

# noticeable justice for all

*craftsmanship and customisation with  
the human touch as the guiding principle*



# A Bridge to Society

Providing low-threshold access to justice: since its establishment in 1970, this has been the mission on which the Dutch Foundation for Consumer Complaints Boards (De Geschillencommissie) derives its right to exist. At the time, our organisation originated from self-regulation and with a focus on consumer complaints. We now see that many more litigants know how to find us, and that not only industry organisations, but also governments approach us to facilitate Complaints Boards and Committees. The landscape in which our organisation operates is more dynamic than ever. These dynamics challenge us to shape and propagate our social added value even more professionally.

‘There is a growing, ever-increasing demand on our organisation. The realisation, that society benefits when complaints and disputes are resolved at an early stage, is now widely shared. As an organisation, we bring many years of experience to that area, built up over half a century of independent and impartial dispute resolution. In doing

*‘There is a growing, increasing demand on our organisation.’*



so, we build the bridge to a society in which new market players call on us, where new issues are topical, and new laws and regulations apply.

What remains is the human touch, with which we shape complaint dispute resolution. With that unique proposition, we are partnering to safeguard the tripartite system, for today and also for tomorrow.’

To respond to this growing but also capricious social need, the Dutch Foundation for Consumer Complaints Boards is deliberately investing in the strength of its organisation. Peter van Grevengoed: ‘As soon as something happens in society, it directly affects our organisation. The outside world constantly keeps us on our toes. A strike in public transport, rising energy tariffs, staff shortages in health-care: these are examples from our daily reality,

*‘As soon as something happens in society, it directly affects our organisation.’*



Jacqueline Berkelaar  
Director

Peter van Grevengoed  
Director of Operations

which are bound to translate into more complaints and disputes. This means we have to set up our organisation in such a way that it can take the specific shape and size needed now in this landscape. That customisation and that growth call for a professional organisational culture that keeps pace with the market and is therefore true to its social significance. That is what Jacqueline and I both signed up for.’

*P.S. How do we actually put our mission into practice and what challenges come our way? For that, please refer to our annual plan, in which we take you extensively through the current playing field in which the Dutch Foundation for Consumer Complaints Boards fulfils its role.*

# Our positioning

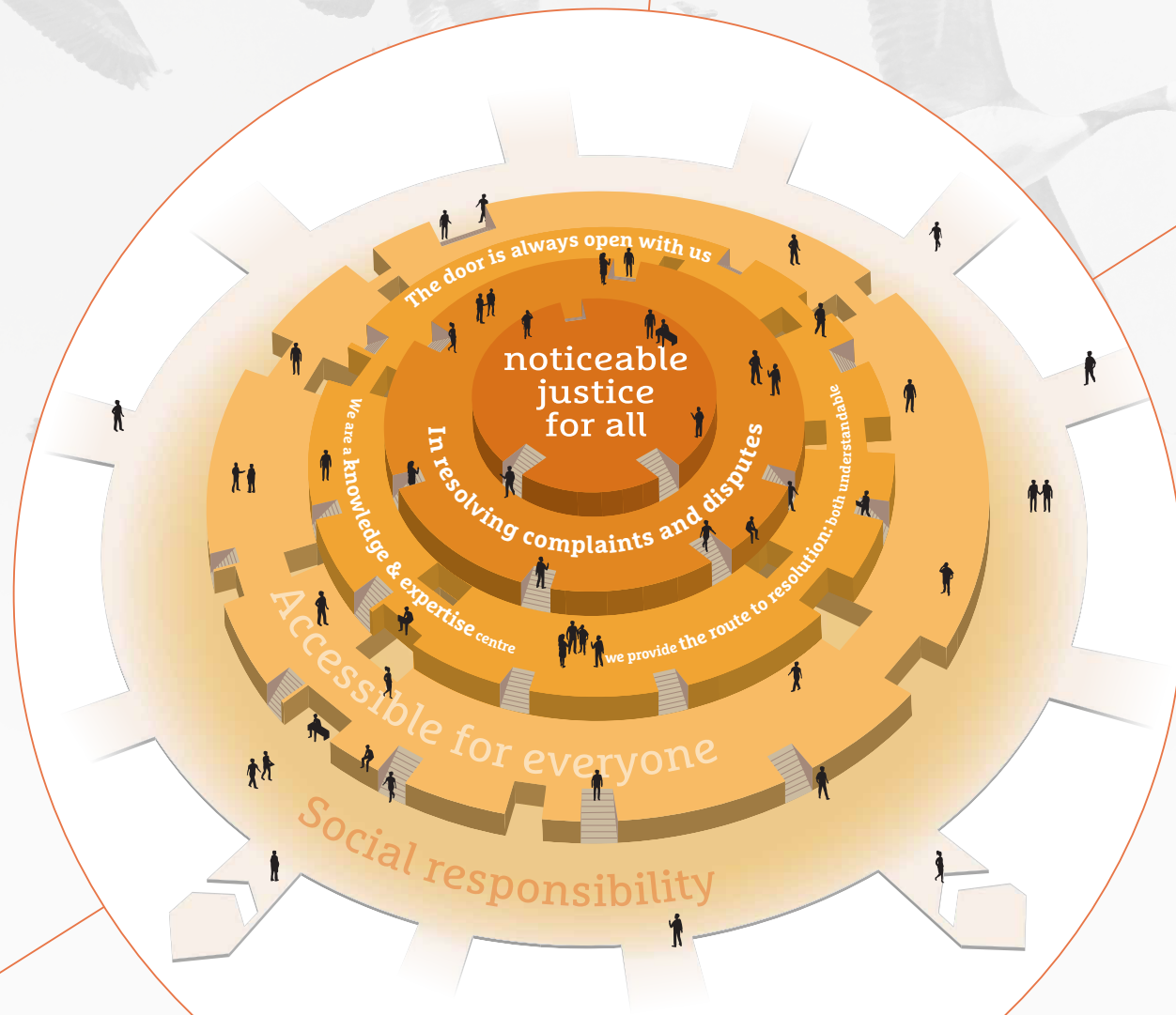
The clear and 'flawless' position we like to occupy as an organisation - in the perception of our target groups - is essential. Being visible in the market well, distinctively and with clear added value is the prerequisite. Relevant 'feel and be'.

From the positioning, the external appearance, communication and other actions are chosen, creating recognisability with added value for existing and new clients. Internally, it creates clarity and contributes to a sense of pride for all employees, and everyone involved.

Within complaint and dispute resolution, our positioning gives an even clearer face that is attractive to everyone in the Netherlands. The Dutch Foundation for Consumer Complaints Boards is the body for everyone to resolve complaints and disputes quickly, easily, properly and in a low-threshold manner. In doing so, we take our social responsibility and make an important contribution to society.

'Noticeable justice for all' – that's what we endorse. In everything we do: there is always and for everyone a way to justice.

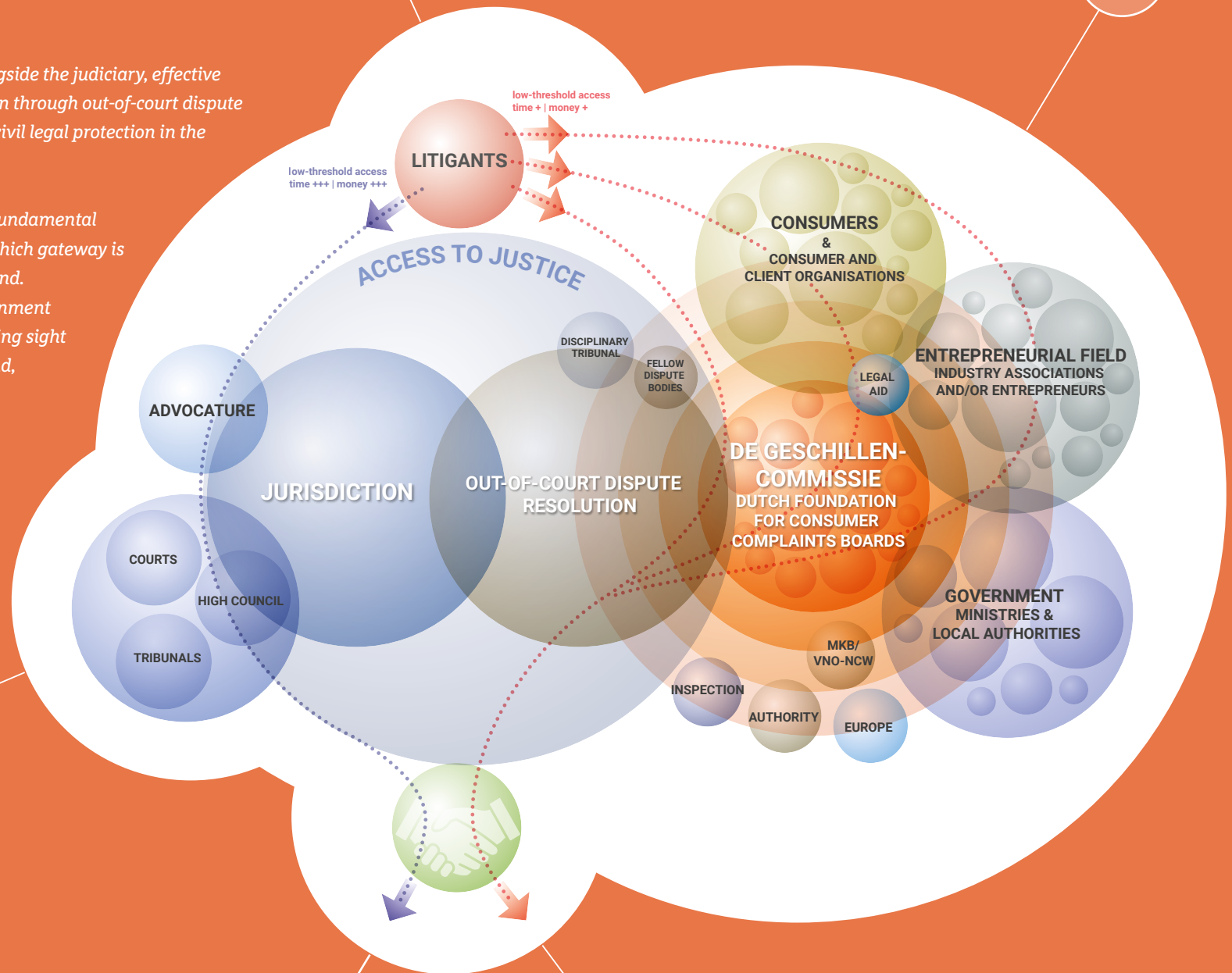
From there, we characterise three clear pillars: 'we provide the route to resolution: both understandable', 'the door is always open with us' and 'we are a knowledge & expertise centre'. These pillars as a foundation to achieve noticeable justice for all in resolving complaints and disputes; a solid foundation for the future.



# Our position in the Dutch legal system

Legal protection is essential for everyone! Alongside the judiciary, effective and accessible complaint and dispute resolution through out-of-court dispute resolution bodies is an intrinsic component of civil legal protection in the Netherlands.

For confidence in the Dutch rule of law, it is of fundamental importance that it is always clear to litigants which gateway is most appropriate for solving the problem at hand. This requires, on the one hand, continuous alignment with the needs and problems in society, not losing sight of the human dimension, and, on the other hand, the joint responsibility of all players in the integrated landscape.

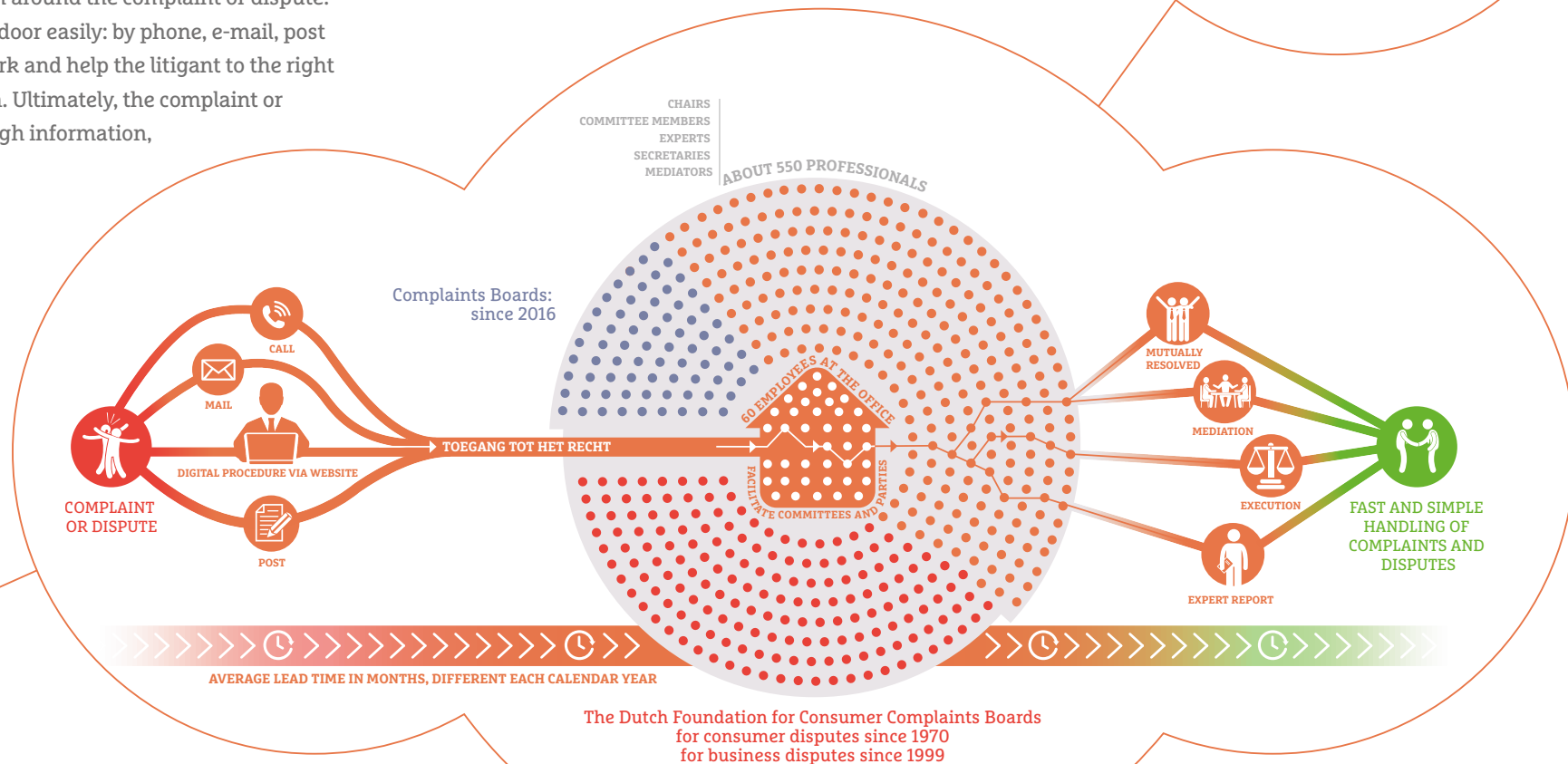


# Our house, one door!

The Dutch Foundation for Consumer Complaints Boards' (De Geschillencommissie) house provides access to justice. Our house is divided into a number of rooms: various complaint counters and Committees. The Complaints Office offers indicative advice; information is provided and conciliation and mediation at the complaint offices.

In 'the house', complaint offices, Committees and parties are facilitated by some 70 staff members; the process counsellors. The 550 professionals around 'the house' provide the independent solution around the complaint or dispute. A litigant knocks on our door easily: by phone, e-mail, post or digitally. We get to work and help the litigant to the right place in our organisation. Ultimately, the complaint or dispute is resolved through information,

guiding advice, mediation, a mutual solution or a ruling by one of the Committees. In short, if the complaint or dispute can be dealt with, one leaves our house with a solution.



The Dutch Foundation for Consumer Complaints Boards  
for consumer disputes since 1970  
for business disputes since 1999

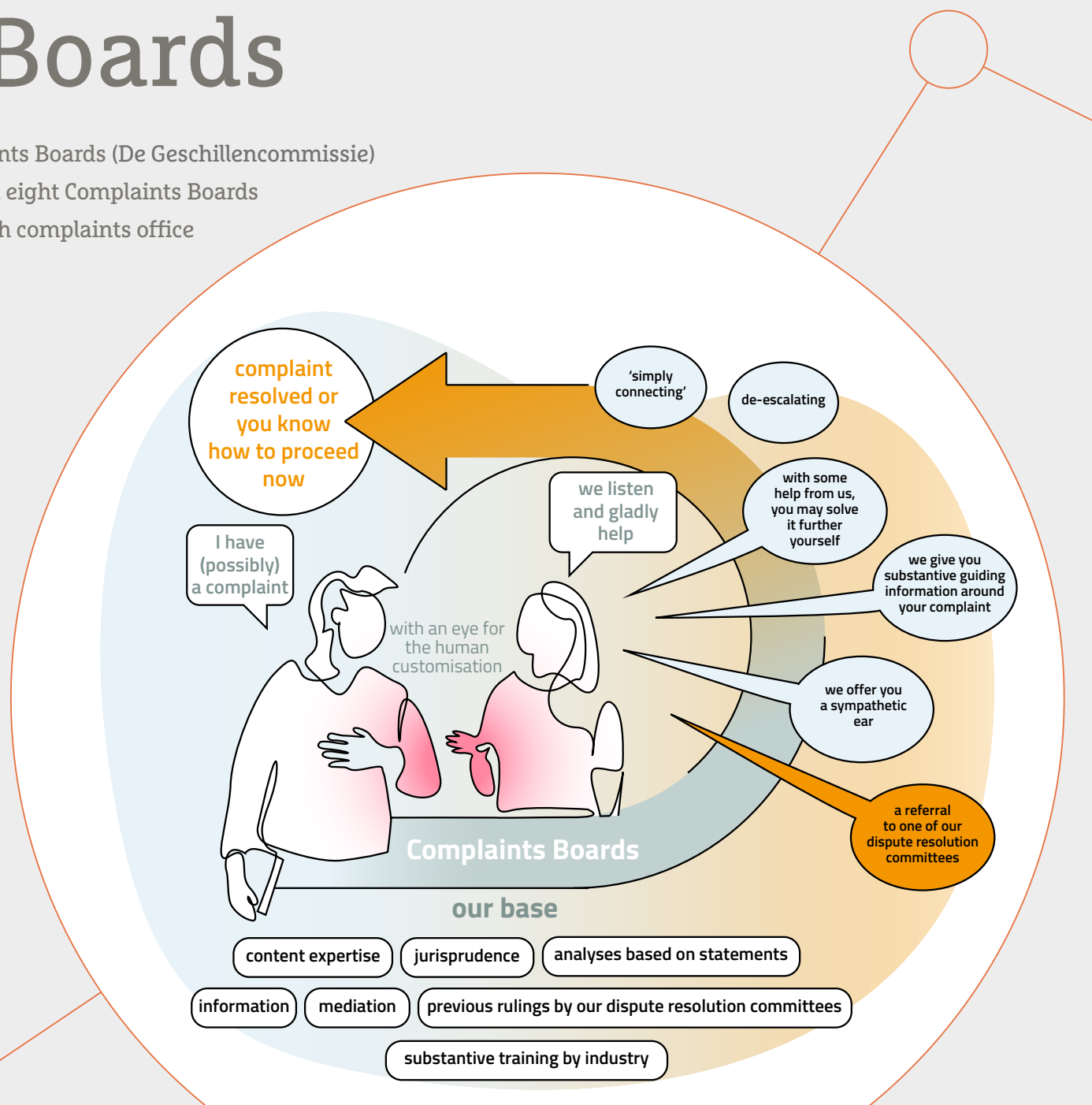
# Complaints Boards

In 2016, the Dutch Foundation for Consumer Complaints Boards (De Geschillencommissie) had its first complaints office. The tally now stands at eight Complaints Boards to which thousands of clients and providers turn. Each complaints office has a defined area of activity in a specific sector.

The first complaints office arose from signals that parties seemed to need a way - before starting proceedings at a Committee - to resolve complaints in an even more accessible way: by getting information and guiding advice and possibly using mediation (led by an MFN mediator). In close consultation with both the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and various market parties, the Complaints Office for Childcare was the first to be developed and set up.

To use the relevant complaints office, a requirement is that the provider is affiliated with us. And while there is no such thing as a complaints office for every dispute resolution body, this is the case the other way around. All eight complaint offices in our house include a Committee so that, in the unlikely event that a complaint cannot be resolved early via the complaint office, parties can always choose to submit the complaint to a Committee.

With the advent of the complaints boards, the Dutch Foundation for Consumer Complaints Boards is even better placed to provide low-threshold access to justice.



# Consumer Complaints Boards

*Judging with experts from the field!*

In dispute resolution, a structured process is very important. Both parties are on an easy and straightforward path to resolution - usually without legal assistance.



## Step 1: REGISTER

Disputes are easily filed by filling in an online form. After registering the dispute, a case is created. This requires contact details, information about the other party and a description of the complaint. The information submitted helps to determine the appropriate dispute resolution committee.

## Step 2: INTAKE

The intake phase determines which Committee can handle the dispute. A digital account is created, allowing additional information to be added to the case. A complaint fee is also requested at this step. For smooth handling, a response within a month is desired. Once all necessary documents are received and the complaint fee is paid, the assessment follows to determine whether the dispute can be taken forward.

## Step 3: HANDLING

If the dispute is considered, the other party is asked for a response. Sometimes the provider contacts the client to still reach a solution together. The provider's response is added to the case. If necessary, an expert is asked to conduct further investigation; both parties are informed of this. We then schedule the hearing.

## Step 4: DECISION

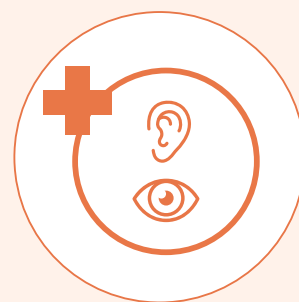
In the final stage, the Committee considers the substance of the dispute. This is done at the hearing. Parties can attend the hearing physically or online. They can also decide not to appear at the hearing. If the parties do attend the hearing, they can explain the dispute and answer any questions from the Committee. Within about a month after the hearing, the parties receive the decision of the Committee.

**The independent and impartial committee** is composed of a chair (usually a judge), a member nominated by the industry organisation and a member nominated by a consumer/patient organisation in the case of consumer disputes or by a business organisation in the case of business disputes. It decides by a majority vote without charge or backing from the organisation from which they are nominated. Some Committees are assisted by a secretary. This has an advisory role, not a casting vote.

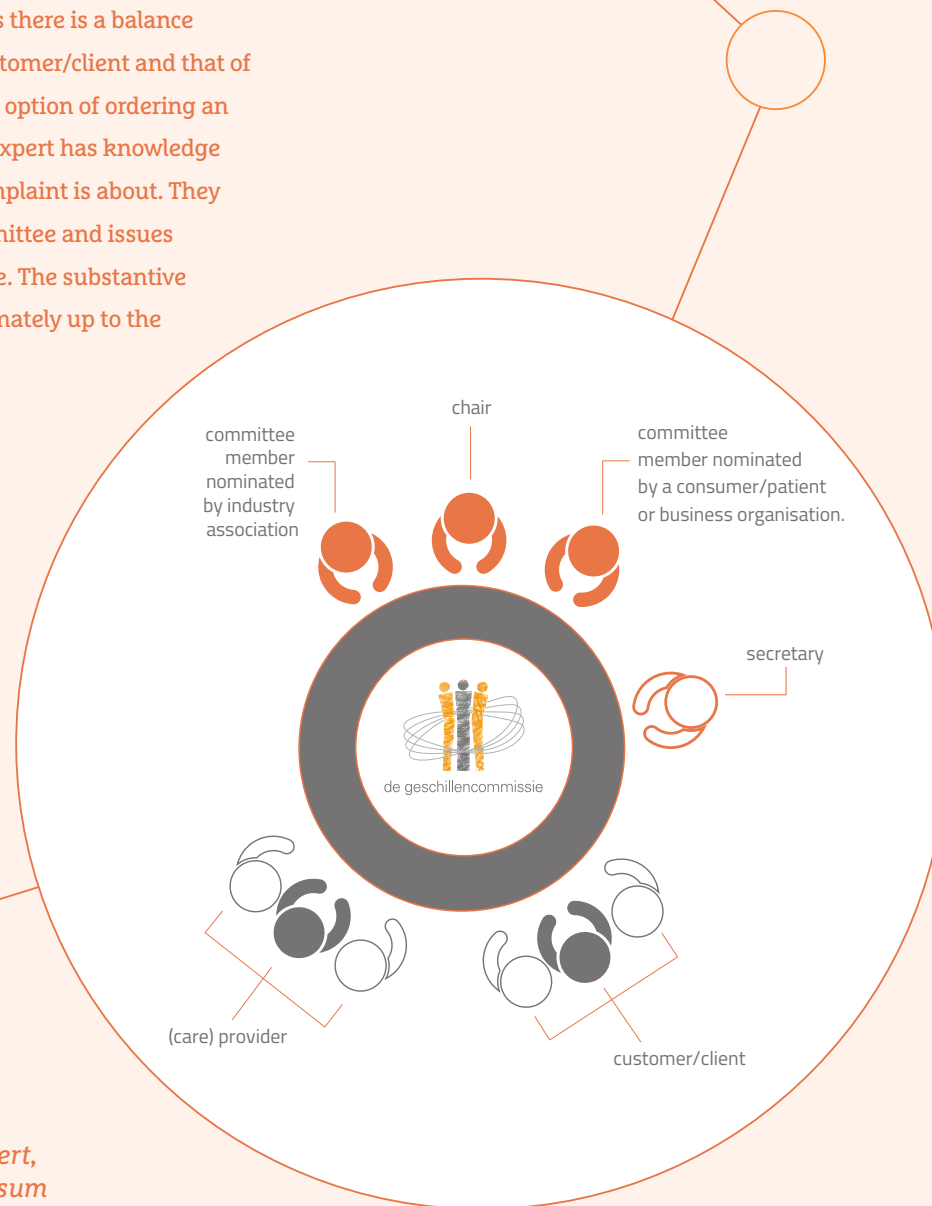
During the oral hearing, the parties will have the opportunity to further explain their positions, respond to each other and answer questions from the Committee. If the Committee sees fit, it will attempt a settlement between the parties.

The composition of the Committee will be announced in writing to the parties in advance so that they know who will settle the dispute.

**Judging with experts from the field** is characteristic of our committees. The members have expertise in the area of the dispute in question and thus there is a balance between the perspective of the customer/client and that of the provider. In addition, it has the option of ordering an on-site expert investigation. This expert has knowledge and experience in the field the complaint is about. They are the 'eyes and ears' of the Committee and issues a technical report to the Committee. The substantive judgment on the complaint is ultimately up to the Committee.

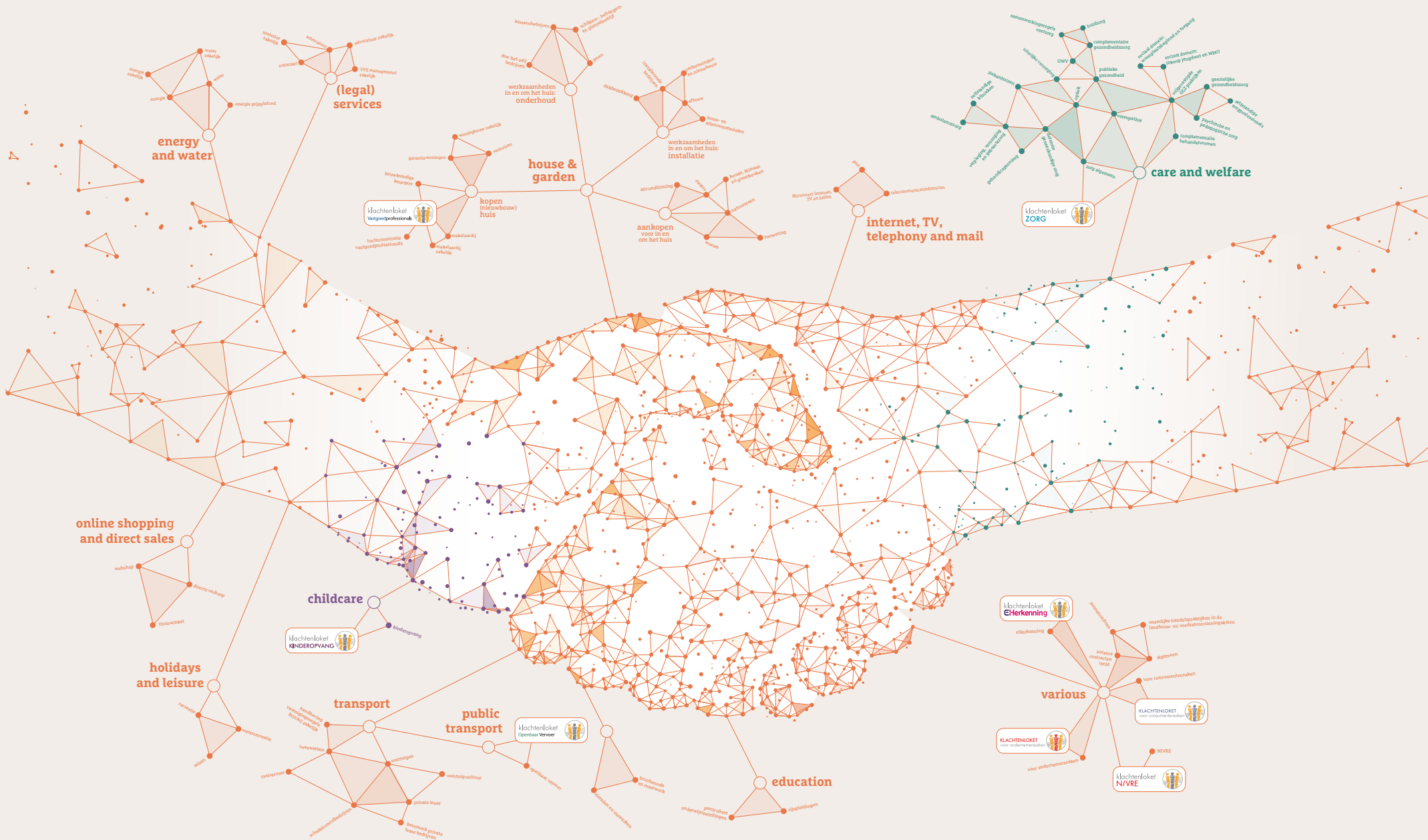


*Together with the external expert, 'our outcome is more than the sum of its parts.'*



# The visualized world of De Geschillencommissie

#samenwerkenaankwaliteit





**De Geschillencommissie**  
The Dutch Foundation for  
Consumer Complaints Boards

PO Box 90600

2509 LP The Hague

Visiting address:

Bordewijklaan 46

T. (+31) 70 310 53 10

E. [communicatie@degeschillencommissie.nl](mailto:communicatie@degeschillencommissie.nl)

I. [www.degeschillencommissie.nl](http://www.degeschillencommissie.nl)

[www.degeschillencommissiezorg.nl](http://www.degeschillencommissiezorg.nl)



[www.samenwerkenaankwaliteit.nl](http://www.samenwerkenaankwaliteit.nl)