

The association's annual report

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Target audience

The annual report is an opportunity for the executive committee to update members annually on the annual accounts and what is going on within the association. It can be used as a way for the executive committee to present itself and the association to members and third parties alike. The annual report can also be aimed at other target groups, such as users of the association's services, potential members, friends and relatives of members, authorities, institutions, specialist departments, companies, performance agreement partners, other associations and organisations, sponsors, donors, funders and the media (magazines, trade media, local radios, etc.).

Preparing the annual report / step 1:

Start by discussing within the executive board who you want the annual report to target. Depending on the target audience, structuring and preparing the content may be easier or more complicated.

Purpose

The annual report may serve the following purposes:

- Report by the executive committee, chair, individual units
- Providing information to members
- Providing information to third parties
- Providing information to other organisations, partners, authorities, specialist departments
- Introducing members, thank yous and honours
- Thanking donors and sponsors, fundraising
- Providing a chronicle of the association's history
- Image advertising
- Media and PR work

Preparing the annual report / step 2:

Next, think about the purposes of the annual report.

Sections

Depending on the association, the annual report may consist of a few printed pages or be a professionally designed publication. It may contain the following sections:

- **Welcome:** editorial by the chair
- **Activities of the executive committee:** meetings, resolutions
- **Report by the office:** personnel-related matters, other special areas
- **Activities of the association:** goings-on, campaigns, events, projects, anecdotes
- **Organisational set-up:** executive committee, management, units, organisational chart
- **Personnel:** incoming and outgoing members, deaths
- **Finances:** annual report, balance sheet, auditor's report, budget (separately or integrated)
- **Honours:** anniversaries, awards
- **Thank yous:** donors, sponsors, members, employees, volunteers
- **Services:** offers for members and third parties
- **Statistics:** diagrams, such as membership trends, finances
- **Outlook:** objectives and plans for the future
- **Images:** reminders, introducing people, illustrations, setting a friendly tone
- **Addresses:** executive committee, units, services
- **Information:** date of the next general meeting, information on upcoming events

Preparing the annual report / step 3:

What are the topics you want to talk about? Create areas of focus!

But: Because the annual report serves as a basis for formally approving the actions of the executive committee, it is vital to include the sections on activities, finances, organisational set-up, personnel and honours.

Author(s)

The annual report does not necessarily need to be written by the chair. It can also consist of reports by individual executive committee members, the office or employees, for example. Viewpoints by members can also be included. If various authors are involved, the report will need to be edited as a whole afterwards.

Preparing the annual report / step 4:

**Who should write the annual report or the different parts of which it is composed?
Give clear instructions and set deadlines.**

Structure and design

The annual report is not a record of current events, but sets areas of focus. The structure of the report in terms of content and images should be used to focus on important, interesting areas. Images brighten up the text and conjure up certain feelings. The report may also be written under a motto (changing annually) or from another perspective.

The text will be more readable by including titles, lead paragraphs and subheadings. Short, clear sentences will enhance readability (no more than 20 words per sentence, few subclauses, few foreign words).

The structure and design of annual reports can vary greatly: e.g. structured by topic and/or in chronological order, ordered by unit, designed as a magazine or image brochure, printed as a short version, with a detailed version of the report viewable upon request. Having a digital version online will save on printing costs and can be viewed at all times and from anywhere. It also means that older annual reports can be archived.

Products designed by laypeople may also be appealing. The important thing is to ensure that the font is easy to read and the typography is simple but functional. Professional products should not give the impression that funds are being used for enhancing image rather than achieving the objects of the association.

Preparing the annual report / step 5:

The annual report is a reflection of the image of your association. Its appearance is seen as a message.

Sources for this work aid: participant documentation from executive committee seminars on writing an annual report by Emil Zopfi and Christine Loriot