

LOCAL ADJUDICATION FRAMEWORK ACROSS EUROPE

At the initial stage of a grievance redressal process, an Ombudsman shall be available as “a first point of contact” for devotees. The Ombudsman will listen impartially, provide a safe and confidential space to express concerns, and guide devotees on the available pathways for resolution. Priority will be given to mediation, counseling, or facilitated dialogue to resolve conflicts with minimal procedures and promote reconciliation wherever possible. If these efforts do not lead to resolution, the aggrieved can choose to take the matter to the local adjudication panel or, in cases requiring specialized or higher-level review, to the appropriate ISKCON agency as outlined in this system. By offering devotees a choice of options—ranging from informal mediation to formal adjudication—the Ombudsman ensures accessibility, fairness, and compassionate handling of grievances.

Purpose: To establish a fair, transparent, and consistent process for resolving disputes, allegations, and disciplinary matters at “ISKCON temples, centres and projects in alignment with ISKCON’s Fair Process and global governance.

Scope: Applicable to all local ISKCON temples, centres, projects, leaders, committees, and devotees.

Approval: Euro Regional Governing Body

1. Preamble

This document provides a structured framework for adjudication at ISKCON temples in Europe. It ensures:

- Adherence to **ISKCON’s Fair Process**
 - Respect for **GBC-established agencies** (Child Protection Oversight Committee, Leadership Conduct Office International, Sannyasa Ministry, Guru Services Committee etc.)
 - Transparency, accountability, and protection of devotee rights
 - Clear documentation and appeal mechanisms
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2. Delegation and Jurisdiction

Where applicable, if the aggrieved party has sought assistance from an Ombudsman and/or attempted resolution through mediation, counseling, or facilitated dialogue without success, all

allegations must be submitted in writing to the immediate local authority for necessary action, adjudication, or escalation. The written complaint shall then be forwarded to the appropriate body responsible for conduct, service-related, financial, or doctrinal matters, or, where relevant, escalated to the designated ISKCON Agencies:

- **Child abuse / risk to minors** → Child Protection Oversight Committee
- **Sexual misconduct by leaders** → Leadership Conduct Office International
- **Sannyasi misconduct** → Sannyasa Ministry
- **Guru misconduct** → Guru Services Committee

Concurrent Jurisdiction: If multiple agencies are involved, all relevant agencies have authority and shall collaborate.

3. Categories of Adjudication *subject to* unsuccessful attempted resolution or rectification through mediation, counseling, or facilitated dialogue, where applicable:

Category	Description	Handling
Severe Offenses	Financial irregularities, child abuse, sexual misconduct by an ISKCON leader, spiritual deviation, breaking vows	Referred to Child Protection Oversight Committee, Leadership Conduct Office International, Sannyasa Ministry, or Guru Services Committee
Moderate Offenses	Service disputes, misrepresentation/miscommunication	Adjudication Panel with Fair Process safeguards
Minor Issues	Interpersonal conflicts, etiquette breaches, minor ethical breaches	Mediation or counseling

4. Fair Process Principles

All adjudications must adhere to ISKCON’s **Definition of Fair Process:**

1. **Notice:** Accused informed of charges, relevant rules, accuser identity (if appropriate), and consequences.
2. **Timeliness:** All steps conducted promptly.
3. **Opportunity to Respond:** Right to present evidence, question evidence and respond to concerns.
4. **Impartiality:** Fair, unbiased fact-finding hearings.
5. **Reasonable Decision:** Decisions must not be arbitrary or unreasonable.

6. **Written Decision:** Parties receive a written decision with reasons.
 7. **Right to Appeal:** Parties may request an appeal (*see details below*).
 8. **Privacy:** Confidentiality maintained as far as possible.
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5. Adjudication Procedure when applicable:

1. **Filing Allegation:** Written submission with supporting evidence.
 2. **Response:** Respondent reviews allegations and submits written response.
 3. **Panel Selection:**
 - Each party nominates one adjudicator from a list of trained adjudicators.
 - The two adjudicators select a third adjudicator.
 - Form the **Adjudication Panel**.
 4. **Evidence Review:** Panel reviews all evidence objectively.
 5. **Decision-Making:** Unanimous vote.
 6. **Written Decision:** Document allegations, responses, evidence, application of Fair Process, reasoning, and final outcome (*see, Justice Ministry model of decision writing*).
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6. Documentation Standards

- Case File includes:
 - Allegations and responses
 - Evidence presented
 - Names of adjudicators
 - Notes on the process
 - Written decision with reasoning
 - Secure storage for confidentiality
 - Accessible for appeals or higher authority review
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7. Appeal Mechanism

- Affected devotees may appeal.
- **Levels of Appeal:**
 1. Regional Council / Zonal Supervisor

2. Intake Officers approved by the Euro RGB¹
- **Grounds for Appeal:** Misapplication of Fair Process, new evidence, or disproportionate penalty
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Appeal Process Flow:

1. **Local Adjudication Decision** – Affected devotee receives the written decision of the local adjudication panel.
 2. **First Level Appeal** – If dissatisfied, the devotee may submit an appeal to the **Regional Council or Zonal Supervisor**. This level reviews whether the local process adhered to ISKCON’s Fair Process and considers the merits of the appeal.
 3. **Second Level Appeal (Intake Officer Review)** – If the devotee remains unsatisfied, the matter is referred to **Intake Officers approved by the Euro RGB**.
 - Intake Officers examine whether the grounds for appeal are valid (misapplication of Fair Process, emergence of new evidence, or disproportionate penalty).
 - If valid, the Intake Officer forwards the case to the appropriate higher adjudicatory body – depending on the nature of the case and while ensuring that the Justice Minister remains briefed about the delegation.
 - If not valid, the devotee is notified with reasons in writing.
 4. **Final Review** – Once cleared by the Intake Officer, the appeal is handled by the relevant and designated ISKCON authority or agency for a final decision.
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8. Implementation Guidelines

- Leaders and committees trained in Fair Process and ISKCON Justice Ministry protocols.
- Severe cases immediately referred to the relevant forum.
- Local adjudication operates independently unless guidelines require GBC involvement.
- Maintain confidentiality and impartiality throughout.

- **Step 1:** Allegation submitted (if the aggrieved party, where possible, has sought assistance from an Ombudsman and/or attempted resolution through mediation, counseling, or facilitated dialogue without success) → Relevant Authority
- **Step 2:** Determine severity → Severe?

¹ Intake Officer – Provided by ISKCON Resolve: The Intake Officer receives and logs complaints, assesses jurisdiction and procedural compliance, and redirects cases as needed. They communicate with submitting parties, clarify information, and screen for conflicts of interest, ensuring a smooth process. The officer coordinates between parties and forums, maintaining follow-up as necessary.

Yes: Refer to Child Protection Oversight Committee/ Leadership Conduct Office International / Sannyasa Ministry / Guru Services Committee

No: Take appropriate measure of mediation or counselling, or where applicable, form adjudication panel

- **Step 3:** Evidence reviewed → Fair Process applied → Panel decision → Written judgment
- **Step 4:** Option to appeal → Regional Council → Intake Officer

APPENDIX 1

I. COMPLAINT SUBMISSION PROCESS

- One of the first points of contact - Ombudsman: A devotee who wishes to raise a concern contacts the regional Ombudsman.
- Attempt Informal Resolution - if the informal approach succeeds, the case is closed with a brief summary note filed for record-keeping.
- Formal Written Complaint - give a concise description of the incident, including dates, times, locations, all parties (complainant, respondent, witnesses), the specific rule or policy breached, and attach supporting evidence. Confirm that informal resolution was attempted (or explain why it was not feasible).
- Review of written complaint - the local authority logs complaints: severe cases → relevant ISKCON agency, moderate → Local Adjudication Panel, minor → Ombudsman for mediation; multiple agencies share jurisdiction and coordinate.
- Appeal mechanism - if either party is dissatisfied, they may appeal first to the Temple President, then to Regional Council/Zonal Supervisor, then to an Intake Officer approved by the Euro RGB, and finally to the designated higher ISKCON authority for a final review.
- Appeals must be based on misapplication of Fair Process, new evidence, or disproportionate penalty.

II. NATURE OF GRIEVANCES

- **Severe cases** - such cases include financial irregularities, child abuse, sexual misconduct by an ISKCON leader, spiritual deviation. These grievances shall be referred to the Child Protection Oversight Committee, Leadership Conduct Office International, Sannyasa Ministry, Guru Services Committee or JMEC (which has authority over managerial decision appeals. Thus, if the local adjudication process is unsuccessful, managerial decision appeals may be directed to the JMEC)
- **Moderate cases** - such cases include service disputes, minor ethical breaches, misrepresentation/miscommunication. These grievances shall be referred to the local Adjudication Panel with Fair Process safeguards.
- **Minor Issues** - such cases include minor interpersonal conflicts. These grievances shall be referred to for mediation under ISKCON Resolve for example.

Grievance	Escalation	Conditions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serious allegations, such as child abuse, financial irregularities, or imminent harm. • Spiritual abuse, exploitation or manipulation of individuals for spiritual or emotional gain. • Adverse actions taken against someone who reported a complaint or participated in an investigation. • Severe breaches of ISKCON’s policies or laws. • Misconduct: Violations of ISKCON’s policies, codes of conduct, or laws, including financial irregularities or abuse of power. 	<p>Directly to the relevant ISKCON agency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Protection Oversight Committee • Leadership Conduct Office • Sannyasa Ministry • Guru Services Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embezzlement, theft, or mismanagement of funds and unauthorized use of temple funds or facilities. • Making unwanted advances or creating a hostile environment for a devotee. • Threats of physical harm or violence, allegations of child abuse and any allegation of physical harm, sexual assault, or imminent danger to a minor or vulnerable adult. • Complaints involving senior leaders, temple authority, etc. • Cases that may attract media attention or impact ISKCON’s reputation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflicts including service disputes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Ombudsman receives the complaint and offers information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Related to conduct, service or interpersonal issues that arise within an ISKCON

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objection to any senior devotee’s engagement or involvement with spiritual organizations outside ISKCON, as a representative of ISKCON. • Discrimination: Unfair treatment based on caste, creed, gender, disability. • Ethical breaches: Violations of ISKCON’s values, regulative principles, or codes of ethics. • Adverse action taken against someone who raised a concern, such as exclusion from activities or smears on their character. • Any senior leader’s misinterpretation of sastras, or deviation from the sastric interpretations, as given by Srila Prabhupada. • Inappropriate language/action against ISKCON - in person or on social media. 	<p>on the resolution of the issue through mediation or facilitated dialogue.</p>	<p>temple, centre or project in Europe.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unauthorized access, disclosure, or misuse of sensitive information. • Repeated incidents or a pattern of misconduct.
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service dispute: Minor ethical breaches, misrepresentation/miscommunication. • Conflicts or power struggles among temple leaders. • Harassment or bullying: Physical, verbal, or emotional abuse, including online harassment. • 	<p>Immediate local authority.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal resolution fails: Mediation, counselling, or facilitated dialogue doesn't resolve the issue. • New information emerges that may impact the decision or outcome. • Any leader using their position to demand personal services, manipulate beliefs, or coerce donations. • Respondent refuses to participate in the process or cooperate with investigations.
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- All complaints must be in writing after the informal stage.
- Fair Process (notice, timeliness, right to respond, impartiality, reasoned decision, written outcome, right to appeal, privacy) applies at every step.
- Concurrent jurisdiction: if more than one agency is relevant, they cooperate and share authority.
- Documentation (allegations, responses, evidence, adjudicators' names, decisions) is kept securely and made available for any appeal or higher-level review.