

# Organisational set-up and departments within the association executive committee

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## 1. The association executive committee

The executive committee is responsible for the following tasks:

**Implementing the association's objectives:** The executive committee is the executive and management body of the association, meaning it is basically the "manager". It is responsible for managing current business and implementing the association's objectives in accordance with law and the articles of association. It executes decisions taken by the general meeting, and plans, organises, decides on, delegates and manages association work.

**Finances:** The executive committee is responsible for using the association's financial means in a way that makes sense economically, and being transparent about such matters to its members. By law, the executive committee is required to keep accounting records on the association's income and outgoings, as well as on the association's assets. The articles of association set out the committee's signatory powers. A joint signature is recommended (i.e. documents that concern legal affairs are always signed by two members of the executive committee).

**Culture:** The executive committee helps to shape the culture of the association, i.e. the way in which people interact with one another, how committee members communicate with one another and which values are important. Also key in this regard is the way in which the executive committee keeps its members up to date and communicates with them.

**External representation:** The executive committee represents the association to the outside work and can conclude legal business on behalf of the association. It informs the public of association-related matters, provides opinions and can engage in litigation proceedings on behalf of the association if needed.

**Other powers:** The association's articles of association may confer other powers onto the executive committee, such as including or excluding members or the power to issue regulations. In all other cases, the powers of the general assembly laid down by law apply (Swiss Civil Code, Art. 64 – 65).

**Number of committee members:** The number of committee members should be conducive to an efficient way of working and create a good meeting and communication culture, as well as enable work to be distributed optimally. Depending on the association (e.g. in a club), representatives of certain groupings, regions and funding bodies, etc., may also need to be taken into account. In practice, executive committees of 3-7 people are generally most effective. In small associations, the general meeting and the executive committee may be identical.

**Departments:** The way in which an executive committee is composed or which units it contains is not set out in law. According to Article 69 of the Swiss Civil Code: "The committee is entitled and obliged as defined under the articles of association to manage and represent the association." Each association can therefore itself decide how the executive committee is to be organised. According to the articles of association, committee members can either be elected by function or the committee may constitute itself. The latter means that the executive committee divides tasks among the units and the work itself.

**Composition:** The executive committee generally fulfils the duties assigned to it as a collective body. Ideally, the association committee will represent a wide range of skills and different specialist knowledge. Willingness to collaborate and a good discussion culture are crucial for all committee members. In the spirit of not simply abandoning tradition, but remaining contemporary and innovative, it makes sense to unite tried-and-tested and innovative strengths within the committee. To ensure continuity, care should be taken to ensure that the body consists of both experienced and new committee members.

## 2. The units

### The chairperson

The law does not specify any explicit powers for the chairperson, just the executive committee as a whole. From a legal point of view, the chairperson therefore does not have any additional powers to those held by the other committee members. Despite this, tasks are typically distributed as follows:

The chairperson represents the association both internally and externally.

#### ***The chairperson's most important tasks:***

- Coordinates association business, namely preparing for, convening and running committee meetings and general assemblies.
- Presents an annual report to the annual general meeting, in which the association's and the committee's most important activities are described.
- Initiates projects and develops visions.
- Brings together divergent groups within the association. Mediates in the event of disputes.
- Represents the association to the outside world and negotiates with outside persons, organisations or committees.
- Enters into agreements on behalf of the association.

***Required skills and capabilities***

- Leadership skills, team-oriented, cooperative management approach
- Good organisational skills, ability to stay on top of things
- Sound communication skills, ability to get on well with others and express oneself clearly
- Mediation skills, ability to mediate between different interests
- Critical faculties and ability to handle conflicts

See also the other work aids on association management, [www.vitaminb.ch/a-z/tools/work-aids](http://www.vitaminb.ch/a-z/tools/work-aids)

**Vice chairperson**

Since the vice chairperson normally deputises for the president, he or she is required to have the same skills and capabilities. The vice chairperson may also assume additional special tasks.

Sometimes the role of vice chairperson is a chance for a person to become acquainted with the position before assuming the office of chairperson at a later date. In this case, the vice chairperson needs to be familiar with all of the tasks typically undertaken by the chairperson.

**Treasurer**

This function may be called something different from association to association: treasurer, teller, cashier, trustee, cashier, etc.

No matter the name, however, this function always deals with the management of finances, a job that calls for somebody extremely trustworthy.

Depending on the association, the treasurer may also be entrusted with managing membership and/or administrative tasks.

In associations that outsource their accounting, the person responsible for finances liaises with the accounting body.

***The treasurer's most important tasks:***

- Receives member contributions and any other credit.
- Deals with transactions.
- Manages association assets.
- Draws up the annual budget together with the unit heads.
- Is responsible for controlling, i.e. the ongoing reconciliation of actual income/outgoings with the budget.

- Regularly keeps the executive committee up to date on the association's financial performance.
- Draws up the annual financial accounts for the attention of the inspection body and the general meeting.
- Reviews the financial impacts of new projects planned.
- Makes suggestions on sourcing new sources of finance.
- Depending on the size and type of the association: responsible for taxes, social security, insurance matters.

***Required skills and capabilities***

- Honesty, integrity
- Flair for numbers, sense of order
- Basic knowledge of accounting
- Accurate and precise way of working, conscientiousness

**Actuary**

The actuary is responsible for taking minutes of meetings and general assemblies. This function is also sometimes referred to as a clerk.

In many associations, the actuary assumes the role of the secretariat and also keeps member lists.

***The actuary's most important tasks:***

- Taking minutes during meetings and general assemblies.

***Required skills and capabilities***

- Reliability, sense of duty
- Good language skills
- Good writing skills or experience of composing texts
- Ability to extract key information from long discussions and implement decisions to the letter
- Good computer skills

See also the work aid on outsourcing administrative tasks: <https://www.vitaminb-e.ch/tools/work-aids>

## Public relations/communication

Depending on the type and size of the association, it may make sense to engage someone specifically to take care of public relations, or to appoint a special unit for this task.

### ***The most important tasks of the public relations unit:***

- Creating a marketing and communication concept.
- Implementing marketing and communication measures.
- Producing or writing the association bulletin.
- Maintaining the association's website.
- Coordinating media work.

### ***Required skills and capabilities***

- Professional experience in media or communications
- Sound writing style
- Good verbal communication skills

## Other units

Associations can decide whether they wish to create further units.

Depending on this, other units may be set up, such as personnel management (for associations with a branch and/or employees), member management or general environment monitoring (innovation research).

## Observers

Observers are committee members who do not run a certain unit. They may take over tasks from committee members with too much on their plate.

Observers should also meet the same general requirements as all other committee members:

### ***Required skills and capabilities***

- Sound management and organisational skills
- Ability to work in a team
- Enthusiasm
- Sufficient time to dedicate to the job

### 3. Functions that are not part of the executive committee – but still important

#### Secretariat

In small associations, the secretariat's tasks are performed by the actuary or treasury. Larger associations will have a secretariat, often with an employed, salaried staff member. The secretariat usually reports directly to the chairperson, but sometimes also to the finance / administration or personnel unit.

#### Auditor

The association's accounting records should be reviewed by specialists not on the executive committee. By law, associations are only required to undergo audits if they have a certain balance sheet total (Swiss Civil Code, Article 69b).

##### ***The auditor's most important tasks:***

- Checking the association's accounting records and annual accounts in terms of correctness and compliance with statutory provisions and the articles of association.
- Checking the reporting of financial results against the earnings situation.
- Advising the treasurer and association committee on financial matters.
- Drawing up a report and proposal on the audit of the accounting records and producing an assessment of developments in the association's finances for the attention of the annual general meeting.
- Uncovering any irregularities or concealed information.

##### ***Required skills and capabilities***

- Good knowledge of single- and double-entry accounting
- Strong accounting knowledge
- Precise way of working
- Experience of accounting procedures

See also the work aid on financial audits <https://www.vitaminb-e.ch/tools/work-aids>