

Complaint Turkey

FWF is responsible setting up a complaints procedure in production countries where FWF is active. The complaints procedure allows third parties to make complaints about the working conditions or the way the Code of Labour Practices is implemented in factories which supply FWF members. The responsibility of FWF includes investigating the complaint, verifying whether the agreed corrective action plan is implemented and public reporting. This complaint report gives an overview of a complaint filed to FWF, the investigation and agreed corrective action plan as well as how the outcome is verified. For more information on the complaints procedure see the FWF website. FWF also publishes an overview of complaints received in its annual reports.

1. Affiliate involved:

A European company involved in a pilot project between May 2008 and June 2009 to evaluate how an affiliation to FWF would work. As part of the terms of reference for this pilot, FWF would not disclose the name of this company (hereafter referred to as the Company) or the supplier factory involved.

2. Accused party:

A factory in Turkey which was a supplier of the Company at the time of the complaint.

3. Date of receipt complaint:

Two complaints against the factory were received by the local complaints handler of FWF in Turkey. The first complaint was received on 8 May 2009 and the second on 20 May 2009.

4. Filing party:

The first complaint was filed by a former apprentice from the factory. The second complaint was filed by a worker at the factory. The contact details of both are known to FWF but will be kept confidential.

5. The case:

The first complaint concerned four FWF labour standards:

Code awareness:

- According to the plaintiff workers were forced to sign false documents.

Payment of a living wage:

- None payment of social security costs
- Less than legal holiday for apprentices



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Legally binding employment relationship:

- According to the first plaintiff, apprentices were on one occasion not allowed to attend their exams because of work pressure in the factory.

A Safe and Healthy working environment:

- Both plaintiffs told that supervisors verbally harassed and threatened the workers.

The second complaint concerned five FWF labour standards:

Code awareness:

- Coaching of workers to give correct answers to social auditors and threats of being fired if answering incorrectly.

Non discrimination:

- Several workers state that they are discriminated against by preferential treatment of workers close relation with supervisor or management.

Payment of a living wage:

- Late and incomplete payments. The plaintiff stated that they did not receive their salary on time and their OT payments were always too low.

No excessive working hours:

- Excessive overtime. Examples were given of having to work until late at night and work the following day.

A Safe and Healthy working environment:

- Verbal harassment by supervisors
- The workplace doctor seldom does not come to the factory but workers were told that they should say that doctor comes twice a week.
- Food facilities are not hygienic and quality of the food is very low.
- Toilets are very dirty and they are not cleaned regularly.

6. Admissibility:

On 13 May and 26 May 2009 respectively FWF decided that the two complaints were admissible as they relate to the Code of Labour Practices and the factory had an active business relationship with the Company.

7. Investigation:

The Company was informed about the complaint and agreed to a suggested investigation plan in May 2009. The investigation consisted of interviews with the plaintiffs and the management of the factory, studying the FWF factory audit report from May 2009 and additional workers interviews done during June to August 2009.

The Company had also conducted their own interviews with the management of the factory after receiving reports on the complains.

8. Findings and conclusions:

Many of the points raised by the plaintiffs are similar to the findings in the FWF factory audit report from May 2009. Several of the other issues raised by the two plaintiffs could be confirmed by the off-site interviews carried out to further investigate the complaint.



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First complaint

Workers forced to sign false documents (Code awareness) – confirmed

None payment of social security costs (Payment of a living wage) - confirmed that correct social security costs are not paid, not confirmed that there are non registered workers

Less than legal holiday for apprentices (Payment of a living wage) – confirmed

Apprentices not allowed to attend exams (Legally binding employment relationship) – not confirmed

Second complaint

Coaching of workers (Code awareness) – confirmed

Preferential treatment of some workers (Non discrimination) – confirmed

Late and incomplete payments (Payment of a living wage) – confirmed

Excessive overtime (No excessive working hours) – confirmed

Verbal harassment by supervisors (OHS) – confirmed

Doctor not present correct hours (OHS) – confirmed

Dirty facilities (OHS) – Not confirmed

9. Corrective action:

On October 9th the findings of the investigations were send to the Company together with a suggested corrective action plan.

A recommendation was that the Company tries to co-operate with other buyers since some of the problems identified would be hard to resolve . The Company preferred not to contact other buyers from the factory, but instead wanted to receive a full action plan of what had already been corrected by the factory and what still needed to be done.

The Company had been in contact with the factory since having received the factory audit report from May as well as after having received the two complaints.

On October 23rd FWF had a meeting with the Company's agent in Istanbul to discuss the situation at the factory. The follow up of the complaint had mostly been done through the agent of the Company until the relation with the factory was ended. Afterwards that, the agent checked improvements by continuing the dialogue with the factory management.

The owners of the factory reported some progress on the corrective action plan. According to them, the local management of the factory would be given training on how to communicate better with the employees to deal with the issue of verbal harassment raised by the plaintiffs.

The owners of the factory also said they would cut down the share of apprentices from around 50 percent to around 30 percent, a part of the target formulated in the corrective action plan.



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10. Verification:

According to the Company they had already taken the decision to stop using the factory as a supplier before the FWF factory audit was carried out. When the Company received the suggested corrective action plan from FWF, the Company no longer had an active business relationship with the supplier. Since The Company is not affiliated to FWF and does not have an active business relationship with the supplier anymore, no verification of improvements made could be carried out by FWF.