



FLOCERT
assuring fairness

Complaints Statistics 2020

**Credibility Assurance,
January 2021**

Definitions

The present Annual Complaints Statistics provide an overview on requests handled by the Credibility Assurance Unit at FLOCERT in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on Appeals, Reviews, Allegations and Complaints. It includes all submitted and closed cases from 1st of January until 31st of December 2020

What types of complaints does the Credibility Assurance Unit deal with?

Allegation: a statement of assertion or assertions by a third party against a customer holding a Fairtrade certificate or being in the process of applying for a certificate (applicant) claiming that this customer is non-compliant with applicable Fairtrade Standards, or is in breach of policies or other contractual obligations with FLOCERT.

Appeal: An official request by the customer to revoke or reverse a Certification Decision, such as decertification or suspension. In the case of EDGE customers wanting to challenge the audit findings, the appeals procedure would apply.

Review: An official request by the customer to review an Evaluation Decision such as: review of non conformities, corrective measures or objective evidence.

Complaint: related to the manner in which FLOCERT provides services, including but not limited to: failure to respond to certification relevant correspondence within a reasonable amount of time, unprofessional behaviour by a FLOCERT staff or auditor.

For more details please consult the Standard Operating Procedures, which are published on FLOCERT website:
<https://www.flocert.net/about-flocert/vision-values/quality-and-appeals/>

Summary

For FLOCERT's Credibility Assurance Unit, 2020 was a year where due to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, risk mitigation was the focus.

Allegations have increased significantly compared to previous years. This is a welcome development as it shows confidence from stakeholders, that their concerns would be investigated diligently and confidentially.

The Allegations process in 2020 has been additionally supported by increased accessibility through measures like the Fairtrace Confidential Allegations, the WhatsApp Allegation channel & constant encouragement to customers, stakeholders and third parties to flag non-compliances to FLOCERT's Credibility Assurance Unit wherever and whenever noticed.

An additional aim of the WhatsApp Allegations Channel was to receive direct inputs from farmers and workers on the compliance situation of a certified organisation. It is even more important to have "eyes in fields" as it was mostly not possible for FLOCERT to conduct onsite audits during the pandemic.

Furthermore, the switch to Remote Audits in March 2020, augmented by Remote Unannounced Investigations which was kicked off in Q2 2020, ensured that all allegations were investigated robustly. The processing times as a result, showed only a slight increase from 4,5 months to 5 months in 2020 compared to the previous year, despite the COVID-19 disruption. These results clearly show the efficiency of the new methodologies.

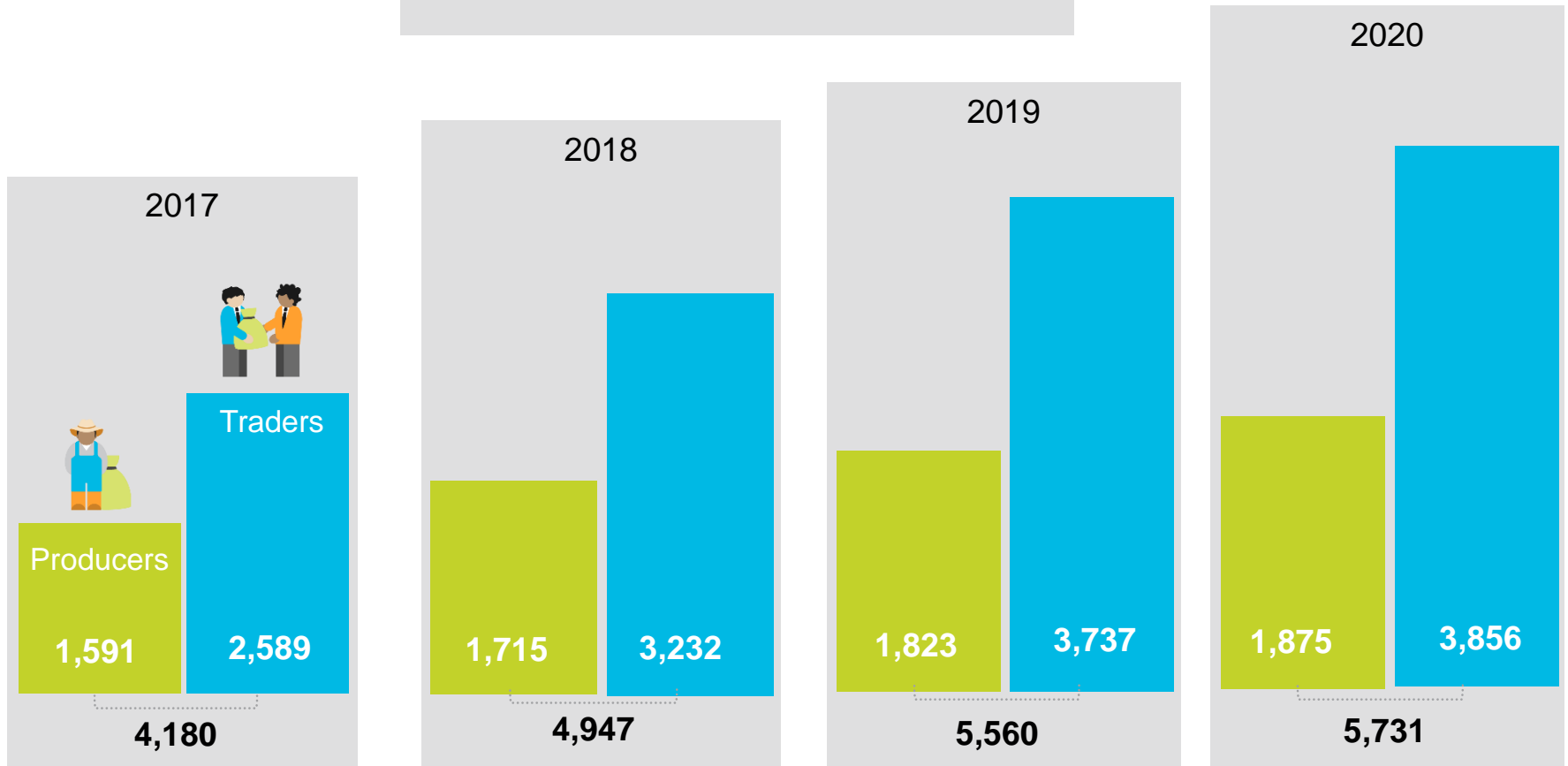
Banana and coffee remained the main targets of allegations, but with a significant increase for bananas (19 in 2019 vs 45 in 2020).

Appeals and **Reviews** decreased slightly from 1,1% to 0,9% compared to the number of audits conducted.


Complaints increased slightly from 0,8% to 0,9% compared to the number of customers with auditor performance remaining one of the major topics complemented by financial issues such as the certification fee and financial sanctions. The latter being possibly related to the world-wide economic situation.

Number of certified organisations

+37%!! Increase in total number of customers since 2017



Four-year overview

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Allegations	40	40	80	110
Appeals	7	7	23	18
Reviews	6	7	14	9
Complaints	19	42	38	47
	4,180	4,947	5,560	5,731

2020 – Status overview

Total	Accepted	Closed	Open	Rejected or stalled	Decision reconfirmed	Decision overturned	
Allegations	110	92	74	40	18	N/A	N/A
Appeals	18	12	12	0	6	8	4
Reviews	9	5	5	0	4	4	1
Complaints	47	46	46	0	1	N/A	N/A



5,731

Allegations:

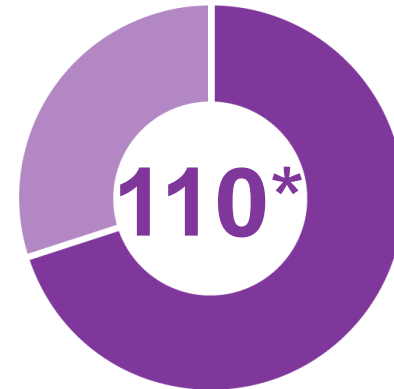
Traders

30



Producers

80



* Total number of allegations by service



The number of allegations increased almost 3x since 2017



Latin America

63



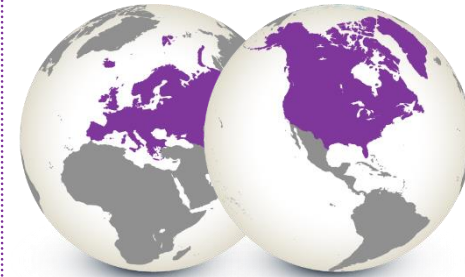
Asia

11



Africa

25

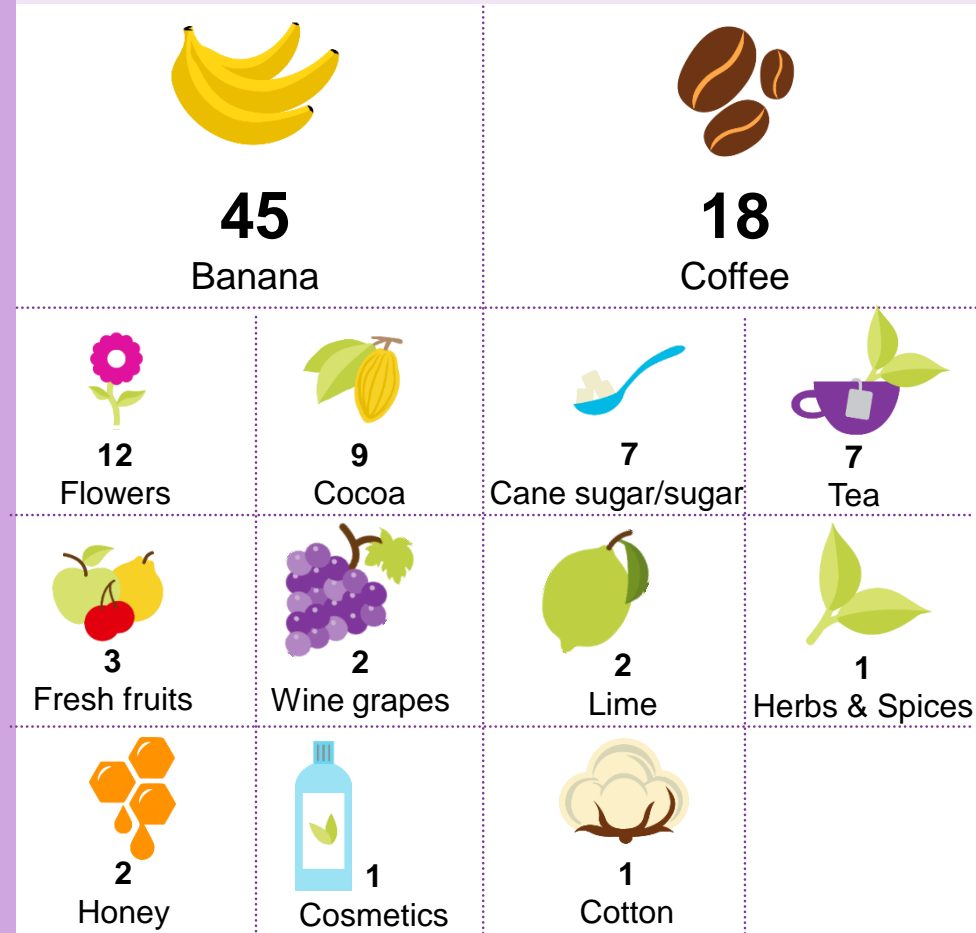


Europe & North America

11

Top 3 topics

- Lack of democracy
- Non-member business
- Misuse of Fairtrade Premium



Investigated allegations:

The method of investigation was usually a focused or an unannounced audit. **36,5% of allegations** were **partially substantiated**, **27%** were **substantiated** whereas **31%** were **not substantiated**. **5,5%** were **not investigated**, mainly because the customer was not certified anymore, or the region could not be visited.

Investigative method

Unannounced + remote unannounced audits

14 + 23

Focused + remote focused audit

11 + 10

Renewal + remote renewal audit

2 + 10

Not investigated

4

Result

Partially substantiated

27

Not substantiated

23

Substantiated

20

Not investigated

4

Average processing time

5 months

to close an allegation
(max. 6 months allowed)

Appeals:

Traders

4



Producers

14



Decertification

10

Suspension

5

Not init. certified

3



The number of appeals decreased slightly in 2020.



Africa

5



Latin America

10



Asia

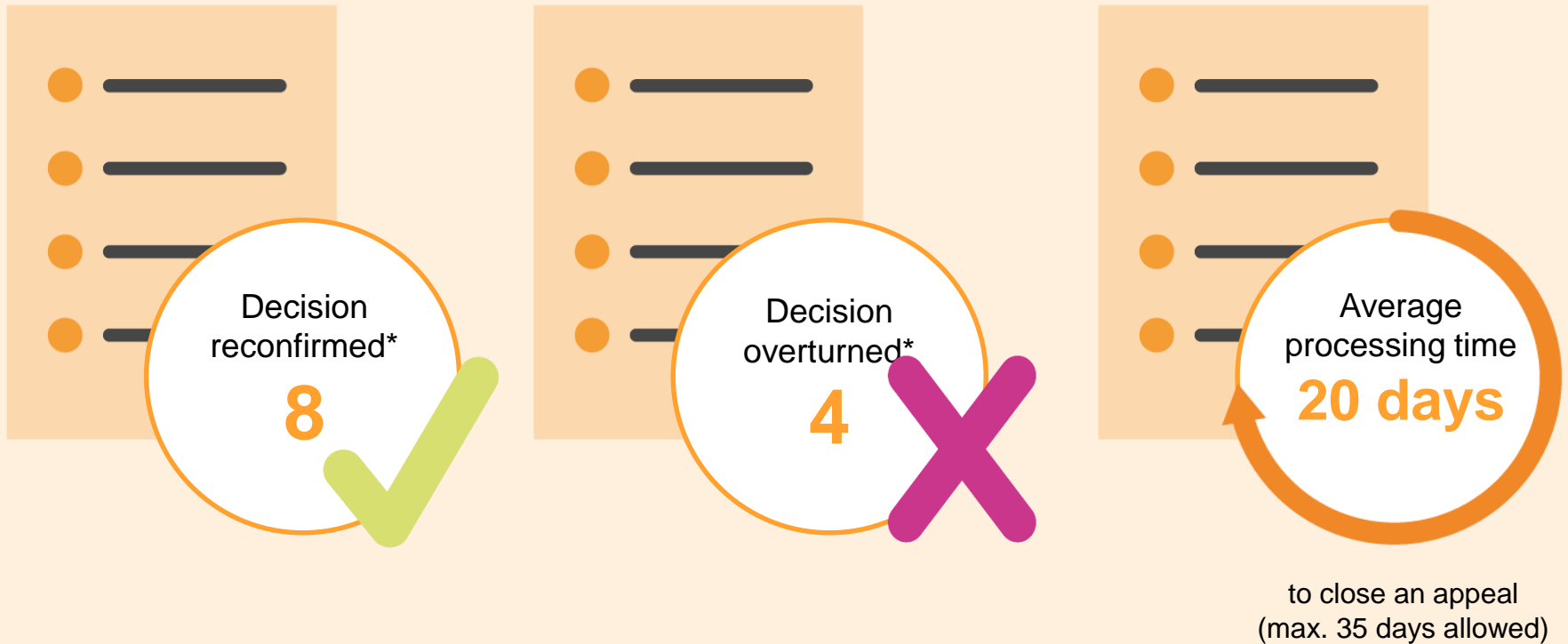
3



Europe & North America

0

Appeal decisions:



*Only considered the 12 processed cases.

Reviews:

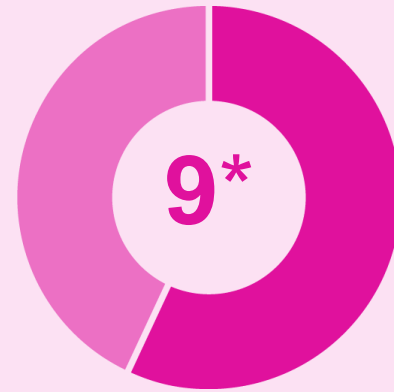
Traders

6



Producers

3



Non-conformity

8

Corrective measures

1



The number of reviews decreased by 4 compared to previous year.



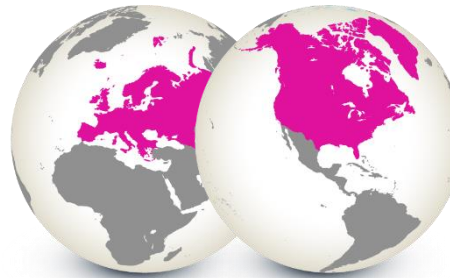
Latin America

5



Africa

1



Europe & North America

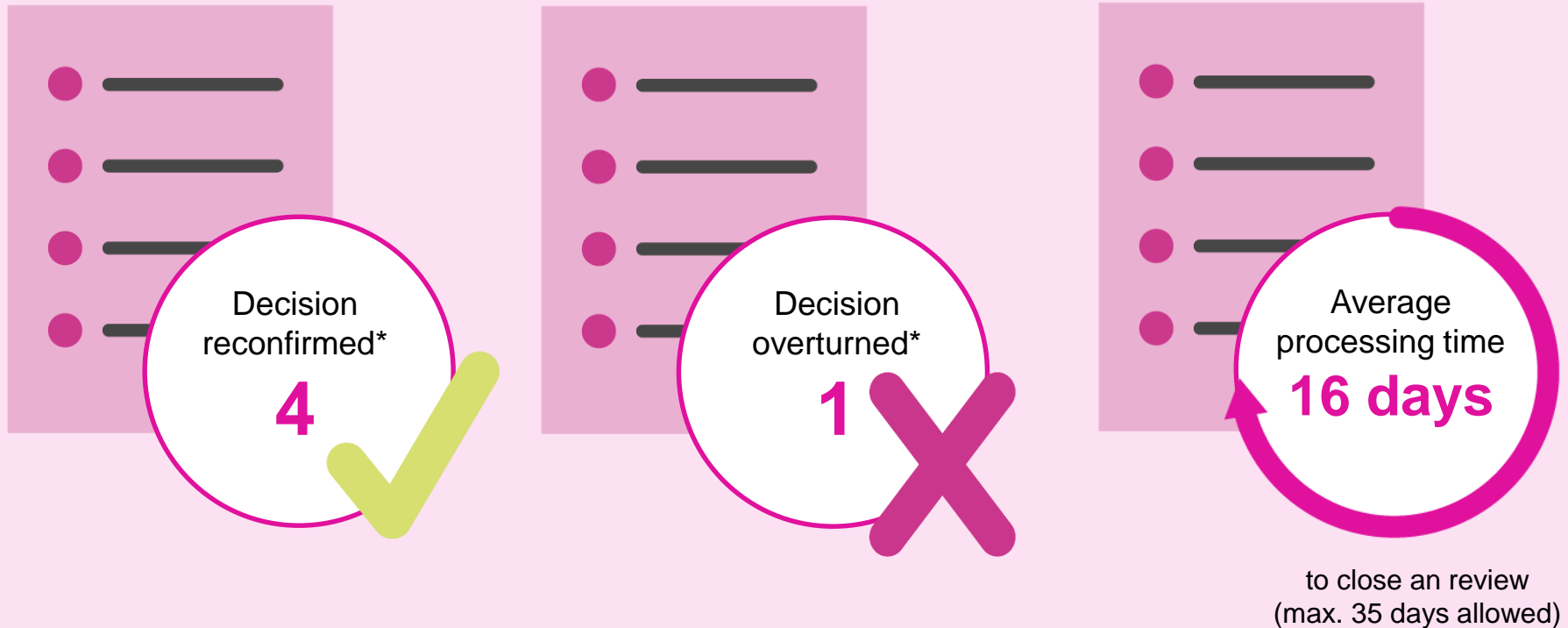
3



Asia

0

Review decisions



*Only considered the 5 accepted and closed reviews.

Complaints:

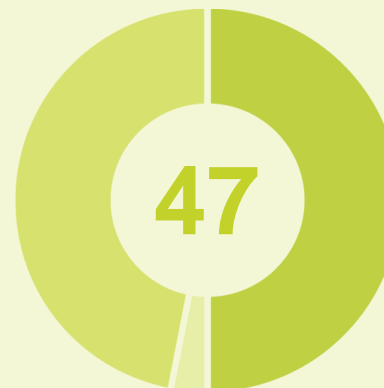
Traders

31



Producers

14



Other/EDGE

3



The number of complaints increased by 11 compared to 2019.



Latin America

17



Europe & North America

19



Africa

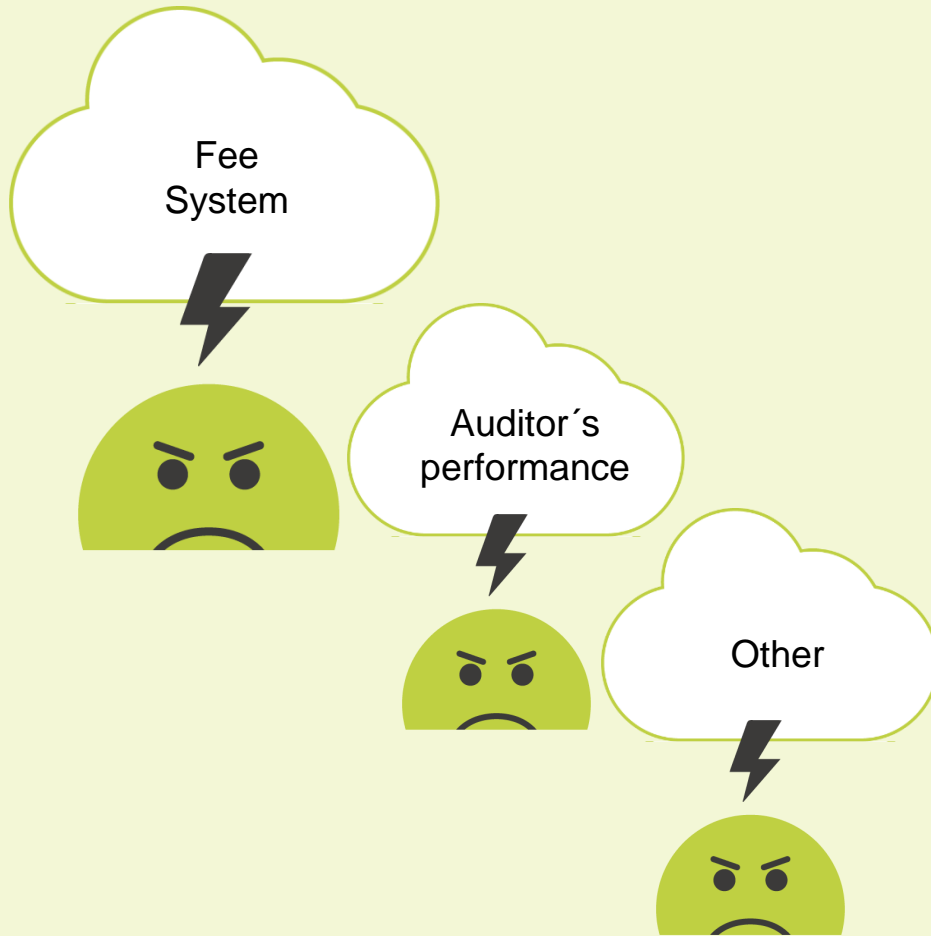
5



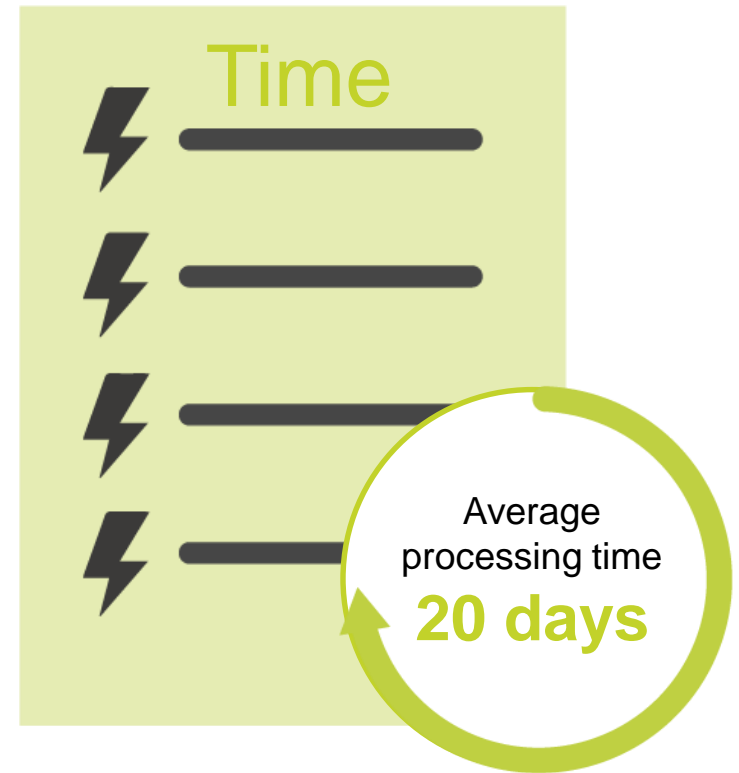
Asia

6

Top complaint topics:



47 complaints represents 0,8% considering the total number of customer: 5,731



to close a complaint
(max. 35 days allowed)

THANK YOU

for your support for continuous improvement.

Please report any concerns regarding the mentioned topics to Credibility Assurance via:

E-mail: credibility@flocert.net

WhatsApp channel: <https://www.flocert.net/flocert-launches-whatsapp-for-allegations>

Website form: <https://www.flocert.net/about-flocert/vision-values/quality-and-appeals/>