

Working Paper:

An Effective System for Grievances and Remedy in Transnational Supply Chains

Focus:

Leather, Leather Products and Shoes

*In Accordance with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights
as well as the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the
OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains in the Garment &
Footwear Sector*

CONTENT, BACKGROUND AND AIM OF THE WORKING PAPER

Production along global supply chains is increasingly being criticised for its impacts on the living and working conditions at the places of production. Regulation for controlling business and state conduct is gaining ground, whether in form of so-called soft law such as the *United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGP)* and the *OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises as well as the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains in the Garment & Footwear Sector*, or as binding regulation such as the *Act on Corporate Due Diligence Obligations for the Prevention of Human Rights Violations in Supply Chains (Lieferkettensorgfaltspflichtengesetz – LkSG)* in Germany.

Alongside preventing human rights abuses and establishing human rights conform working and living conditions, access to effective remedy plays an increasingly important role. In the area of business and human rights, the UNGP and OECD Guidelines formulate the duty for businesses to take part in non-judicial complaint mechanisms or to implement their own. The LkSG also contains regulation on the implementation of complaint mechanisms.

Grievance mechanisms provide remedy in cases of rights violations and support the business risk analysis through evaluation of complaints. Moreover, because the mechanisms can be accessed early-on, they have a preventative function.

This working paper shall serve as an impulse for further discussion and as a basis for a handbook that is yet to be developed on the design of non-judicial grievance mechanisms with a focus on the areas leather, leather products and shoes. Based on the research report *“Non-judicial Grievance Mechanisms in Global Supply Chains: Recommendations for Institutionalisation, Implementation and Procedural Design”*, published on behalf of the German Federal Ministry of Justice and for Consumer Protection in September 2021, this working paper offers specific recommendations for institutionalisation, implementation, process design and designing grievance mechanisms as learning systems.

With this working paper exchange on the practical transfer and further development of the recommendations is specifically sought, for example with organisations of rights holders or aggrieved parties¹, representatives of the leather and shoe industry as well as multi-stakeholder initiatives and further relevant players.

To this end, non-judicial complaints mechanisms are introduced in their regulatory and actual environment and the potentials of these mechanisms are shown. On this basis, industry specific frameworks and challenges are identified and the outline of an *Integrative Grievance System* as an ideal model of a cross-company complaint mechanism is discussed. Finally, industry-specific starting points and needs for discussion of the steps towards practical implementation are addressed.

This working paper was developed by Prof. Dr. Ulla Gläßer and Helene Bond of the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder), commissioned by and in cooperation with Berndt Hinzmann and Anne Neumann of INKOTA. It's INKOTA's mission to defeat hunger, combat poverty and shape globalisation fairly. Fair rules on world trade as well as respecting human rights and environmental protection in global supply chains are integral parts of this.

1 In this paper the terms “affected people” and “rights holders” are used equally for potential complainants. This shall make clear that grievance mechanisms in the field of business and human rights are generally open for complaints from people whose interests and concerns are affected by local business conduct without the necessity of a manifest impairment of rights for admissibility.

OVERVIEW

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IMPRESSUM

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I. GRIEVANCE MECHANISMS IN THEIR REGULATORY AND ACTUAL CONTEXT

Non-judicial complaint mechanisms have to be looked at in their regulatory and actual context to understand how they function and how they can be ideally designed. Only the individual connection to their existing frameworks makes complaint mechanism effective.

1. REGULATORY CONTEXT OF GRIEVANCE MECHANISMS

The regulatory context is made up of the legal framework and semi-legal regulation, which pose requirements to the design of non-judicial complaint mechanisms.

→ Obligation to implement or take part in complaint mechanisms

United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGP)

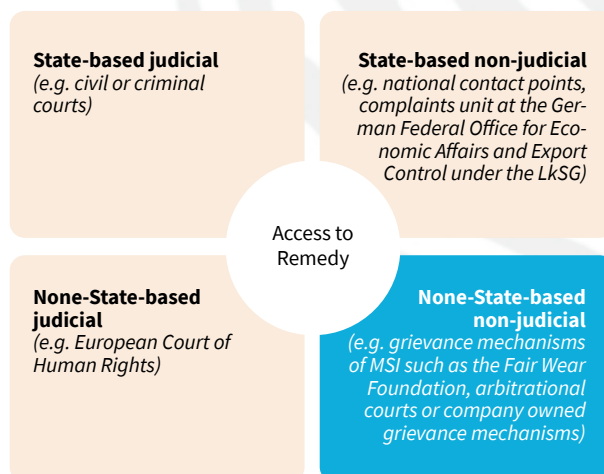
The UNGP were unanimously adopted by the UN Human Rights Council and are directed to states and businesses.² As so-called “soft law” they are one of the central sets of rules with a high degree of recognition in the field of business and human rights. They highlight the states’ duty to protect human rights (first pillar) and the business responsibility to respect human rights (second pillar). As a third pillar they call for access to effective remedy (see chart 1). For the implementation of the UNGP the German federal government agreed on a *National Action Plan for Business and Human Rights (NAP)* which sets non-binding goals for German businesses when implementing human rights in their supply chains.³

Chart 1: Three pillars of the UNGP



In the third pillar, different kinds of remedy are described (see chart 2). This working paper deals with the design of non-state-based non-judicial complaint mechanisms.

Chart 2: Types of remedy according to UNGP



OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises

The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises were adopted in their original version in the year 1976.⁴ In the form of “soft law” they define requirements of the signing countries’ governments to the multinational enterprises operating in or from the states. The OECD Guidelines contain (non-legally-binding) principles and benchmarks for responsible business conduct concerning human rights and environmental protection in a global context. According to this, businesses shall “provide for or co-operate through legitimate processes in the remediation of adverse human rights impacts.” To further the effective application of the Guidelines, the signatories shall establish so called national contact points (NCP).⁵ In addition, the OECD has specified its recommendations in guidance for specific industries – such a guidance also exists for the garment and footwear sectors. In section 1 No. 6 of this guidance, the criteria and function of complaint mechanisms are discussed under the heading of “remediation.”⁶ Four options for designing such systems and mechanisms are named:

2 All not otherwise marked information in this working paper is based on Gläßer, Ulla/ Schmitz, Dominik/ Pfeiffer, Robert/Bond, Helene “Außergerichtliche Beschwerdemechanismen entlang globaler Lieferketten – Empfehlungen für die Institutionalisierung, Implementierung und Verfahrensausgestaltung”, September 2021. Link and further resources in chapter V. of this working paper.
 3 The implementation of the NAP by businesses was analysed in a monitoring process. The results show low participation by the businesses and low implementation of the human rights due diligence. Ernst & Young GmbH Wirtschaftsprüfungsgesellschaft; German Federal Foreign Office, monitoring the extent to which companies are meeting their due diligence obligations enshrined in the National Action Plan for Business and Human Rights (NAP) 2016–2020, final report, 08.10.2020; accessible at <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/aussenpolitik/themen/aussenwirtschaft/wirtschaft-und-menschenrechte/monitoring-nap/2124010>
 4 The OECD guidelines are accessible at <http://mneguidelines.oecd.org/guidelines/>; last access on 27.12.2021.
 5 The German NCP is affiliated to the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action: <https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/DE/Textsammlungen/Aussenwirtschaft/nationale-kontaktstelle-nks.html>; last access on 19.01.2022.
 6 The specification for the sector can be found at <http://mneguidelines.oecd.org/responsible-supply-chains-textile-garment-sector.htm>; last access on 27.12.2021.

- establishing a company-owned grievance mechanism
- engaging in multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs) that provide supply chain grievance mechanisms
- entering into agreements with trade unions, for example through global framework agreements
- agreeing to participate in mediation with the OECD National Contact Points (NCPs)

Act on Corporate Due Diligence Obligations for the Prevention of Human Rights Violations in Supply Chains

The Act on Corporate Due Diligence Obligations for the Prevention of Human Rights Violations in Supply Chains (Lieferkettensorgfaltspflichtengesetz – LkSG) from July 2021 regulates the requirements for the fulfilment of human rights due diligence by German businesses. § 8 LkSG concerns the establishment of complaints procedures. According to this, a business must establish their own complaints procedure or participate in an appropriate external complaints procedure. An EU Directive concerning due diligence in supply chains is also being worked on.

→ Requirements to the design of non-judicial grievance mechanisms

The UNGP as well as the OECD Guidelines formulate several criteria that grievance mechanisms shall fulfil in order to be able to provide effective remedy.

Effectiveness Criteria of UNGP 31

legitimate
accessible
predictable
equitable
transparent
rights-compatible
a source of continuous learning
based on engagement and dialogue

The OECD Guidelines formulate criteria that are almost identical in their content in Section IV Nr. 46: legitimacy, accessibility, predictability, equitability, compatibility

with the Guidelines and transparency, and are based on dialogue and engagement with a view to seeking agreed solutions and can be a source of continuous learning.

These criteria serve as a basis for designing grievance mechanisms. However, for their practical implementation they have to be further specified.⁷

2. ACUTAL CONTEXT OF GRIEVANCE MECHANISMS

The actual context of a grievance mechanism is made up of the local circumstances that must be considered when establishing a grievance mechanism for it to be able to provide effective remedy.

→ Different Types of Remedy

Non-judicial grievance mechanisms are only one form of remedy (see above, chart 2, types of remedy). Ideally the different types of remedy complement each other and make up a comprehensive system of remedy.⁸ The accessibility and the local implementation of the different types of remedy are, however, often subject to major obstacles and full of shortcomings. Effective grievance mechanisms currently are rather the exception than the rule in supply chains.

State-based judicial

Judicial remedy can be sought before the courts

of the guest or home country of the business against which the complaint shall be filed. In many cases there are material as well as procedural obstacles that often make a lawsuit (for damages) seem to promise little. In many countries there are also deficits in law enforcement.⁹ Furthermore the financial, cultural and language barriers are often very high for complainants.

Non-state-based judicial

Non-state-based judicial mechanisms are

especially international human rights courts such as the European Court of Human Rights. Similar obstacles to those for state-based judicial mechanisms can be expected here.

State-based non-judicial

State-based non-judicial mechanisms are

especially the National Contact Points for the OECD Guidelines. Also the complaints unit at the German Federal Office for Economic Affairs and Export Control

7 The criteria were specified and enriched with practical examples in chapter six of the research report on non-judicial grievance mechanisms. Furthermore, an extensive specification is laid out in the *Accountability and Remedy Project (ARP)* of the UN-OHCHR. ARP III concerns non-judicial grievance mechanism and their design. The report can be accessed at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Business/Pages/OHCHRAccountabilityandremedyproject.aspx>; last access on 20.01.2022

8 This thought is also basis for the UNGP. The commentary to UNGP 25 states: “State-based judicial and non-judicial grievance mechanisms should form the foundation of a wider system of remedy. Within such a system, operational-level grievance mechanisms can provide early stage recourse and resolution. State-based and operational-level mechanisms, in turn, can be supplemented or enhanced by the remedial functions of collaborative initiatives as well as those of international and regional human rights mechanisms.”

9 The German Federal Ministry for Justice and Consumer Protection published a detailed brochure on access to justice in November 2019: “The responsibility of business enterprises for human rights violations: Access to justice and the courts,” accessible at https://www.bmj.de/SharedDocs/Publikationen/DE/Menschenrechtsverletzungen_Wirtschaftsunternehmen_engl.html?nn=16632802; last access on 06.08.2022.

under the LkSG is a state-based non-judicial unit. These are often not locally accessible and therefore difficult to use for those affected.

Non-state-based non-judicial

Non-state-based non-judicial remedy, e.g. in the

form of company owned or cross-company grievance mechanisms, fulfils a complementary function. The affected parties shall be able to use this option for complaining locally with a low threshold. A non-judicial grievance mechanism can flexibly respond to the complainants needs, take in different kinds of complaints, and have a preventative effect. Many companies have already established their own grievance mechanisms or are participating in combined grievance mechanisms.¹⁰ Nevertheless also this form of remedy is subject to considerable accessibility obstacles and problems with transparency, procedural design and quality control.

→ Power Imbalance and Vulnerability

The complaints are embedded in a context of a significant structural power imbalance between the affected parties and the businesses. The design of a grievance mechanisms must therefore have the furthest possible balancing of these power asymmetries as a goal. The power imbalance between the affected parties and the businesses has multiple and complex causes, of which some are listed here as examples:

- economic/existential dependency of the affected parties
- lack of supply chain transparency
- low accessibility of business information for affected parties
- low legal standards and low control of enforcement
- vulnerability of the affected parties

Factors that can contribute to vulnerability

general: existential dependency on the employment continuing; being subject to directives, low access to justice, possibly working without contract, low social security, often missing collective representation of interests

specific: gender, being a minor, disabilities, being part of an ethnic, religious, or other minority

The power imbalance as such already makes the affected people vulnerable since they are often in a relationship of dependence towards the respective company as workers or third parties and have less access to different resources.

Furthermore, other factors for vulnerability such as gender, being underage or a disability can come into

play. Many times, multiple factors for vulnerability come together in one person. In the supply chains of leather, leather products and shoes studies displayed a higher vulnerability for women and members of certain groups (e.g. religion, ethnicity, caste, migration background) (see chapter III).

This general as well as specific vulnerability of many affected people is a vital part of the context to be constantly considered when designing grievance mechanisms and their interaction. Therefore, there should be different types of remedy available to the affected parties that adequately consider the complainants' vulnerability and aim to balance out the power asymmetries. Ideally, the best mechanism for the affected parties to deal with the complaint effectively can then be chosen.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

There is often insufficient clarity about the meaning of certain terms in the discourse. Therefore, as a basis for the working paper, in the following we offer some definitions of terms.

Complaints Procedure – The procedure as a systematic course of dealing with a complaint from submitting the complaint to implementing the results is the heart of a grievance mechanism.

Grievance Mechanism (GM) – A grievance mechanism contains the complaints procedure as well as the institutional or organisational framework of the procedure. Every grievance mechanism therefore is a functional system.

Grievance System – In a grievance system many grievance mechanisms work together systematically under one roof. A grievance system can take in different types and levels of complaints, possibly for various constellations of participants, and has a suitable mechanism to deal with them.

Practical example: grievance system by Adidas with grievance mechanisms on factory level as well as grievance mechanism for third parties such as trade unions or other organisations.

Operational Grievance Mechanism (OGM) – The UNGP name OGM as procedures that are not necessarily led by a neutral third party. A closer definition of the type of procedure within an OGM is not given. Since the focus of this working paper lies clearly on cross-company grievance procedures that are conducted by neutral third parties the term OGM is not used in the following.

¹⁰ Many practical examples for grievance mechanisms and their design can be found in chapter 6 of the research report by Gläßer, Schmitz, Pfeiffer, Bond, September 2021.

II. INDUSTRY SPECIFIC FRAMEWORK AND CHALLENGES

This working paper offers an orientation and is open for discussion with different rights groups for the establishment of effective grievance and remedy mechanisms in the supply chains for leather, leather products and shoes. The basis for this are the *United Nations Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights*¹¹ as well as the *OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises*.¹²

The *United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights UNHCHR/OHCHR* recommends in the *Accountability and Remedy Project III*¹³ that the operators of non-state-based non-judicial grievance mechanisms shall “cooperate proactively and constructively with each other in order to raise standards and promote good practice with respect to the resolution of grievances arising from business-related human rights harms.”

In global supply chains the probability of different brands and/or retailers sourcing products from the same suppliers and/or factories is very high. These businesses are often members of one or more initiatives/multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSI) or use standard systems that work towards improving working conditions in the supply chain. Some of these businesses have established external non-judicial or company-own grievance instruments for workers and their representatives (e.g. trade unions, NGOs).

Leather production, leather processing and shoe production are strongly globalised economic areas. Through the harsh international competition many German businesses in the leather and shoe industry have outsourced their production to abroad or have changed their business model to retail. The remaining production of shoes, leather products and leather is often specialised on high-quality products and is

located in the luxury segment or specific niches. Actors that are not located in the classic shoe or leather industry are increasingly pushing into the market for shoes, bags/suitcases, accessories etc.¹⁴ Furthermore, non-leather products are rising in sales compared to leather products.¹⁵

The supply chains of leather, leather products and shoes contain a broad product spectrum. Depending on the exact product classification¹⁶, leather clothing, belts, rubber shoes or non-leather-suitcases can be part of this spectrum. Similarly, when looking at certain sector definitions of leather production, leather processing or shoe production¹⁷, some companies are in or out of focus. In this working paper we want to focus on the risk for workers and residents coming from shoe factories and tanneries while not unnecessarily restricting the scope.

This working paper proposes an argumentation focused exemplarily on the supply chains of leather shoes because the human rights and environmental risks are well documented.¹⁸ At the same time there is sufficient evidence that these risks (e.g. concerning the rules of the International Labour Association, ILO) also apply to related supply chains.

Therefore, this paper is on the one hand directed to all businesses producing and/or selling shoes – whether the shoes have leather components or not. The working and discussion paper is directed to a) shoe retailers, b) fashion retailers that also offer shoes, c) other retailers (e.g. classic food discounters) or online platforms that offer shoes and d) businesses of the shoe industry.

11 The UN-Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights were published as brochures in English and German, accessible at https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/GuidingPrinciplesBusinessHR_EN.pdf and <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/266624/b51c16faf1b3424d7efa060e8aaa8130/un-leitprinzipien-de-data.pdf>

12 The OECD-Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises were published in various languages, accessible at <https://mneguidelines.oecd.org/mneguidelines/>

13 See reference 7.

14 On the developments in the sectors of leather and shoe industry, see the working paper 2021 of the research funding of the Hans-Böckler-Foundation: Dispan, Jürgen; Mandler, Laura: Branchenanalyse Leder- und Schuhindustrie, 2021; accessible at https://www.boeckler.de/de/faust-detail.htm?sync_id=HBS-008057

15 Shoes imported to Germany in 2015 and 2016 were made of plastic or rubber in approximately 35% of the cases, while leather shoes made up approximately 25%. An almost equally high amount as shoes made from plastic and rubber was made up by shoes made from textiles. See World Footwear Yearbook 2017 and 2016, accessible at <https://www.worldfootwear.com/>. The global links of shoe production are summarised in the factsheet „Wo der Schuh drückt“ of the Change Your Shoes campaign <https://webshop.inkota.de/produkt/download-factsheet/factsheet-wo-der-schuh-drueckt>. Import and export links of leather, leather products and leather shoes between Bangladesh/India/Pakistan and the EU are shown in the studies of the programme Together for Decent Leather, accessible at <https://togetherfordecentleather.org/>

16 A typical goods classification would be the HS (Harmonized System) nomenclature of the World Customs Organization.

17 When looking at the classification of business branches as used by the Federal Statistical Office of Germany (WZ 2008), these three sectors together make up the business section production of leather, leather products and shoes. A different system is offered by the Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community (NACE).

18 Multiple social and ecological risks in the leather, leather products and shoe production were documented by the studies of the campaign *Change Your Shoes* and *Together for Decent Leather*. A list of the studies with a sorting to the respective countries can be found in chapter V.

On the other hand, this paper is directed to all businesses that have leather in the products they sell or produce. This includes the a) leather industry (e.g. also producers of bags, suitcases etc.) and leather clothing industry (e.g. leather jackets, leather trousers etc.), b) retailers offering leather clothing and leather goods, c) furniture industry and retail, d) car industry and retail and further businesses.

The risk study commissioned by the German Federal Government in the scope of the National Action Plan and conducted in May 2020¹⁹ names the production of leather, leather products and shoes as a focus sector for human rights and environmental risks. In the sector “Heat Map” the areas with the highest human rights and environmental risks are identified. The focus lies on international lower-tier supply chain sourcing as well as direct international sourcing. Across the different regions there are high risks in the areas of working conditions, discrimination, human trafficking and exploitation, child labour, health and safety at the workplace, freedom of association, land use and property rights as well as environmental protection and health.²⁰ The following examples shall specify the risks:

a. Working Conditions

Interviews with workers in shoe factories and tanneries in China, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Italy and Eastern Europe²¹ show that informal employment relations pose a very general and widespread risk. This includes employment relations as day labourers, the absence of employment contracts, irregular lay-offs or unpaid social security fees. Also the outsourcing of production steps into the informal working area, especially into home work, is typical. Excessively long and illegal working hours as well as unannounced and involuntary overtime are regularly detected in investigations. A central topic for the workers is the lack of transparency on the composition of wages as well as missing payments of wages or even the payment of wages under the legal minimum wage instead of a living wage.

b. Discrimination

In shoe factories and tanneries, discrimination, e.g. because of gender, religion, ethnicity or the caste-system is widespread. Migrants (e.g. refugees from

Syria in the Turkish leather, leather products and shoe production or internal migrants in India) are especially vulnerable.

c. Human Trafficking and Exploitation

Forced labour has in the past been documented mainly in the sectors of cotton production and cotton manufacturing. In the last years, the production of sneakers has been documented in the forced labour camps for Uighurs in Xingjiang, China.

d. Child Labour

Cases of illegal child labour have been documented for example in tanneries in India. Especially in informal work settings, the inclusion of child labour is a risk.

e. Health and Safety at the Workplace

In tanneries in India many health hazards are documented as a result of the untrained and unsecured handling of chemicals and the operation of machinery. In China, benzol poisonings in sneaker factories are documented. Also in leather and shoe factories in India, Bangladesh or Pakistan, health impairments connected to the work are documented. An important topic is also the safety of facilities and buildings as well as fire safety.

f. Right to Freedom of Association, Collective Bargaining

The violation of this basic right as well as trade union rights as well as international agreements and work norms of the International Labour Association (ILO) but also the disregard for national laws at production sites are frequently documented.²² In India, for example, the legally required worker committees only seldomly exist in the factories. And if they exist, they are often only for appearance's sake and not an effective instrument for worker participation. There is systematic repression to hinder workers from exercising their rights and organise collectively.

g. Environmental Protection and Health

Air, water and land pollution and toxic input in the vicinity of tanneries and shoe factories are bountifully documented. Despite the moving of large tanneries and the construction of sewage treatment plants, grave pollution, and Chrome-IV contamination of surrounding bodies of water and land in the region around the tanneries in Hazaribagh in Bangladesh are documented.²³

19 The study “Die Achtung von Menschenrechten entlang globaler Wertschöpfungsketten. Risiken und Chancen für Branchen der deutschen Wirtschaft“ was published by adelphi consult in cooperation with Ernst & Young commissioned by the German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The study was a central measure of the National Action Plan for Business and Human Rights. Accessible at <https://www.adelphi.de/de/system/files/mediathek/bilder/fb-543-achtung-von-menschenrechten-entlang-globaler-wertschoepfungsketten.pdf>

20 Which human rights and environmental risks are connected to exactly which topics, is explained in detail in annex 4 of the study named in reference 16.

21 All examples for the risks are derived from the studies of the campaign *Change Your Shoes and Together for Decent Leather*. A list of the studies with allocation to the respective countries can be found in chapter V.

22 An important overview is offered by the yearly global rights index by the International Trade Union Confederation (IGB). The report for 2021 is accessible at <https://www.globalrightsindex.org/de/2021>

23 For example, for Hazaribagh Human Rights Watch has documented the toxic strain in a study from 2012. Accessible at <https://www.hrw.org/report/2012/10/08/toxic-tanneries/health-repercussions-bangladeshs-hazaribagh-leather>. 2013 the Blacksmith Institute and Green Cross Schweiz counted Hazaribagh to the 10 most toxic places in the world in their report “Top Ten Toxic Threats in 2013: Cleanup, Progress and Ongoing Challenges”. 90-95% of all registered tanneries in Bangladesh were located in Hazaribagh at that time. Accessible at https://www.greencross.ch/wp-content/uploads/uploads/media/pollution_report_2013_top_ten_wpp.pdf. In 2016 the organisations Pure Earth and Green Cross Schweiz counted tanneries to the 10 most toxic industries. The report is accessible at https://www.greencross.ch/wp-content/uploads/uploads/media/pollution_report_2016_top_ten_wpp.pdf. The toxic strains in India are thoroughly documented in the studies listed in chapter V.

Global supply chains and production are often located in countries whose indicators for governance and human rights counteract sustainable development. Especially through the German Supply Chain Act companies are supposed to take the risks in their own management systems and purchasing practices into account in a preventative manner as well as on specific occasions. A grievance and remedy mechanism is part of this. The risk-based approach of due diligence and the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights pose the challenge to businesses in this supply chain to establish measures and initiatives that meet the requirements of the law and the UNGP.

For the supply chains focused on in this paper, there are various industry or multi-stakeholder initiatives, inter alia Amfori BSCI, the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles, CADS, the Fair Wear Foundation or the Leather Working Group, in which individual businesses are members. At this point it can be asserted that none of these initiatives cover the comprehensive approach of due diligence processes.²⁴ The initiatives and standards don't have the extensive conformity with the OECD due diligence approach.²⁵ The existing systems rely mainly on audits and certifications as central regulating element. The limited effectivity of audit-based systems is claimed by experts.²⁶ Also from the consumer protection perspective, the need for action is highlighted – sustainability certifications are not effective enough in clothing supply chains from the perspective of the Federation of German Consumer Organisations.²⁷

There are various challenges concerning the Supply Chain Act and the existing gaps in the initiatives referred to. Some of the initiatives provide grievance and remedy mechanisms. However, these need to be improved, especially concerning the accessibility of the mechanisms and the effective and timely remedy for the rights holders and affected people. The need for action is seen by different sides and in existing initiatives. In the OECD-Forum for due diligence in the garment and shoe industry in February 2022, the focus lies on collaborative

approaches for access to grievance and remedy.²⁸ Initiatives like the Fair Wear Foundation, the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles and amfori are involved. The idea is that collaborative action and transparency of different multi-stakeholder initiatives and their grievance systems offer the possibility to better apply the existing leverage in the process of registering the complaint and implementing the respective remedy. A joint back-up and supporting system could more effectively pick up and solve cases. Moreover, structural risks could be addressed or stopped more effectively.

- 24 The deficiencies of the respective initiatives of the shoe sector are listed in the reports "Gute Güte – Gütezeichen, Multi-Stakeholder- und Sektorinitiativen in der Schuh- und Lederproduktion" as well as „Trampling Workers Rights Underfoot“. They are accessible at <https://webshop.inkota.de/node/1576> and <https://webshop.inkota.de/produkt/download-studie/studie-trampling-workers-rights-underfoot>. Which elements are nevertheless effective for better working and environmental conditions is shown in the report "How to do better: An exploration of better practices within the footwear industry", accessible at <https://webshop.inkota.de/node/1519>
- 25 The Partnership for Sustainable Textiles went through the OECD Alignment Assessment 2020. Various deficits were named in the report. The report is accessible at <https://www.textilbuendnis.com/oecd-bericht-aa/>. Further assessments for the garment and shoe sector are published by the OECD under following link <https://mneguidelines.oecd.org/alignment-assessment-garment-footwear.htm>. The Fair Wear Foundation is currently going through the OECD Alignment Assessment. The report has not been published.
- 26 The limited use of audits is shown, for example, in the discussion paper "Sozialaudits in der öffentlichen Beschaffung am Beispiel Schuhe und Leder", accessible at <https://www.suedwind-institut.de/files/Suedwind/Publikationen/2021/2021-27%20FS%20Sozialaudits%20Schuhe%20und%20Leder.pdf>. For the garment industry as a whole, the report "Sozialaudits – wie sie Unternehmen schützen und Arbeiter*innen im Stich lassen" illustrates the problem, accessible at <https://webshop.inkota.de/node/1592>. The study "Menschenrechtsfitness von Audits und Zertifizierern" by the ECCHR, Brot für die Welt and Misereor documents the deficits of an approach focused solely on audits across industries. Accessible at <https://www.ecchr.eu/publikation/menschenrechtsfitness-von-audits-und-zertifizierern-1/>
- 27 The Federation of German Consumer Organisations (vzbv) published two legal opinions in December 2021 which discuss how sustainability certification in textile supply chains can become more binding and thus more effective, accessible at <https://www.vzbv.de/publikationen/nachhaltigkeit-verlaesslich-zertifizieren>
- 28 The discussion event on cooperative improvement of existing systems for complaint and remedy in the sector is conducted jointly by the Fair Wear Foundation, the Partnership on Sustainable Textiles and amfori. Goal and documentation of the event "Collaborative approaches to improve access to remedy" is accessible at <https://www.fairwear.org/stories/oecd-forum-2022-sidesession-collaborative-approaches-to-improve-access-to-remedy>

III. DRAFT OF AN INTEGRATIVE GRIEVANCE SYSTEM (IGS) FOR THE SECTOR LEATHER, LEATHER PRODUCTS AND SHOES

→ Methodological Origin and Possible Application of the IGS

An effective grievance mechanism needs an effective procedure. For this to be accessible and fair for the affected people, the procedure needs to be embedded in a functioning and neutral organisational structure that implements the mechanism locally. Only the interaction of institutional framework, implementation and the procedure itself makes the mechanism comprehensively and effectively usable for the affected people. The continuous improvement of the mechanism as a learning system moreover ensures that development, improvements, and adjustments to changing conditions are systematically included.

Why IGS?

Grievance mechanisms for various constellations of participation and cases have to be regarded as overall systems. An accessible, fair and effective procedure is only possible through institutional framing and the local implementation.

↳ Draft of a grievance mechanism under consideration of institutionalisation, implementation, procedural design and setting up a learning system.

The Integrative Grievance System (IGS) interlinks these dimensions. It is a model for a cross-company grievance mechanism, which comprehensively embeds the grievance procedure into the institutional and local

context.²⁹ When establishing an IGS, four dimensions are important:

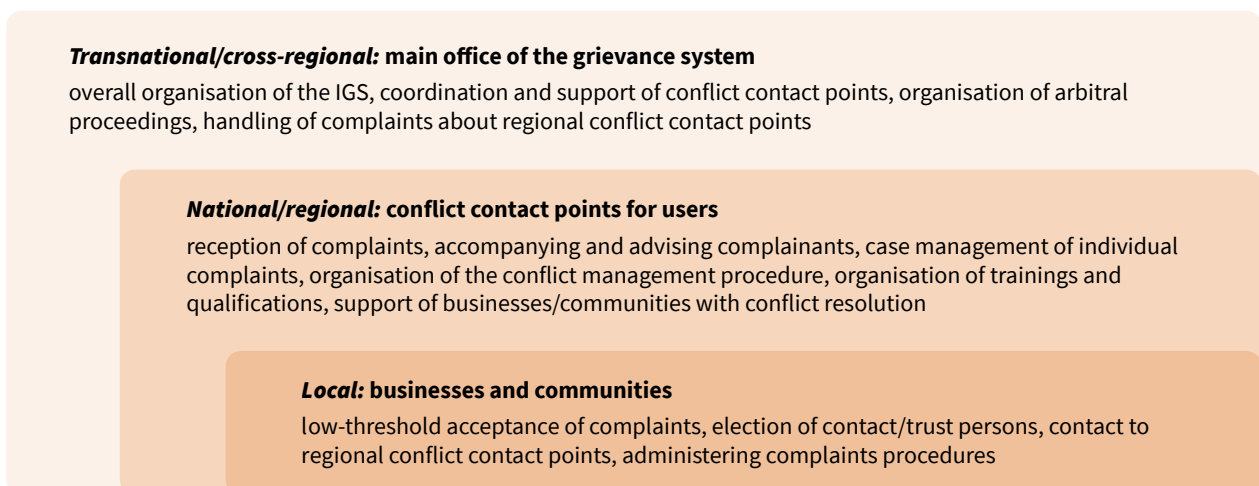
1. Institutionalisation
2. Local Implementation
3. Procedural Design
4. Designing the Grievance Mechanisms as a Learning System

On every dimension there are several design categories to be considered (see table 1). In each of these design categories, relevant questions of design are pointed out and various practical possibilities are shown. This makes the IGS an ideal overall model which companies, business associations or MSIs who are at the beginning of establishing a grievance mechanism can use. The IGS can and should however also be used to optimise and complete existing grievance mechanisms with regards to individual recommendations.

→ INTEGRATIVE GRIEVANCE SYSTEM (IGS) in Detail

The IGS is a cross-company grievance mechanism, embedded in a governing organisation. It can be implemented in different regions at the same time and be responsible for local factories producing for different brands. In leather tanneries, for example, it is sensible to have one clearly responsible grievance mechanism even if the leather is produced for different brands.

Chart 3: Geographic Levels of the IGS



²⁹ The complete model with methodological derivation and comprehensive recommendations can be found in chapter 9 of the research report by Gläßer, Schmitz, Pfeiffer, Bond, September 2021.

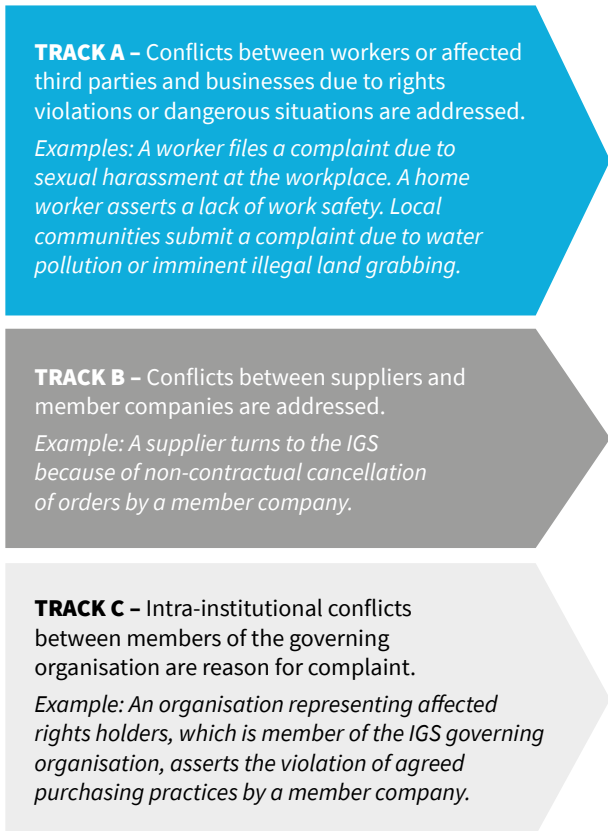
→ **Geographic Structure**

The IGS should be coordinated transnationally to reach supply chains in different countries. For the local implementation, regional conflict contact points are needed that manage coordination and are regionally approachable. Furthermore, in the factories and communities there is the need for local conflict management that is as close as possible to the affected people.

→ **Participation and Types of Complaints**

Depending on the participants, different types of complaints can arise. Ideally these should all be addressable in one grievance system. Next to the conflicts between private workers and companies, there can also be conflicts between suppliers and buyers as well as between member companies or organisations of the IGS itself. Therefore, the IGS offers three so called *procedural tracks* (see chart 4).

Chart. 4: IGS Procedural Tracks



→ **Types of Procedure**

The IGS offers two complementary conflict management procedures: the conciliatory mediation and the arbitration proceedings. These procedures are adequate for different types of complaints and at different points in time. The conciliatory mediation initially builds on dialogue and takes the interests of all parties into focus. In the arbitration proceedings on the other hand, a neutral arbitrator decides primarily based on the legal situation.

Chart 5: Procedures in Track A

(On the Procedural Sequence see Chart 8)

Regional Conflict Contact Point
Reception of complaints
Analysis of the case through an investigative unit of the grievance mechanism
Consultation and choice of procedure together with complainants
Local Factory Level
Conciliatory mediation with neutral third-party guidance
Supra-regional Arbitration Institution
Arbitration proceedings upon failure of conciliatory mediation or unsuitability of complaint for conciliatory mediation

The recommendations of this working paper are focused on IGS track A, dealing with conflicts between workers or affected third parties and businesses.

Table 1: IGS Design Categories

Institutionalisation
Governance structures
Funding of the grievance mechanism
Incentive schemes for member companies
Development of material standards
Focus on vulnerable groups
Local Implementation
Raising awareness of the grievance mechanism
Incentive schemes for supplier companies
Transparency of the supply chain
Adaptation of purchasing practices
Interaction with other human rights mechanisms
Procedural Design
Participants in the proceedings
Submission of complaints
Admissibility of grievances
Criteria for case assessment
Fact-finding
Dealing with power asymmetries/imbbalances
Consideration of the interests of particularly vulnerable victims
Protection of parties to the proceedings
Choice of procedure
Qualification profiles for staff assisting in and managing the grievance procedure
Place of proceedings
Language of proceedings
Duration of proceedings
Procedural costs
Transparency of the dispute resolution process
Outcomes of proceedings
Implementation of agreements/decisions
Development of a learning system

The design categories of this table are derived from the categories in the research report on non-judicial grievance mechanisms.³⁰ For increased clarity of this working paper the categories were partly joined and changed in their order.

30 On the derivation of the design categories see chapter 4 of the research report by Gläßer, Schmitz, Pfeiffer, Bond, September 2021.

31 The answers to these questions are partly connected to the legal personality chosen for the governing organisation.

INSTITUTIONALISATION

Meaning of institutionalisation

The grievance system must be offered and framed by a governing organisation. By embedding the grievance mechanism in such an organisation, an effective financial design and common standards as well as systematic interlinking of the grievance mechanism with other approaches to human rights due diligence are possible.

Why cross-company?

- independence of the grievance mechanisms and individual procedures
- efficiency in institutionalisation and implementation
- continuous regional accessibility
- bundling the access to remedy
- effective enforcement of remedy and prevention measures towards suppliers
- establishing a comprehensive learning system

Institutionalisation is about questions of embedding the IGS in a cross-company administering organisation. How is this organisation structured? Which other approaches to human rights due diligence does it follow? How is internal decision making and funding of the organisation designed?

Five design categories are introduced in the following: governance structures, funding of the grievance mechanism, incentive schemes for member companies, development of material standards and focus on vulnerable groups.

→ DESIGN CATEGORIES

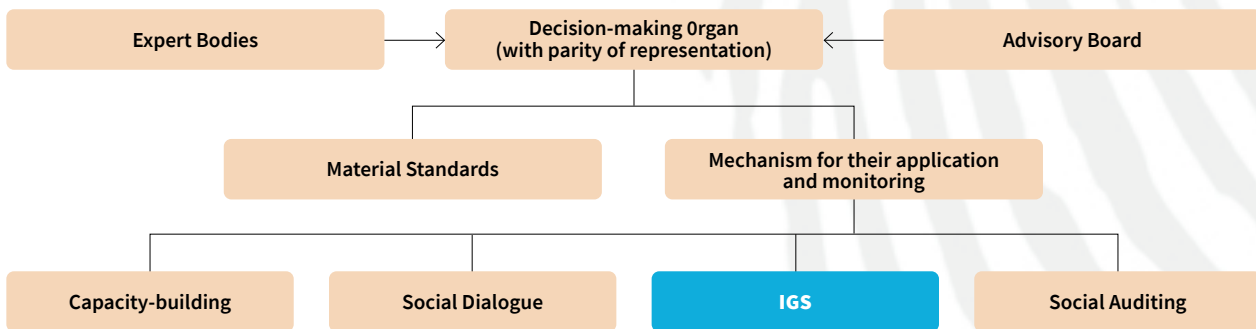
Governance structures

The IGS is embedded in a governing organisation with the goal of fulfilling human rights due diligence. This governing organisation³¹ could, for example, be a multi-stakeholder initiative.

Practical examples: Fair Wear Foundation; Fair Labor Association

In the ideal structure of the IGS governing organisation, there is a central decision-making organ that is consulted and accompanied by independent expert bodies and an advisory board. The organisations' goal is the agreement on common material standards which are to be adhered to within the members business activity (especially the adherence to human rights standards and maybe their industry specifications) and the establishment of mechanisms for implementation and control of enforcement of these standards (see chart 6).

Chart 6: Structure of Administering Organisation



For the sake of hiring personnel and mandating external neutrals responsible for procedures, this organisation must either have its own legal personality or delegate these tasks to a legal entity that, inter alia, runs the grievance mechanism. To ensure structural power balancing on the institutional level, the governance structures (the steering and regulating bodies) are to be equally filled with representatives of member companies or their associations on the one hand and representatives of other stakeholder groups, e.g. national or transnational labour unions and organisations representing affected people, on the other hand.

Funding of the grievance mechanism

The IGS is funded by the member companies. Two types of costs arise within a grievance mechanism:

Fixed costs (material and personnel expenses)
Covered through regular payment of membership fees by member companies.

Practical example: consumer conciliation (German version can be read in chapter 8 of the full research report)

case specifics costs (payment for externals in charge of process, costs of remedial measures)
Possible models for covering the case specific costs can take a multitude of variable factors into account (e.g. number of companies sourcing from one place of production or region, business or financial volume of member companies, volume of grievance procedures arising against ordering company, etc.). Therefore, the member companies of the administering organisation must negotiate a fair model for cost allocation individually.

Incentive schemes for member companies

For the member companies there need to be incentives to participate in the IGS and actively implement the material standards (see next category: development of material standards). Firstly, an effective grievance mechanism complements, facilitates and refines a company’s risk analysis. Regular reporting by the companies on the fulfilment of the material standards which is directed at length to the members of the organisation and published in consolidated, possibly

anonymised, form is recommended (see closer under reporting system). A positive effect on the company image is possible when the standards are implemented comprehensively. The implementation of material standards can also be linked to financial incentives; on the other hand, sanctions can be used as negative incentives.

Development of material standards

Because the human rights are generally not specific enough to serve as guidance for conduct, and/or do not unfold sufficient binding effect on businesses, the members of an administering organisation should develop common standards for their business conduct. To this end they should agree on specific rules for the implementation of their human and environmental rights responsibility, taking into account sector specific and regional risk potential. These can be laid down in a binding *code of conduct*.

Material standards (e.g. code of conduct)

- General part:** general rules for protection of human rights and the environment
- Specific part:** specification through sector specific requirements and protective regulation

These common standards shall be formulated as precise requirements to member companies and suppliers for them to be able to serve as assessment criteria in grievance procedures. This way the material standards also ensure that the remedial measures are rights-compatible, as required by the UNGP, because they specifically implement the human rights.

Starting points for the development of standards:

- directly legally binding standards of the § 2 section 1 and 2 of the LkSG; since the standards referred to in the LkSG are very general, a specification and enhancement of these standards should be conducted when establishing a grievance mechanism
- expected EU Directive on human rights due diligence for businesses
- sector-specific risks and resulting risk-minimising rules of conduct

These standards shall be developed by the IGS decision-making organ with equal representation of business and other organisations and be revised and possibly updated every year.

Focus on vulnerable groups

A comprehensive focus of the IGS on the vulnerability of potential affected groups as well as individual complainants is necessary. The effects concerning factors of vulnerability and the protection of affected people shall be laid out with every decision of the governing organisation. The perspective of vulnerability must be structurally considered and integrated in the design and development of the governing organisation through the effective involvement of representatives of affected groups.

LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

Meaning of local implementation

The grievance mechanisms must reach those affected locally; they have to know of the mechanism, trust it and actually be able to use it. To this end, awareness has to be raised about the grievance mechanism in factories and communities and it must constructively interact with other human rights protection mechanisms. The suppliers have to be effectively involved and participate.

The IGS must reach the people affected locally to be an effective grievance mechanism. All contract partners in the supply chain must participate in implementing the IGS. In complex or untransparent supply chains this regularly poses a challenge since suppliers are not always known or change often.

Five design categories are introduced in the following for effective local implementation: raising awareness of the grievance mechanism, incentive schemes for supplier companies, transparency of the supply chain, adaption of purchasing practices and interaction with other human rights mechanisms.

→ DESIGN CATEGORIES

Raising awareness of the IGS

Effectively raising awareness of the grievance mechanism is a central requirement for its accessibility. The affected people have to know that the mechanism exists and how it can be used. To this end, building trust is very important. In global supply chains there are special challenges if the mechanism shall also reach home workers, informally employed persons, affected third parties and others who are not in a fixed employment setting.

Especially the following must be published:

- existence, mandate, goals, and institutional background of the IGS
- criteria for the admissibility of a complaint
- cost-free nature of the complaint procedure, financial and immaterial offers of support and guidance for complainants
- characteristics of possible types of procedure, procedural stages and results of the procedure
- material rights of the affected people and corresponding duties of companies
- possibility of raising a complaint anonymously and other measures for protection of complainants and possible witnesses
- verifiability and implementation of outcomes

This information must be spread proactively and be understandable for potential users of the grievance mechanism. Therefore, special channels of communication which are also understandable for illiterate people or people impaired in sight and/or hearing are necessary, which also reach home workers, informal workers and can be contacted outside of operational structures. Persons of trust or representatives of operational worker-management committees can help to raise awareness.

Incentive schemes for supplier companies

Effective incentives shall be established so that suppliers actively participate in the IGS and other measures of the governing organisation. The member companies could make adherence to human rights standards a requirement for awarding contracts. Moreover, the member companies can set the following exemplary incentives for suppliers: self-commitment to fair purchasing practices, perspective for long-term contractual relations, support in implementing material standards e.g. through capacity building programmes. Negative incentives such as sanctions or ending contractual relations are also possible.

Transparency of the supply chain

The IGS administering organisation must know at which production facilities to implement the grievance mechanism and against which businesses (also suppliers, sub-contractors etc.) a complaint can be filed. Therefore, the member companies must identify their suppliers and inform the IGS about these.³² This information is meant for internal use and generally to be treated confidentially by the IGS.

However, further publication of supply chains surpassing internal transparency is possible and generally desirable. Transparency is a basic requirement for effective cooperation and to develop common leverage. The Fair Wear Foundation even sees this as a requirement; also the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles follows the approach to publish suppliers, for example in the Open Apparel Registry. The Bangladesh Accord is also a good

32 Transparency of lower supply chain tiers can be reached through cascading contractual clauses, through which the suppliers are bound to bind their suppliers in turn.

example of the positive effect of sharing information with all relevant stakeholder groups, including members, external organisations, NGOs and the public. At the same time, it is possible to keep the complaints confidential and anonymous on the individual level of complainants or others involved. A further element is the case reporting (in the context of the process as well as in the individual reporting systems) to show the solution to the complaint or the removal of the risks and thus the effect. Transparency lowers the obstacles for entry and improves cooperation.

Adaption of purchasing practices

Purchasing practices³³ include all principles and processes with which brands and retailers interact with the producers of their products. Responsible purchasing practices enable suppliers to plan their production and working hours in a human-rights-conform and also effective manner while paying their workers fairly. At the same time they enable the suppliers to invest in the general improvement of working conditions. The purchasing practices of ordering companies therefore have to align with the adherence to the material standards and make it possible for business partners and suppliers to also adhere to the standards. Through sustainable purchasing practices, the member companies must give their suppliers enough financial and temporal leeway to implement and attend to a grievance mechanism.

The following examples of sustainable purchasing practices can be taken into account:

- minimum price guarantee
- appropriate production and delivery dates
- incentives for long term supplier relations
- cascading contractual rules to mandate the suppliers to fair purchasing practices towards their suppliers

To achieve better purchasing practices, various multi-stakeholder initiatives are working on a Common Framework for Responsible Purchasing Practices.³⁴ The framework is equally directed to businesses and multi-stakeholder initiatives. Responsible purchasing practices are defined to establish an effective cooperation based on partnership between purchasing companies and suppliers.

Interaction with other human rights mechanisms

Next to a grievance mechanism the governing organisation should follow further approaches contributing to adherence to human rights due diligence and standards: especially Capacity Building, Social Dialogue und Social Auditing seem relevant here. Only through systematic interaction these mechanisms can be fully effective.

Capacity Building

Relaying relevant knowledge and specific trainings, e.g. on the use of the IGS, to prevent violations of certain work and social standards

↳ helps to inform the people about their rights and enables them regarding their enforcement

Social Dialogue

Dialogue and negotiations between governments, employers, and unions; collective bargaining between employers/employer organisations and unions

↳ opens a further channel of communication about deficiencies and furthers exchange

↳ can be supported by Capacity Building

Social Auditing

Control of factories or other operations on the adherence to the material standards and the implementation of the IGS through independent audits (often has to be seen critically in practice)

↳ helps with checking the adherence to the standards and the implementation of the grievance mechanism

Central coordination through IGS governing organisation

The IGS governing organisation should centrally coordinate the mechanisms, especially the capacity building programmes. This can result in considerable gains in efficiency and reduce the risk of confusion and excessive demand on the suppliers through too many different programmes and requirements.

PROCEDURAL DESIGN

Meaning of procedural design

The complaint procedure is the centrepiece of the grievance mechanism. It includes the design of the actual grievance process from raising a complaint to individual procedural aspects and enforcement of the results.

A thoughtfully designed procedure is the prerequisite for a grievance mechanism being accessible, functioning efficiently, being operated fairly and producing sustainable results in the sense of the UNGP-criteria and the OECD Guidelines. When designing a grievance procedure, many individual aspects need to be taken into account, especially to enable the complainants to self-effectively participate, balance power asymmetries,

33 Responsible purchasing practices were the yearly focus topic in 2021 of the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles. Together with other initiatives like the Ethical Trading Initiative, ACT and the Fair Wear Foundation, the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles is currently working on a frame of reference for responsible purchasing practices. All information on this topic can be found at <https://www.textilbuendnis.com/jahresthema-2021-einkaufspraktiken/>

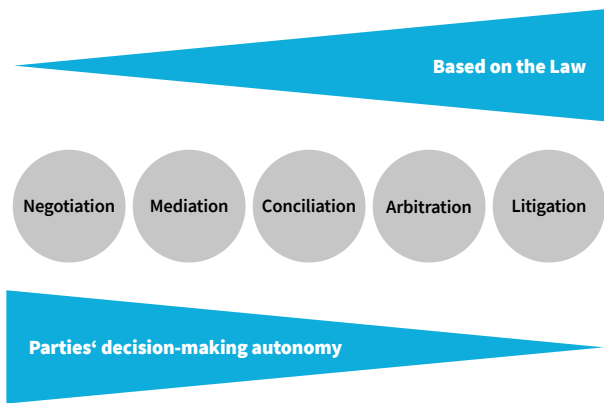
34 The common framework is accessible via the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles at <https://www.textilbuendnis.com/purchasing-practices-framework/> or through the project "The Industry we want" at <https://www.theindustrywewant.com/spotlight-cfrpp>

ensure a neutral and fair process and protect against illegitimate exertion of influence.

Next to categories like language, place and costs of the procedure, especially neutrality, integrity and qualification of the staff assisting in and managing the grievance process are important. A good procedural design has to be put into practice by respectively qualified people.

The primary type of procedure in the IGS is conciliatory mediation; this is complemented by the option of an arbitration procedure. The procedure thus combines three classic procedures of alternative dispute resolution (ADR). For a basic understanding of the procedures' specifics, the different types of ADR-procedures are briefly introduced here.³⁵

Chart 7: Characteristics of ADR-procedures



Negotiation: Parties autonomously search for an individual solution based on their interests in direct contact without third party involvement

Mediation: Parties search for an individual solution based on their interests, supported by a neutral third person that moderates and structures the process and supports the parties in finding a solution

Conciliation: a neutral third person makes a conciliation proposal based on the legal situation and possibly the parties' interests which only becomes binding upon agreement by both parties

Arbitration: procedure similar to court, organised privately with binding third person decision on the basis of the legal situation; the parties have to agree on an arbitration and the arbitrator autonomously

Litigation: process in court with binding third party decision by state judges on basis of legal situation

PLEAS NOTE: The use of terms is not coherent internationally.³⁶ Therefore, in international discourse the procedural characteristics connected with the use of the terms should be closely checked.³⁷

Reasons for process combination

With its interest orientation and the consideration of individual needs and the openness for very different levels and approaches to solutions, mediation is well suited to consider the individual situation and needs of complainants in a human rights context. It enables the development of individually tailored viable measures of prevention and remedy directed to the future.

Furthermore, mediation can contribute to keeping or rebuilding relationships between the involved people. This is especially important when the employment continues in the same factory or establishment.

Complementing this with elements of a legally oriented conciliation procedure is necessary to ensure the UNGP criteria of rights-compatibility of remedy in human rights complaints procedures and, when needed, to contribute to the balancing of power asymmetries through evaluative interventions and suggestions by the conciliator. The conciliator shall be guided by (human) rights regulations and the governing organisation's standards as well as the previously discovered parties' interests.

Should the involved parties not reach an amicable solution in conciliatory mediation within a specified time frame, the complainants must be able to choose the path into an arbitral procedure so that complaints procedures can be brought to a binding solution within the grievance mechanism. (Alternatively, the complainants can choose state-based litigation as an "opt out.")

→ IGS procedure track A

The procedure for track A is a hybrid procedure. It combines the potential of mediation, conciliation and arbitration and gives the complainants the possibility to choose the best suited procedure and also change between the types of procedure. The ideal procedural path of the IGS grievance procedure is described briefly in the following and shown in the procedural graph (see chart 8).

After a complaint has reached the IGS, the admissibility has been checked and a first analysis of the legal and factual situation has taken place, the choice of procedure is made where the complainants can receive further information and support by IGS staff, if needed. The complainants can choose between conciliatory mediation or an instant opt-in to an arbitration with a binding arbitral award.

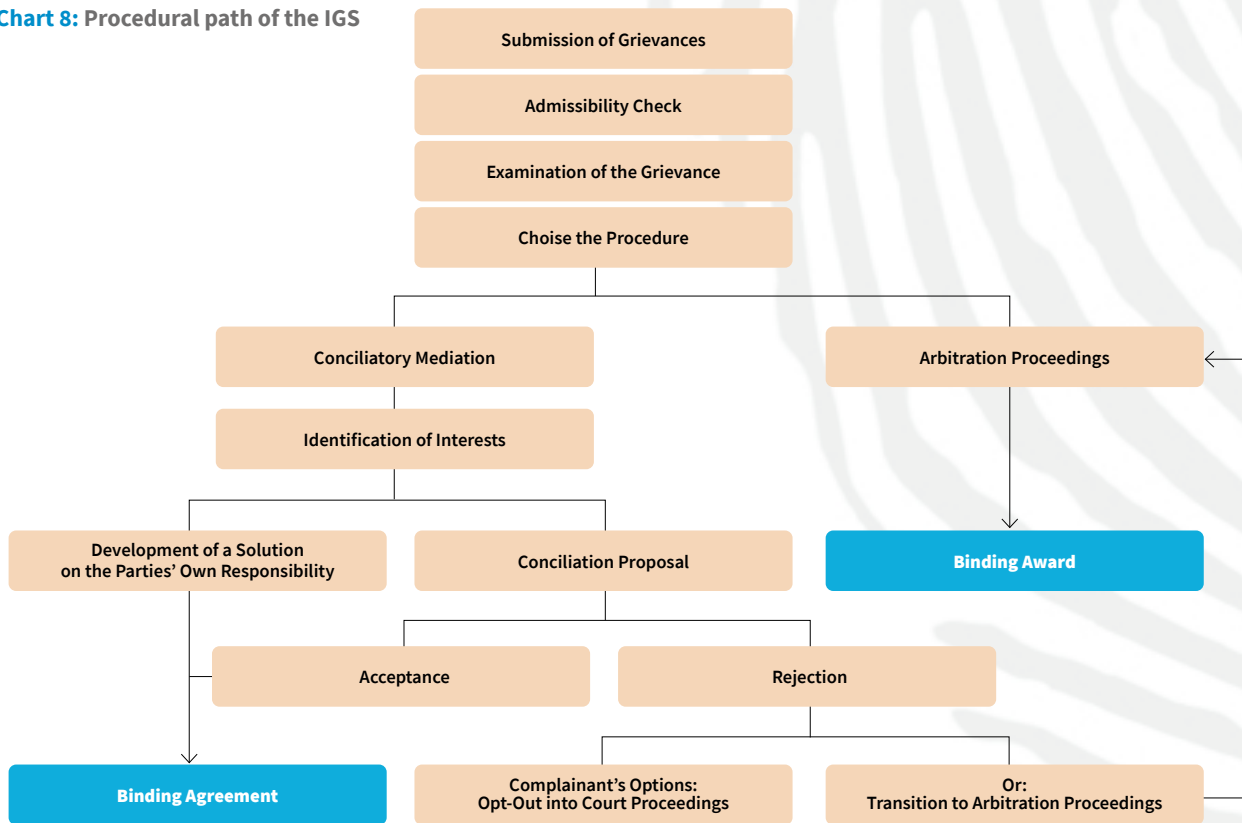
The conciliatory mediation starts out with exploring the parties' interests. From this an autonomous and individual solution can ideally be developed which

³⁵ Further information on ADR and its potential in the realm of business and human rights can be found in chapter 7 of the research report by Gläßer, Schmitz, Pfeiffer, Bond, September 2021.

³⁶ See exemplarily on the term of mediation Schonewille/Schonewille (eds.), *The variegated landscape of mediation*, 2014; Alexander, "Global Trends in Mediation", 2006.

³⁷ Steffek/Unberath/ et al. (eds.), "Regulating Dispute Resolution", 2014 called for a critical review of the terms and a functional, criteria-based description of ADR procedures.

Chart 8: Procedural path of the IGS



results in an agreement that is binding for both parties. Should it not be possible to individually find a solution, a conciliation can be started. The resulting conciliation recommendation can be accepted or rejected by the involved parties. If accepted, the conciliation recommendation becomes a binding agreement. Upon rejection the complainants can decide whether they want to enter state-based litigation or the IGS arbitration.³⁸

When designing this procedure, the following design categories are relevant: participants in the proceedings, submission of complaints, admissibility of grievances, criteria for case assessment, fact-finding, dealing with power asymmetries/imbbalances, consideration of the interests of particularly vulnerable victims, protection of parties to the proceedings, choice of procedure, qualification profiles for staff assisting in and managing the grievance procedure, place of proceedings, language of proceedings, duration of proceedings, procedural costs, transparency of the dispute resolution process, outcomes of proceedings, implementation of agreements/decisions.

→ DESIGN CATEGORIES

Participants in the proceedings

The requirements for who can submit or participate in a complaint shall be kept simple to ensure broad accessibility of the grievance mechanism.

Who can submit a complaint in track A

- workers when claiming a breach of or threat to their rights
- unions when claiming a breach of or threat to their collective rights through businesses (member companies or suppliers)
- affected third parties when claiming a breach of or threat to protected legal assets
- unions, NGOs, or associations in the name of affected people (and mandated by them or with their consent) when claiming a breach of or threat to individual legal assets or (the threat of) an impairment of protected environmental issues

Against whom can a complaint be filed on track A

- member companies of the governing organisation and their suppliers (connection between business activity and complaint cannot seem completely impossible)

Relevant rights arise from the respective countries' legal systems as well as the material standards of the governing organisation. For the grievance mechanism to also unfold a preventative effect, the threshold for assuming a possible threat should be low. Multiple complainants or respondents of a complaint can lead a complaint together if there is factual proximity and the complainants explicitly agree. Complainants can be represented in the procedure.

³⁸ Whether the participation in an arbitral procedure is voluntary or mandatory for members shall ideally be decided by the IGS members in a general decision, independently of an individual case.

Submission of complaints

Submitting a complaint must be made as easy as possible for the affected people. To this end, accessible communication channels are needed at the regional conflict contact point. The contact point supports on the procedural level, while remaining neutral, with

- consultations on the possibilities when using the IGS
- submitting a complaint
- consultation on other matters related to a complaint.

Use of different channels of communication:

- telephone
- email or messenger-service/app
- online-complaint-form
- fax
- postal
- in person directly at the conflict contact point or via trust persons/representatives

Complaints must be submittable in the complainants' own language, optionally in English. An anonymous submission of complaints must be possible for protection of the affected.

At the regional conflict contact point, case managers accept the complaints. They must be trained in dealing with vulnerable people. From the staff of the production sites and the surrounding communities, trust persons who are in touch with the conflict contact point shall be regularly elected.

Admissibility of grievances

The case managers decide about the admissibility and thus the handling of the complaint based on the admissibility criteria of the IGS.

The following criteria can be relevant:

- orderly raising of the complaint at the conflict contact point (in case of non-orderly raising: note by contact point and support in orderly raising of complaint)
- complainants' ability to take part in proceedings and permission to file a complaint

The complaint is evaluated based on the complainants' presentation. A rejection due to inadmissibility must be explained in writing. The complainants can first express themselves through a counter-statement and then file a complaint against the rejection.

Criteria for case assessment

Criteria for case assessment are the relevant rules of the respectively applicable legal system and the material standards developed by the IGS governing organisation. These criteria are especially relevant for conciliation and arbitration. However, they also serve as a control benchmark for an interest-oriented and rights-compatible solution.

Fact-finding

Finding the facts underlying a complaint follows the inquisitorial principle. This means that staff assisting in and managing the process proactively investigate the facts of the case. The factories and operations in the supply chain shall be contractually bound to support the investigation.

The first step is an initial investigation by the team of the regional conflict contact point. The investigating people can be in touch with the complainants, question other people and conduct further investigations on the ground. To enable the highest possible balancing out of power asymmetries, the investigation needs to be conducted by the neutral conflict contact point which must be equipped with the respective resources.

The conciliators and arbitrators can also question witnesses in the proceedings and mandate further investigations.

Dealing with power asymmetries/imbances

The structural and individual power asymmetries between the involved parties must be balanced to the best possible extent in the procedure. This makes the following measures necessary:

- freeing the complainants of direct costs for the procedure and reducing indirect costs
- making anonymous raising of complaints possible as well as raising of complaints through third parties in their own name
- procedural counselling and attending complainants before, during and after a grievance procedure through the regional conflict contact point
- conducting an investigation of the complaint on the ground through neutral staff of the IGS
- effective protection from the threat or use of violence against complainants and/or other participants in the proceedings before, during and after the grievance procedure
- control of the enforcement of agreed or decreed measures of remedy and prevention
- constant and targeted consideration of individual vulnerabilities of potential complainants

Consideration of the interests of particularly vulnerable victims

The grievance procedure generally and individually must be focused on the needs of specifically vulnerable groups of people. To this end, through involving and questioning affected groups of people, the IGS rules of procedure need to be oriented in such a way that specific grievance procedures can be flexibly adapted to the individual situation, capacity and needs of vulnerable people.

Examples:

Participants to the proceedings: Minors and people with mental, psychological and/or physical impairments or illnesses must be supported with the autonomous protection of their interests and be appropriately accompanied, supported and/or represented.

Submission of complaints: Channels for complaint must be accessible in the broadest sense. For example, they have to be accessible for illiterate people and people without internet access as well as people with hearing or sight impairments. Submitting a complaint orally in the own language must be possible.

Choice of procedure: When consulting on the choice of procedure, the case managers of the regional conflict contact point must consider factors of vulnerability and respective special needs and need for protection of the complainants.

Qualification profiles for staff assisting in and managing the grievance procedure: The staff must be trained in direct personal contact with traumatised people and be made aware of the needs of especially vulnerable groups of people through respective trainings, especially for gender specific needs.

Language of proceedings: The equal participation of complainants who, e.g. through illiteracy or impairment in sight/hearing, are restricted in participating in the procedure, must be ensured. This must be possible in their own language or in adequate ways of communication.

Procedural costs: Complainants must be completely freed from direct costs and freed from indirect costs as far as possible. Indirect costs can also be reduced by scheduling negotiations in working hours (without loss of wages). This way complainants who conduct care work when not working in employment (childcare, household work, care for relatives) can also participate.

Outcomes of proceedings: A special focus needs to be laid on the consideration of the specific needs of vulnerable people in the scope of the agreed or decreed measures.

Protection of parties to the proceedings

The protection of parties to the proceedings before, during and after the procedure is a central duty to ensure a wide and low-threshold usability of the grievance mechanism.

For this reason, it must be possible to file a complaint anonymously or retrospectively anonymising a complaint. Moreover, there needs to be the offer of free representation through an adviser so that the complainants can remain anonymous.

In an ongoing procedure there needs to be the possibility of accompanying complaints against intimidation or (threat of) reprisals. The arbitral tribunal can order immediately enforceable protective measures in cases of acute threats.

Should complainants be in danger, the recipients of the complaint can be sanctioned (e.g. by suspending business relations with the respective supplier or ending the membership in the covering organisation)..

Choice of procedure

The IGS offers two conflict management procedures to choose from: conciliatory mediation or arbitration (see also above).

The choice of procedure is made after the investigation of the factual situation on the ground by case managers in agreement with the complainants. The complainants' interests should be aligned with the characteristics of the respective procedure and the goal of effective remedy must be constantly kept in mind. Generally, conciliatory mediation is favoured, which complies with the criteria of the UNGP 31 and the OECD Guidelines, laying a focus on dialogue-based procedures.

Qualification profiles for staff assisting in and managing the grievance procedure

Assisting in the procedure: The staff of the conflict contact points accompanies complaints and consults complainants.

Requirements:

- regional language knowledge
- familiarity with cultural specifics
- relevant legal knowledge
- solid knowledge of the procedural alternatives
- sensitivity for the needs of vulnerable groups and the interaction of various factors of discrimination

Managing the procedure: Conciliatory mediators or arbitrators lead the procedure as neutral third persons.

Requirements:

Conciliatory mediators

- deeper knowledge of facilitation of dialogue oriented on interests and understanding and leading structured negotiation
- mediation training
- further training in the hybrid procedure of conciliatory mediation
- substantiated knowledge of the respective law and the material standards of the IGS governing organisation

- practical skills for the development of effective remedy and prevention measures
- advanced training in application of the criteria for case assessment and the IGS (arbitration/ conciliation) rules of procedure
- ensuring effective protection of vulnerable parties (balancing of power asymmetries)
- cultural sensitivity
- neutral/omnipartial approach

Arbitrators

- legal training/knowledge, human rights expertise
- deeper knowledge of material standards of the IGS governing organisation
- advanced training in application of the criteria for case assessment and the IGS (arbitration/ conciliation) rules of procedure
- methodological knowledge of structured procedural leadership
- practical skills for the development of effective remedy and prevention measures – for deciding upon binding arbitral awards
- ensuring effective protection of vulnerable parties (balancing of power asymmetries)
- cultural sensitivity
- neutral approach

Note:

The search for appropriately qualified staff can be challenging. Therefore, respective trainings should be invested in for the future.

In addition to the individual qualifications of the procedural staff, ongoing measures to ensure neutrality and independence should be implemented. Trainings on neutrality and regular case supervisions or collegial consultation are recommended.

Place of proceedings

Conciliatory mediation: Conciliatory mediation should generally be conducted locally in the factory or the community of the complainants. For this end, conciliatory mediators must be regionally available or sent on a case-by-case basis. Appropriate premises should be rented by the IGS if this is necessary for offering a neutral place or for protection of the involved people.

Arbitration: This procedure takes place at the designated place of arbitration. For the general choice of the place of arbitration through the IGS the arbitrability of conflicts in the realm of business and human rights must be considered. The place of arbitration should be included in the IGS arbitration clause. The regional conflict contact point supports the complainants if they have to travel further away.

Language of proceedings

The participation in the procedure must be possible for complainants in their own language. To this end, either the conflict assistants must speak the language of the involved parties or interpreters need to be hired. All relevant documents must be translated into the

complainants' language. Additional measures have to be taken if there are linguistic barriers (e.g. illiteracy). The language requirements also apply to steps before and after the procedure (e.g. submitting a complaint).

Duration of proceedings

The procedure should be as quick as possible to ensure effective remedy. Furthermore, highest possible transparency on the expected length of the proceeding should be given so the complainants know what to expect.

To this end the IGS should publish general time frames for individual steps of the proceeding, including a regular minimum and maximum time, and control their enforcement. This way, excessively long proceedings can be avoided and effective remedy ensured.

Procedural costs

The complainants must be freed from direct and indirect costs as far as possible. This means the IGS bears the procedural costs; especially the following costs shall be paid by the IGS:

- costs for receiving the complaint
- costs for mandating staff managing and assisting in the procedure
- costs of investigating the case
- travel expenses to an appropriate extent
- possibly compensation for loss of wages and costs of childcare

Transparency of the dispute resolution process

The process should be held under highest possible transparency. The participants must know what to expect at which step and why certain decisions are made. Moreover, they must know the relevant facts and circumstances of the case. This transparency should be established through active supply of information which is understandable for the complainants.

Restrictions on transparency are possible for the protection of participants and legitimate interests of third parties (e.g. on personal data).

Outcomes of proceedings

The result of conciliatory mediation is a binding final agreement or an accepted conciliation recommendation with an individually developed remedy and prevention plan of the parties. This should contain specific deadlines and step-by-step plans for implementation and enforcement of the results. The arbitration results in a binding arbitral award including the terms for implementing and enforcing (possibly step-by-step) respective measures of remedy and prevention within specific deadlines.

Types of remedy can be:

- **material restitution and compensation**
- **implementation of future-oriented and preventative measures**
- **non-material types of remediation (asking for forgiveness or measures for rehabilitation of stigmatised people)**

Implementation of agreements/decisions

The regional IGS conflict contact point regularly controls the timely implementation of procedural results under consultation of the affected people. When it comes to implementation and checking of results, there need to be consultation offers for the affected people. The member companies shall, e.g. through pressure on their suppliers, actively contribute to the implementation. For the member companies there are further incentives through public reporting of the grievance mechanism (see below).

DEVELOPMENT OF A LEARNING SYSTEM

Meaning of the learning system

It is important to design the IGS as a learning system on various levels so that it improves itself and at the same time improves the context in which it is placed. The grievance mechanism shall not only provide effective remedy but also supplement the risk analysis and encourage change. This needs systematic feedback routines and a detailed, regular reporting system to check effectivity and identify needs for improvement.

A grievance mechanism shall not only provide effective remedy when rights violations have taken place. It shall also serve as a preventative warning system and contribute to improving the living and working conditions at the places of production in general.

A grievance system also needs to be able to adapt to changing local surroundings. To this end, a grievance mechanism must continuously evolve in its functionality to better recognise possible problems and provide adequate and effective remedy. The mechanism must learn as a system from its daily operations and at the same time initiate learning processes in the contexts where it is situated.

Therefore, the IGS should be a learning system on three levels:

Learning processes within the Integrative Grievance System

- A)** The grievance system must continuously be improved, which comes with noticeable efficiency gains in operation and user satisfaction.

Learning processes in the spheres of the affected people

- B)** Through analysing problematic areas and respectively adding to the risk analysis, the grievance system can contribute to an improvement of local living and working conditions.

Learning processes in societies of home and guest countries

- C)** The grievance system should send targeted learning impulses into the political and societal spheres of home and guest countries.

There are different possibilities to systematically gather data and relevant information on the different levels. Focused feedback routines through systematic and continuous surveying of users and staff are crucial. Additionally, general surveys of potential users about prominence, accessibility and functionality of the mechanism should be conducted and the possibility to give feedback on one's own incentive should be created.

At the same time, data from the IGS should be evaluated in a consolidated manner. The documentation and critical analysis of reasons for complaint, courses of procedures, outcomes of procedures and the implementation of the outcomes provides for an important data basis on the development of the grievance mechanism.

Manner of gathering feedback

Feedback should be gathered with cultural sensitivity. The accessibility of feedback formats for complainants must be ensured. Feedback capacities can be strengthened in capacity building programmes, for example by training trust people.

The following options to gather feedback are possible:

- gathering feedback twice: directly after the procedure and with some distance to the implementation of the results
- quantitative questionnaires with spaces for individual text: digital or analogue questionnaires, ensuring the accessibility for people with impairments (no internet access, impaired sight or hearing, illiteracy)
- regular questioning of the IGS staff on functionality, possibilities for improvement or need for training

Feedback should be gathered by trust persons and neutral and qualified staff of the regional conflict contact point.

The following topics can be subject of the feedback:

- satisfaction with the IGS itself
- perception of the mechanism's effectiveness
- satisfaction with the outcome and the procedure
- feedback on staff managing and assisting in the grievance procedure

To retain the motivation to give feedback, it is of utmost importance that noticeable change is felt by the affected people resulting from the feedback.

Reporting System

The feedback gathered and the analysis of IGS data must be structured and published regularly in understandable and accessible reports which contain central learnings and conclusions from the feedback. On the one hand there should be an internal reporting to the members and the governing organisation for self-control and comparison with other grievance mechanisms. This reporting can be more detailed and technical than may be appropriate for external reporting

to the public. An external reporting to the public serves the legal and societal accountability.³⁹ There is greater need for anonymisation of cases and comprehensibility for people who are not familiar with the functioning of the IGS. Also the people giving feedback must be able to understand the reports if interested.

Possible conclusions from the analysis of the feedback are:

- frequent problems and thus heightened areas of risk in production
- information for the risk analysis and implementation of due diligence issues in society such as gaps in labour law, missing control and enforcement of human rights standards

IV. STEPS INTO PRACTICE: STARTING POINTS, CHALLENGES AND NEED FOR DISCUSSION

The practical implementation of these recommendations will come with a lot of need for discussion on the details. Unanswered questions and challenges will appear which have to be answered in exchange with various stakeholder groups without overly hindering the process of establishing grievance mechanisms. Some of these points will be discussed here, without this claiming to be a complete list.

Benefits of effective grievance mechanisms for businesses

- adherence to human rights due diligence; fulfilment of legal requirements (e.g. the LkSG)
- data basis for risk analysis; better understanding problems in supply chains
- possibility to provide for focused remedy

The sector-specific adjustment will pose various challenges for the designers of a grievance system because supply chain structures, local production conditions and risk factors can be very different between sectors and places of production. A detailed analysis of the contextual situation and especially the effective cooperation with local organisations and affected people is necessary to understand the practical requirements for the establishment of an effective grievance mechanism.

At the same time the aspiration should not be to establish an ideal mechanism right at the outset since this would majorly delay the practical start or even make it impossible. Much rather a constantly learning system should be built into the structure of the grievance system (see section III on the learning system). Many problems can only be identified during practical operation of the mechanism.

The practical challenges and experiences in the establishment should be shared and discussed with the operators of different mechanisms. This can facilitate

common learning and learning from each other, moreover, already developed solutions can be used and improved.

Ideally, cooperation between different initiatives and organisations is encouraged so that individual actions can be effectively bundled, and an overlap of remedy offers and dealing with complaints is avoided in factories from which multiple brands source. The cooperation of different MSI and individual member companies improves the possibility to secure existing legal claims for affected workers and communities. Furthermore, improved cooperation between initiatives and businesses contributes to an improved risk analysis by the businesses. This way the risks in the countries of production can be minimised and fewer complaints arise.

In the following, a few questions on the four design levels of the IGS are posed which should serve as a basis for further discussion and be constantly added to.

INSTITUTIONALISATION

- 1 How can different types of remedy (state-based/non-state-based and judicial/non-judicial) be connected to establish a complementary system of remedy and use synergies sensibly?
- 2 Who can be member of a grievance mechanism?
- 3 Is membership open for different stakeholder groups (businesses, unions, NGOs, and other organisations)?
- 4 Which legal personality does the governing organisation of the grievance mechanism have or to which organisation with legal personality is the operation of grievance procedures delegated?
- 5 How is the grievance mechanism funded?
- 6 How can potentially affected people and vulnerable groups be systematically included in the design of the grievance mechanism?

³⁹ This differentiation of reporting can also be found in § 34 of the German Act on Alternative Dispute Resolution in Consumer Matters.

LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

- 1 How can suppliers and other partner companies in the supply chain as well as rights holders/affected people and their representing organisations be structurally included in the implementation of a grievance mechanism?
- 2 How can the IGS be made known and the use by affected people be promoted?
- 3 How can obstacles to use be effectively removed?
- 4 How can lower tiers of the supply chain be reached?
- 5 How can the grievance mechanism be effectively interlinked with other human rights mechanisms such as capacity building, social dialogue, and social auditing?

PROCEDURAL DESIGN

- 1 How can highest possible accessibility be ensured?
- 2 Which measures contribute to a best possible balancing of power imbalances?
- 3 How can vulnerability be adequately considered in the grievance procedure?
- 4 How must a grievance process deal with vulnerability?

- 5 How much qualified process managing staff is locally available?
- 6 How can staff be qualified through training?

DEVELOPMENT OF A LEARNING SYSTEM

- 1 How can effective feedback routines be established and their effects made tangible for the affected people?
- 2 How is the effect monitoring designed (e.g. worker-based monitoring, tracing in the supply chain)?
- 3 How is a differentiated internal and public reporting system designed in detail?
- 4 Where and how often are reports published?
- 5 How are the reporting results discussed?
- 6 On which platform and through which cooperation can intensive exchange between different grievance mechanisms on learnings and challenges take place?
- 7 How can common learning of different systems lead to higher effectivity for all systems concerning verification, mediation, and recommendations for remedy?
- 8 How can common learning of different systems create synergies for an effective system back up?

V. REFERENCE TO THE RESEARCH REPORT AND FURTHER RESOURCES

The full research report by Gläßer, Ulla/Schmitz, Dominik/ Pfeiffer, Robert/ Bond, Helene **“Außergerichtliche Beschwerdemechanismen entlang globaler Lieferketten – Empfehlungen für die Institutionalisierung, Implementierung und Verfahrensausgestaltung”** September 2021 can be accessed under the following link: https://www.bmj.de/DE/Themen/Menschenrechte/Wirtschaft_und_Menschenrechte/Forschungsbericht_Aussergerichtliche_Beschwerdemechanismen.html?nn=16632802
An English version of the executive summary is accessible at: https://www.bmj.de/DE/Themen/Menschenrechte/Wirtschaft_und_Menschenrechte/Executive_Summary_engl_Non-judicial_Grievance_Mechanisms.html?nn=16632802

The UN Global Compact Network Germany has developed a guidance for businesses to implement a human rights grievance management with the title:

“Zuhören lohnt sich – Menschenrechtliches Beschwerdemanagement verstehen und umsetzen”. It can be accessed under following link: https://www.globalcompact.de/migrated_files/wAssets/docs/Menschenrechte/Publikationen/DGCN_GM-Leitfaden_20181005_WEB_Ringbuch.pdf

The Partnership for Sustainable Textiles has published an informative paper for businesses with the title **“Zugang zu Abhilfe und Beschwerdemechanismen sichern und fördern – Sorgfaltspflichten verstehen und umsetzen”**. It can be accessed under following link: <https://www.textilbuendnis.com/download/infopapier-beschwerde-und-abhilfemechanismen-2018/>

The Fair Wear Foundation has published a brochure on its grievance system titled **“Fair Wear Complaints procedure”**. It can be accessed under following link: <https://api.fairwear.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Fair-Wear-Complaints-procedure-V2.0.pdf>

The organisations of the partnerships Change Your Shoes and Together for Decent Leather have written various reports that document the social and ecological risks in shoe and leather production. Specifically, these are the following:

Focus Country, Year of Publication	English Title	German Title	Downloadlinks
Indien (Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu), 2021	“Shoe and Leather workers during Covid-19 Recession, How to Reverse the Impoverishment of Workers in the Shoe and Leather Sector in the light of the Covid-19 Recession” (3 pages)		https://webshop.inkota.de/node/1637
Indien (Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu), 2021	Based on the English studies available at https://webshop.inkota.de/node/1639 https://webshop.inkota.de/node/1640	Study “Wenn aus zu wenig fast nichts wird - Erhebung über die Auswirkungen der Covid-19-Pandemie auf indische Arbeiter*innen der Schuh- und Lederherstellung” (24 pages) and summarising factsheet (6 pages)	https://webshop.inkota.de/node/1632 https://webshop.inkota.de/node/1633
Türkei, 2021	Study “Valuable as Leather?” (74 pages)	Factsheet “So wertvoll wie Leder?” (6 pages)	https://www.suedwind-institut.de/files/Suedwind/Publikationen/2021/2021-21%20Valuable%20as%20leather_Being%20a%20leather%20industry%20worker%20and%20producer%20in%20Turkey.pdf https://www.suedwind-institut.de/files/Suedwind/Publikationen/2021/2021-21%20Factsheet%20Leder%20T%C3%BCrkei_fin.pdf
Bangladesch, Indien, Pakistan, 2021	Studies “Trends in production and trade: Leather products from Bangladesh/India/Pakistan”		https://togetherfordecentleather.org/publications/
Indien (Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu), 2017	Study “Watch Your Step” (36 pages) and summarising factsheet “Watch Your Step” (4 pages)	Study “Zeigt her Eure Schuhe! Soziale und ökologische Auswirkungen von Gerbereien in Uttar Pradesh und Tamil Nadu in Indien” (36 pages) and summarising factsheet (4 pages)	https://webshop.inkota.de/node/1521 https://webshop.inkota.de/node/1522 https://webshop.inkota.de/node/1523 https://webshop.inkota.de/node/1524
Indonesien, 2017		Study “Zwei Paar Schuhe – Indonesische Lederschuhproduktion und Arbeitsrechte” and summarising factsheet (4 pages)	https://webshop.inkota.de/produkt/download-studie/studie-zwei-paar-schuhe-indonesische-lederschuhproduktion-und-arbeitsrechte https://webshop.inkota.de/produkt/download-factsheet/factsheet-zwei-paar-schuhe-indonesische-lederschuhproduktion-und
Italien, 2016	Study “A tough story of leather – a journey into the tanning industry via the Santa Croce District” (49 pages)		https://webshop.inkota.de/produkt/download-studie/studie-tough-story-leather-journey-tanning-industry-santa-croce-district
Indien, 2016		Study “Auf der Stelle getreten – Arbeitsrechtsverletzungen in der indischen Schuh- und Lederindustrie” (40 Seiten) and summarising factsheet (4 Seiten)	https://webshop.inkota.de/produkt/download-studie/studie-auf-der-stelle-getreten-arbeitsrechtsverletzungen-der-indischen-schuh https://webshop.inkota.de/produkt/download-factsheet/factsheet-auf-der-stelle-getreten-arbeitsrechtsverletzungen-der-indischen
Osteuropa (Albanien, Bosnien-Herzegovina, Mazedonien, Polen, Rumänien, Slowakei), 2016	Study “Labour on a shoe string” (32 pages)	Factsheet “Harte Arbeit für wenig Geld” (6 pages)	https://webshop.inkota.de/produkt/download-studie/studie-labour-shoestring https://webshop.inkota.de/produkt/download-factsheet/factsheet-harte-arbeit-fuer-wenig-geld
China, 2016		Study “So wird ein Schuh draus. Arbeitsbedingungen in der chinesischen Schuhindustrie” (40 pages) and summarising factsheet (4 pages)	https://webshop.inkota.de/produkt/download-studie/studie-so-wird-ein-schuh-draus https://webshop.inkota.de/produkt/download-factsheet/factsheet-so-wird-ein-schuh-draus

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Comments, feedback and further thoughts on the research results are welcome by mail to ADR@europa-uni.de

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The INKOTA-network is a developmental organisation that aims to defeat hunger, combat poverty and make globalization work for everyone through political campaigns and in cooperation with partner organisations in the global south. INKOTA strengthens people in the global south so they can autonomously free themselves from hunger and poverty. For this reason, human rights business responsibility is a central topic for us. We are active in the Clean Clothes Campaign as well as the international partnerships Change Your Shoes and Together for Decent Leather. We also contribute our long-standing expertise to the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles (steering committee) and the Fair Wear Foundation.