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INSTRUCTIONS ON REMOTE MEETINGS FOR ORGANISATIONS

In a normal situation, participating in a meeting of the association (or a similar meeting) using a telecommunications link or some other technical means – that is, participating remotely – requires the rules of the association to allow for this (Associations Act, Section 17). In a normal situation, the Associations Act further states that remote participation requires the establishment of voting and election rules 'in which shall be included any regulations on voting and elections needed to supplement the provisions of this Act and the rules of the association' (Associations Act, Section 30). The voting and election rules must be approved in a meeting of the association.

Associations Act, Section 17, Subsection 2, defines remote participation as a whole in the following manner (underlining added to highlight the relevant part):

> 'The rules may contain a provision to the effect that members may, under the conditions referred to in the rules, attend a meeting by post, using data connection or some other technical means during the meeting or before the meeting. **In such case, the association must be able to ensure that the right to attend and the correctness of vote count can be established in a way that is comparable to that used in ordinary meetings of the association.** If the primary purpose of the association is to exercise influence over State affairs, the right to attend will only apply during the meeting.'

However, the Finnish Parliament has approved an exception to the Associations Act, based on which associations may hold meetings of the association during the coronavirus situation using a remote connection even if the necessary entries in their rules and regulations do not exist. According to this exception, it is also possible to require advance registration to the meeting of the association.

HERE ARE SOME GOOD TIPS FOR REMOTE MEETINGS:

1. It is a good idea to require participants to register in advance. The deadline for advance registration can be two weeks before the meeting at the earliest, but in practice, we recommend setting the deadline for registration relatively close to the meeting itself, the day before the meeting or the morning of the meeting day, for instance – as long as the

organising party has enough time to go through the participants' information. In the registration, you should ask for at least the name and email of the people registering for the meeting. You can send a link to the meeting to the participant's email address closer to the meeting. This means that you do not have to share the meeting link publicly – you can send it to participants based on advance registration.

2. In remote meetings, you must be able to establish the right to attend and the correctness of the vote count in a way that is comparable to that used in regular, physical meetings. Correspondingly, you do not need online banking codes or similar methods in registration – identification can be done using other means. To identify the participants, you should, for instance, compare the information in your member register to the details of the people who have registered. Comparing, for example, the name and email address listed in the member register to the details entered when registering is a perfectly valid way of identifying participants in advance.

3. In the meeting itself, identification can be based on faces, for instance: the remote participants open their camera to allow them to be identified with satisfactory reliability. If using the camera is not an option, you can use other methods or simply settle with authentication done via email. No single fool-proof method exists here. In any case, the handles of members participating remotely should follow the format 'first name last name' to avoid unnecessary hassle in the meeting due to people trying to be funny.

4. During the meeting, particularly in voting situations, the number of votes to be given must be monitored and, if needed, reviewed. This can be done in a manner corresponding to a roll call: checking whether everyone who had registered is present. People exiting or entering the meeting should be carefully recorded in the minutes to ensure that you know the number of votes in the 'room' at any given time. You should also remind participants of this to avoid any suspicion of vote rigging.

5. Voting can be conducted using either a separate voting service or software or premade voting forms. Services and software can even be found for free online, but every organisation is responsible for choosing one that suits itself. Simply typing 'online voting tools' or similar in a search engine may produce results. However, organisations can also create form templates for voting situations – these templates can then be filled during the meeting to correspond to the matter you are voting on. This requires a certain amount of effort on the IT front during the meeting, but that is somewhat unavoidable.

a. The idea behind a form template is to provide the organisation with an electronic template that can be copied and then edited to add the names of the people you are voting on, for instance. The form can then be edited so that participants can vote for as many persons as it is possible to vote for in the vote in question. Once the form has been edited to make it suit your needs, it can be delivered to participants using the chat feature of the remote meeting, for instance, or some other way. The participants are given a certain amount of time to vote, after which the form is closed and the tellers check the votes from the form. After the voting time has ended, you can naturally ask whether everyone who wanted to vote has managed to do so.

b. The Zoom programme also includes a polling feature, which can be utilised especially in situations where you can only vote for one option. In multiple-choice scenarios, it is not possible to limit how many options you can vote for on Zoom, which may make certain voting scenarios difficult. When using Zoom, you should also remember that the 'host' or 'co-host' cannot vote in the meeting, which means that the 'host' should be the chair of the meeting and preferably someone who does not have the right to vote – an alumni, for instance. Tellers should check the votes to the extent that it is possible, by taking a screen capture of the voting result, for instance.

c. In electronic voting, you should, in any case, remember the secrecy of the vote: the form should have no special identifiers for respondents, such as email addresses. However, you can check the report of the possible voting form to ensure that the votes have been given in a valid manner – that voters have not voted for too many options, for instance. In case there are any defective votes, you should do what is done in physical meetings, too: cancel the vote. The tellers' role is thus still important for the course of the meeting.

6. In voting situations, you should generally receive as many votes as there are people entitled to vote participating in the meeting. Accordingly, if more votes are given than there are people entitled to vote, the vote should be retaken. If fewer votes are given than there are people entitled to vote, you should check that everyone who is present has managed to vote. The starting point is thus that each participant votes either for the option they prefer or blank, exactly like when voting physically. As per normal, a voting report – the votes given – must also be entered as an appendix to the minutes.