

Presidential Decree on the Finnish Red Cross
(239/2000)

Chapter 1
General provisions

Section 1
Name, status and distinctive emblem

The provisions of the Act on the Finnish Red Cross (238/2000) apply to the name, status and distinctive emblem of the Finnish Red Cross (in Finnish 'Suomen Punainen Risti', in Swedish 'Finlands Röda Kors'), hereinafter 'Society'.

Section 2
Domicile and languages

The domicile of the Society is Helsinki. The languages of the Society are Finnish and Swedish. Within the native region of the Sami the Society safeguards the rights of the Sami to use their own language by observing where appropriate the Act on the Use of the Sami Language before Authorities (516/1991).

Section 3
Purpose

In accordance with the Fundamental Principles of the International Movement the Society shall

- (1) protect life and health and ensure respect for the human being and human rights in all circumstances;
- (2) promote co-operation and peace among all peoples;
- (3) save human lives within the country and abroad;
- (4) assist the most vulnerable in order to prevent and alleviate human suffering;
- (5) support and assist national authorities in times of both peace and war and during armed conflicts in order to promote human well-being;
- (6) promote solidarity and positive attitudes towards assistance work in society;
- (7) increase understanding for the work of the Red Cross and its humanitarian mandate; and
- (8) strengthen the Society's preparedness and operational capacities.

Section 4
Activities

In order to attain its purpose the Society shall

- (1) uphold its preparedness and carry out humanitarian assistance work;
- (2) create understanding for assistance work and recruit members;
- (3) in co-operation with authorities, engage in and develop voluntary rescue services and carry out tracing activities;
- (4) provide social and health services, as appropriate;
- (5) pursue blood transfusion services in accordance with the Act on Blood Transfusion Service (968/1994);

- (6) carry out youth work and activities;
- (7) support multicultural activities and provide education towards international understanding;
- (8) train its voluntary and employed staff and organize their work;
- (9) organize fundraising and campaigns;
- (10) engage in economic activities and other acquisition of funds to promote the purpose of the Society;
- (11) co-operate with the central organs of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and with other National Societies;
- (12) engage in co-operation with other legal entities (associations, foundations and institutions), according to special agreements and conditions; and
- (13) take other similar measures when necessary to promote or support the purpose of the Society.

Section 5

Organs

- (1) Local work is carried out by the Branches. The organs of the Branch are the Branch Assembly and the Branch Board.
- (2) For regional work the country is divided into Districts. The organs of the District are the District Assembly and the District Board.
- (3) The national organs are the General Assembly, the Council, the Board and the Secretary General.

Section 6

Legal capacity

What is provided concerning associations entered in the register of associations shall apply to the right of the Society and its Districts and Branches to obtain rights and to enter into liabilities and to bring action or to answer before a court of law and other authorities in its own name, taking into consideration the statutes of the Society.

Chapter 2

Members and elected officials

Section 7

Individual members

- (1) Anyone wanting to act for the purposes of the Red Cross can become a member of the Society. The new member is accepted by the Board of the Branch that he or she wishes to join.
- (2) The Branch Assembly can at the proposal of the Branch Board exclude a member who by his or her actions has damaged the Society or who by his or her actions as a member of the Society has violated the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross.
- (3) An individual member who has not paid his or her membership fee is considered to have left the Society at the end of the year of activity.

Section 8

Supporting members

- (1) The Society can by decision of the Board, a District by decision of the District Board and a Branch by decision of the Branch Board accept supporting members, which can be natural persons or legal persons by private or public law.
- (2) A supporting member does not have the rights or obligations of an individual member.

Section 9

Honorary membership

- (1) The General Assembly can, at the proposal of the Board, invite those that have particularly distinguished themselves in the activities of the Society to become honorary members of the Society.
- (2) The District Assembly can, at the proposal of the District Board, invite those that have distinguished themselves in the regional or local activities of the Society to become honorary members of the District.
- (3) The Branch Assembly can, at the proposal of the Branch Board, invite those that have distinguished themselves in the local activities of the Society, to become honorary members of the Branch.
- (4) An honorary member has the right to be present and to speak at the meetings of that Society unit which has appointed him or her as an honorary member. An honorary member has no other rights or obligations pertaining to an individual member.

Section 10

List of members

- (1) The Board shall keep a list of members by District and Branch. For each member the list contains name, date of birth, and adequate information on the address.
- (2) The members of the Society shall upon request be allowed to study the membership data referred to in subsection (1). Provisions on the transfer of data are otherwise laid down in the Personal Data Act (523/1999). The Board or, with its authorization, the Secretary General shall assess whether the preconditions for the distribution of these data are fulfilled.

Section 11

Membership fees and support fees

- (1) The individual members pay an annual membership fee to the Society, the amount of which for the following calendar year is decided by the Council at its ordinary meeting. For members under the age of 30 a reduced membership fee can be decided. The Council can decide a lifetime membership fee for individual members, equalling at least ten annual fees.
- (2) Supporting members pay an annual support fee to the Society. The minimum amount of the support fee for the following calendar year is decided by the Council at its ordinary meeting.
- (3) The Board organizes the collection of the membership fees nation-wide.

Section 12

Right of initiative

Each individual member and each Society unit with legal capacity has the right to take initiatives concerning the Society's local, regional and national activities. Provisions on the treatment of initiatives are included in the Rules of Procedure of the Society.

Section 13

Eligibility and term of office of the elected officials

- (1) Only individual members of the Society can be elected as officials. When nominating the candidates, every effort must be made to ensure that the composition of the organs reflects a regional, language, gender and age balance.
- (2) The members of the Council and the Board must be 15 years of age. A person declared bankrupt, a person subject to a prohibition to pursue a business or a person whose legal competence has been restricted cannot be a member of the Council or the Board.
- (3) An individual member must not be elected a member of both the Council and the Board for the same term of office.
- (4) The term of office for the officials elected by the General Assembly begins as soon as the General Assembly is closed and continues until the closing of the following General Assembly.
- (5) The eligibility of the elected officials in the Districts and the Branches and the beginning and end of their terms of office are fixed in the Rules and Regulations for the Districts and Branches. What is provided in this section shall be observed as applicable.

Chapter 3
Branches and Districts

Section 14
Branches and Districts

- (1) The Branches and Districts must follow the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and work to carry out the purpose of the Society.
- (2) With the consent of the District Board, a Branch can be founded by a minimum of 20 individual members of the Society. A Branch which fails to meet the obligations arising from the Society's membership can by decision of the Board be excluded from the Society.
- (3) In such a case the Branch shall lose the right to use the name and emblem of the Red Cross. The property of the Branch will be transferred to the custody of the District Board. The property must be used for activities that serve the purpose of the Society within the area of the Branch.
- (4) The Council determines the number of Districts as well as their boundaries and names. If the area of a District is enlarged or reduced or if a new District is formed by division or merger of old Districts or parts of them, or if a District is dissolved, the Board shall decide on the distribution of the property and liabilities of the Districts.
- (5) As far as the Branches are concerned, the provisions in subsection (3) shall be applied, so that the decisions are made by the District Board, the Branches concerned having made a decision with a majority of at least two thirds of the votes cast at their meetings.
- (6) A member shall on the basis of his or her address be transferred to the nearest Branch, unless he or she expressly wishes to be transferred to some other Branch.

Section 15
Right to vote and use of the right to vote

- (1) An individual member has the right to vote at the Branch Assembly of the Branch of which he or she is a member and the right to speak at the District Assembly of the District to which his or her Branch belongs. The Branch Assembly constitutes a quorum when at least three individual members are present.

- (2) At the District Assembly every Branch has one voting representative for each commenced one hundred members. The number of representatives with the right to vote is calculated on the number of individual members of the Branch who have paid the membership fee for the previous year. The Branch Board appoints the representatives of the Branch at the District Assembly. The District Assembly constitutes a quorum when at least one fifth of the Branches within the District are represented.

Section 16
Branch Board

- (1) The Branch Board consists of the President and Vice-President of the Branch and a minimum of four and a maximum of eight other members, as decided by the Branch Assembly. Each year a minimum of two and a maximum of four of the other members are in turn to resign.
- (2) The President and Vice-President of the Branch and the other members of the Branch Board are elected by the Branch Assembly for a period of two years. The election of the President and the Vice-President must be submitted to the District Board for approval.
- (3) The Branch Board constitutes a quorum when at least half the Board members, including the chairperson of the meeting, are present.

Section 17
District Board

- (1) The District Board consists of the District President and Vice-President and a minimum of ten and a maximum of sixteen other members, as decided by the District Assembly. Each year a minimum of five and a maximum of eight of the other members are in turn to resign.
- (2) The District President, Vice-President and the other members of the District Board are elected by the District Assembly for a period of two years. The election of the President and the Vice-President must be submitted to the Board of the Society for approval.
- (3) The District Board constitutes a quorum when at least half the Board members, including the chairperson of the meeting, are present.
- (4) The District Board appoints the District Manager, who is responsible for preparing the matters to be considered by the District Board and implementing the decisions of the District Board.

Chapter 4
General Assembly

Section 18
Ordinary and extraordinary General Assembly

- (1) The ordinary General Assembly of the Society is held every third year in August or September.
- (2) An extraordinary General Assembly is held when the Board considers it necessary, or when the Council or at least one tenth of the Branches so require. The extraordinary General Assembly shall consider the matters for which it was convened and which the Board has presented to the Assembly.

Section 19
Use of the right to vote and right of presence

- (1) At the General Assembly every Branch has one voting representative for each commenced 200 members. The number of representatives with the right to vote is calculated on the number of individual members of the Branch who have paid the membership fee for the previous year. The Branch Board appoints the representatives of the Branch at the General Assembly.
- (2) At the General Assembly each District has one voting representative appointed by the District Board.
- (3) The members of the Society and those who have the right to speak are entitled to be present at the General Assembly. Entitled to speak at the General Assembly are the voting representatives as well as the Council members, the Board members, the Secretary General and those persons whom the General Assembly has granted the right to speak.

Section 20

Summoning of the General Assembly; validity and quorum

- (1) The Board shall give notice of the time and venue of the ordinary General Assembly at least four months in advance.
- (2) The written notice of meeting issued by the Board shall be sent to the Branches and Districts at least four weeks prior to the General Assembly. The matters to be considered at the General Assembly shall be mentioned in the notice of meeting.
- (3) The General Assembly is valid if it has been convened in accordance with this section, and it constitutes a quorum when at least one fifth of the Branches are represented.

Section 21

Matters to be considered at the ordinary General Assembly

The procedure at the ordinary General Assembly is the following:

- (1) the General Assembly is opened by the President of the Society or one of the three Vice-Presidents, or if these are prevented from attending, by the most senior member of the Board present;
- (2) a chairperson and three vice-chairpersons and the necessary number of secretaries are elected for the General Assembly;
- (3) for the verification of the minutes of the General Assembly at least two examiners of the minutes are elected among the voting members;
- (4) for counting the votes at the General Assembly one senior and at least six tellers are elected;
- (5) the presence of participants is established and their powers of authority are confirmed;
- (6) the composition of the election committee is established and a convener is elected;
- (7) the validity and quorum of the General Assembly are established;
- (8) the agenda for the General Assembly is confirmed;
- (9) guidelines and recommendations for the activities and economy of the Society are adopted;
- (10) a President and three Vice-Presidents are elected for the Society for the following three years;
- (11) six other members of the Board are elected for the following three years;
- (12) a Chairperson and a Vice-Chairperson for the Council, as well as the 23 Council members and 23 deputies are elected for the following three-year term;
- (13) three auditors are elected, at least one of whom shall be authorized by the Central Chamber of Commerce, and for them three deputy auditors, at least one of whom shall be authorized by the Central Chamber of Commerce, their task being the auditing of the Society's accounts during the following three accounting periods;
- (14) other matters presented by the Board and matters that the General Assembly will unanimously take into consideration are considered;

- (15) any initiatives submitted to the General Assembly at least two months in advance are considered; and
- (16) the General Assembly is closed.

Section 22

General Assembly election committee

- (1) The elections to be held at the General Assembly are prepared by an election committee consisting of the voting representatives of the Districts, elected in accordance with section 19(2).
- (2) The election committee appoints a chairperson and a vice-chairperson among its members and engages a secretary, if necessary.
- (3) While the General Assembly is in progress the election committee shall state the officials who are to be elected at the General Assembly and submit its reasoned proposals to the General Assembly.

Chapter 5

Council, Board and Secretary General

Section 23

Composition and tasks of the Council

- (1) In addition to the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson the Council consists of those 23 other members that have been elected by the General Assembly, every one of whom has a personal deputy. If a member is prevented from attending a meeting, his or her personal deputy will take his or her place. In other respects the provisions in this Decree concerning the Council members apply to the deputies. Each District shall be represented in the Council.
- (2) In addition to the Council members elected by the General Assembly, the State appoints five members and personal deputies for them. Of the members appointed by the State one represents the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, one the Ministry of the Interior, one the Ministry of Defence, one the Ministry of Education and one the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.
- (3) The Council shall supervise the activities, economy and administration of the Society in the whole country. The Council confirms the Rules of Procedure and the economy rules for the Society and the Rules and Regulations for the Districts and Branches.

Section 24

Meetings of the Council

- (1) A written notice of meeting shall be sent by mail to the members of the Council and when necessary to the deputies at the latest two weeks before the meeting. The matters to be considered at the meeting shall be mentioned in the notice of meeting.
- (2) The Council shall convene for its ordinary meeting once a year before the end of May.
- (3) An extraordinary Council meeting shall be held when the Board considers it necessary or when a minimum of six members of the Council so require. The extraordinary Council meeting shall consider the matters mentioned in the notice of meeting, as presented by the Board.
- (4) The Council constitutes a quorum when the Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson and at least 15 other members are present.

- (5) The right to be present and to speak at the Council meetings is held by the members of the Board, the Secretary General and the auditors and by those whom the Council has granted the right to be present and to speak.

Section 25
Ordinary Council meeting

The ordinary Council meeting shall

- (1) consider the Board's report and the accounts for the previous activity period;
- (2) hear a summary of the Districts' accounts;
- (3) hear the auditors' report;
- (4) adopt the accounts and discharge those accountable within the central administration of liability;
- (5) confirm the amount of the membership fee and the minimum support fee, on the proposal of the Board, and decide on their use;
- (6) consider other matters presented by the Board; and
- (7) consider such other matters within the competence of the Council which the Council has unanimously decided to consider.

Section 26
Board

- (1) The Board consists of the President and three Vice-Presidents of the Society and six other members elected by the General Assembly.
- (2) The Board constitutes a quorum when at least half the Board members, including the chairperson of the meeting, are present.

Section 27
Duties of the Board

- (1) The Board shall
 - (1) each year approve the plan of action for the Society and in connection therewith adopt the joint economy plan for the central administration and the Districts and the budget for the central administration;
 - (2) prepare the matters to be considered in the General Assembly and the Council and supervise the implementation of the decisions made by the General Assembly, the Council and the Board;
 - (3) develop the activities of the Society and decide about matters of principle that concern the activities and the economy;
 - (4) decide about purchases and sales of real estate for the central administration and about other considerable investments, and direct and supervise the management of the Society's finances;
 - (5) adopt the guidelines for the Society's personnel policy and the principles of the employees' representation in the administration of the various activity units;
 - (6) in accordance with the Rules of Procedure engage and dismiss the Secretary General of the Society and other members of management within the central administration;
 - (7) appoint among its members or other individual members of the Society for specific tasks committees, commissions and working groups for a fixed term;
 - (8) when necessary appoint Boards of Directors for those institutions which are subordinate to the Board and issue Rules and Regulations for their activities;

- (9) supervise for its part that the name and emblem of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent are not used contrary to the regulations;
 - (10) consider any other matters presented by the Secretary General; and
 - (11) consider other similar matters.
- (2) The Boards of Directors are responsible for the activities of their institutions in accordance with the plan of action and budget approved by the Board, as stipulated in their Rules and Regulations and in the Rules of Procedure for the Society.
 - (3) As prescribed in the Rules of Procedure of the Society, the Board can delegate matters within its competence to a committee, commission, Board of Directors, the Secretary General or other staff members.

Section 28

The Secretary General

- (1) The Secretary General shall
 - (1) direct and develop the work of the Society;
 - (2) be responsible for the preparation and presentation of the matters to be considered by the Board;
 - (3) be responsible for the implementation of the decisions made by the General Assembly, the Council and the Board;
 - (4) lead and supervise the activities of the Society's employees; and
 - (5) on behalf of the Board supervise that the property and assets of the Society are managed and used in an appropriate manner.
- (2) The Secretary General can delegate the handling and deciding of individual matters within his or her competence to staff members as determined in the Rules of Procedure of the Society.
- (3) The Secretary General can take over the decision or presentation of a matter being handled by a staff member within the central administration or refer the decision of a matter to the Board.

Chapter 6

Patron and distinctions

Section 29

Patron

The provisions of the Act on the Finnish Red Cross apply to the President of the Republic acting as the patron of the Society. The Society's Board invites the President as patron.

Section 30

Badges of merit

- (1) The Society's badges of merit are the cross of merit, and the medal of merit in silver and in bronze.
- (2) A badge of merit can be awarded to a Finnish or foreign national who has worked meritoriously and unselfishly for the Society and its purposes.

Section 31

Description of the badges of merit

- (1) The cross of merit is a red enamelled cross, in the centre of which there is a circle surrounded by a green oak leaf crown, inside which there is an emblem on a white surface symbolizing the Red Cross. Both the cross itself and the emblem symbolizing the Red Cross have a gold-coloured edging. On the reverse the cross of merit bears the letters SPR as an abbreviation of the Society's name and underneath them the letters FRK.
- (2) On the obverse of the medal of merit there is an emblem symbolizing the Red Cross surrounded by an oak leaf crown and the words *Inter arma caritas*, and on the reverse the name of the Society.
- (3) The medal of merit is attached by a red ribbon with white stripes, the width of which is 30 millimetres.

Section 32

Grant of the badges of merit

- (1) The President of the Republic decides on grant of the Society's badges of merit as provided in the Act on the Finnish Red Cross. The Society's Board submits a proposal on granting the badges of merit to the Ministry of the Interior.
- (2) The badge of merit is accompanied by a diploma officially signed by the Society. The badge of merit and the diploma are issued free of charge.

Section 33

Other distinctions

The Society's Board can also decide on other distinctions than the badges of merit and issue more detailed guidelines on them.

Chapter 7

Miscellaneous provisions

Section 34

Decision-making and elections

- (1) At the General Assembly and at the meetings of the Council and the Board both matters of substance and matters of procedure are decided by simple majority of the votes cast, with the exceptions provided in section 21(14), section 25(7) and section 40. If the votes are equal, the chairperson's vote is decisive.
- (2) In an election the persons having received the majority of votes are elected. However, if only one person is to be elected, more than half of the votes cast is required. If the votes are equal, elections are decided by drawing lots.
- (3) Elections are conducted by ballot if any of the voting persons present so require.

Section 35

Disqualification

No-one must participate in the consideration of a matter where his or her personal interests may conflict with those of the Society in the manner laid down in sections 26 and 37 of the Associations Act (503/1989).

Section 36

Liability for damages

- (1) The provisions of the Associations Act concerning the liability for damages apply to the Board members and the Secretary General of the Society, the members of the Society's District and Branch Boards, and the staff members of the Society. What is separately provided shall apply to an employee's liability to compensate damages.
- (2) The provisions of the Associations Act shall apply concerning the personal responsibility of the Society's members for the liabilities of the Society and its Districts and Branches.

Section 37

Signing the name of the Society

- (1) The name of the Society is signed by the President or Vice-Presidents of the Society, each separately together with the Secretary General or a member of the Board, as authorized by the Board.
- (2) The name of a District is signed by its President and Vice-President together or one of them separately together with the District Manager.
- (3) The name of a Branch is signed by its President and Vice-President together or one of them separately together with the secretary of the Branch.
- (4) A person who is legally incompetent, who has been declared bankrupt, who is subject to a prohibition to pursue a business, or whose legal competence has been restricted can neither sign the name of the Society, a District or a Branch nor represent the Society, the District or the Branch.
- (5) A summons or other notice of service is considered to have reached the Society, a District or a Branch when one of those entitled to sign the name of the unit has received the summons or the service.
- (6) The Society's Board shall keep a list of those entitled to sign the name of the Society. This list shall be available at the National Headquarters and particulars and extracts from the list shall be given to those who so request.

Section 38

Activity and accounting period

The activity and accounting period of the Society equals the calendar year.

Section 39

Economy, bookkeeping and auditing

- (1) The Accounting Act (1336/1997) and Accounting Decree (1339/1997) shall where applicable be applied to the economy and bookkeeping of the Society, and the Auditing Act (936/1994) shall be applied to the auditing.
- (2) Further regulations about the economy, bookkeeping and auditing of the central administration, the Districts and the Branches are issued in the economy rules adopted by the Council.

Section 40

Amendment of the statutes and use of the assets if the Society is dissolved

- (1) Amendments to this Decree can be made by Decree, the General Assembly of the Society having decided on the matter with a majority of at least three-fourths of the votes cast.
- (2) A decision by the General Assembly to the effect that the Society shall discontinue its activities shall be made in the manner provided in subsection (1) above.

- (3) If the Society is dissolved, its funds shall be used for the purpose mentioned in section 3, with due consideration of the special provisions in deeds of donations and wills.

Chapter 8
Entry into force and transitional provisions

Section 41
Entry into force

- (1) This Decree enters into force on 1 March 2000.
(2) This Decree repeals:
 (1) the Decree on the Badges of Merit of the Finnish Red Cross (79/1931); and
 (2) the Decree on the Finnish Red Cross (1065/1997).

Section 42
Transitional provisions

- (1) The Society's Rules of Procedure and economy rules as well as the Rules and Regulations of the Districts and Branches adopted under the Decree specified in section 41(2)(2) above shall remain in force.
(2) The Council and Board as well as the District and Branch organs appointed under the Decree specified in section 41(2)(2) above shall continue till the end of their term.