

## COMPANY COMPLAINTS SETTLEMENT SCHEME FOR THE LEGAL PROFESSION

### 1. Company Complaints Settlement Scheme

Houthoff aims at providing high-quality services. In the unlikely event that you are dissatisfied with the work a lawyer performed on Houthoff's behalf, or with an invoice Houthoff sent to you, we ask you to inform us of your complaint. In accordance with the procedure laid down in the Company Complaints Settlement Scheme for the Legal Profession below, we will take up your complaint and will seek to solve your complaint within a reasonable period of time.

### 2. Definitions

Lawyer	the lawyer employed at Houthoff or the person who works under the responsibility of the lawyer in question;
Client	the recipient, whether represented or not, of the services of Houthoff;
Houthoff	Houthoff Coöperatief U.A., Houthoff België B.V., Houthoff London B.V. and Houthoff New York B.V.;
Company Complaints Settlement Scheme	the present scheme in which the procedure has been laid down for handling Complaints of Clients of Houthoff as referred to in the Legal Profession Regulation [ <i>Verordening op de advocatuur</i> ];
Complaint	a dispute about (i) the formation and/or the performance of an engagement, (ii) the quality of the provision of services and/or (iii) the amount of the invoice sent to the Client; and
Complaints Officer	Mr J.B. Londonck Sluijk, the lawyer appointed by Houthoff in charge of handling the Complaint.

### 3. Filing a Complaint

- 3.1. The Client files the Complaint within a period of three months after the moment when the Client has become aware of - or has in reasonableness been able to become aware of - the acts or omissions of the Lawyer giving rise to the Complaint. If a Complaint is filed after the expiry of the aforementioned three-month period, the Complaints Officer may decide not to take up the Complaint. In such event the Complaints Officer will inform the Client as soon as possible after receipt of the Complaint in writing as to whether or not the Complaint will be taken up.

- 3.2. The Client files the Complaint in writing with Houthoff for the attention of the Complaints Officer. To this end the Client has to provide at least the following information:
- (i) the name and address details of the Client;
  - (ii) the name of the Lawyer against whom the Complaint is directed;
  - (iii) a specification of the acts or omissions of the Lawyer, or the invoice, which gave rise to the Complaint;
  - (iv) the file number to which the Complaint is related;
  - (v) the statement that the Complaint should be handled by means of the Company Complaints Settlement Scheme; and
  - (vi) the date the Complaint is filed and signature.
- 3.3. If the Complaint does not meet the requirements specified in article 3.2, the Complaints Officer will inform the Client about this after receipt of the Complaint. In such event the Client will be given the opportunity to provide the missing information as yet, failing which the Complaints Officer will not take up the Complaint. In the latter case the Complaints Officer will inform the Client in writing about not taking up the Complaint.

#### **4. Acknowledgement of receipt of a Complaint**

After receipt of a complete Complaint the Complaints Officer sends an acknowledgement of receipt of it to the Client. The Client also receives the contact details of the Complaints Officer and information about the next steps of the procedure in accordance with the Company Complaints Settlement Scheme.

#### **5. Handling of a Complaint**

- 5.1. The Complaints Officer informs the Lawyer against whom the Complaint is directed of this Complaint, in writing and as soon as possible, and gives the Lawyer the opportunity to respond to the Complaint in writing.
- 5.2. The Complaints Officer obtains the information that is required for a proper, impartial handling and assessment of the Complaint. The Complaints Officer gives the Client and the Lawyer the opportunity to provide (more detailed) information and may ask for additional information.
- 5.3. If considered necessary by the Complaints Officer, or if one party so wishes or both parties so wish, the parties are called together to discuss the case at a place, day and time to be set by the Complaints Officer.

- 5.4. The Complaints Officer may ask both parties to make a proposal for the solution of the Complaint. On the basis of all the information obtained, the Complaints Officer will submit a proposal for a solution of the Complaint to both parties.
- 5.5. Both parties are to respond in writing to the proposal for the solution of the Complaint, failing which the party in question is deemed to agree to the proposal of the Complaints Officer for the solution of the Complaint.
- 5.6. The Complaints Officer informs both parties in writing of the decision on the Complaint.
- 5.7. A Complaint is handled with the greatest possible care and confidentiality.

## **6. Time limit**

The Complaints Officer will seek to solve a Complaint to the satisfaction of the Client within one month after receipt of a complete Complaint. If the settlement of the Complaint within one month turns out not to be possible, the parties will be informed in writing of the reason of the delay, as well as of the period within which a decision will be given about the merits of the Complaint.

## **7. Registration**

The Complaints Officer sees to it that Houthoff registers all Complaints internally.

## **8. Competent court**

- 8.1. If a Complaint has not been solved to the satisfaction of the Client, the Client may submit the Complaint to the competent court in Amsterdam.
- 8.2. Contrary to the procedure as laid down in this Company Complaints Settlement Scheme, the Client and Houthoff may at any time together decide to discontinue the handling of a Complaint, in which case the Client can submit the Complaint to the competent court in Amsterdam.

## **9. Other**

The Client does not have to pay a fee to Houthoff for the costs of the handling of the Complaint in accordance with this Company Complaints Settlement Scheme. Each party bears its own costs.

Please file your complaint by e-mail ([companycomplaints@houthoff.com](mailto:companycomplaints@houthoff.com)) for the attention of Mr J.B. Londonck Sluijk, Complaints Officer. Should you have any questions about the Company Complaints Settlement Scheme for the Legal Profession, please contact Ms L.A. Beukers, Company Secretary ([l.beukers@houthoff.com](mailto:l.beukers@houthoff.com)).