

Proposals for amendments to the laws of VR

VR General Meeting 2024



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Proposal 1.

Art. 20.2. On the election of the Consultative Council, paragraph 2.

Current version:

“Advertisements shall be placed in newspapers and on the home page of the union calling for members who wish to take a seat on the list.”

Will be:

“Advertisements shall be placed **on the web sites of the union and the largest news media sites or in another verifiable way** for members who wish to take a seat on the list.”

Proposal 2.

Art. 20.3. The implementation of elections, paragraph 3

Current version:

“The Election Committee shall advertise an invitation for candidacies in newspapers and on the website of the union.”

Will be:

“The Election Committee shall advertise an invitation for candidacies on the web sites of the union and the largest news media sites or in another verifiable way.”

Proposal 3.

Art. 23. Annual general meeting, paragraph 1

Current version:

“The meeting shall be advertised on radio, newspapers and on the electronic media of VR or in another proven manner with a notice of at least 10 days.”

Will be:

“The meeting shall be advertised **on the web sites of the union and the largest news media sites or in another verifiable way** with a notice of at least 10 days.”

Proposal 4.

Art. 25. Meetings of the union, paragraph 1.

Current version:

“The meeting is lawful if convened with advertising on radio, newspapers and electronic media of VR or in another provable manner with a notice of not less than two days.”

Will be:

“The meeting is lawful if convened with advertising on **the web sites of the union and the largest news media sites or in another verifiable way** with a notice of at least two days.”

Notes with proposals 1 to 4.

The above-mentioned amendments to the VR laws are proposed in light of major changes in the media and new possibilities of reaching members with information about elections or meetings. VR's laws stipulate that votes and meetings must be advertised on VR's website, but also in newspapers and/or radio. Today there is only one newspaper in the country which is also a subscription newspaper. That platform is thus not a general platform for the union's advertisements. It is the assessment of the union's development department that advertisements in newspapers and radio are less effective than advertisements on the web and social media.

In art. 8 of ASÍ's voting rules says:

"When the candidacy deadline has expired and proposals or lists have been returned, when a collective agreement is ready for processing or a proposal is available for announcing a work stoppage, the election committee shall advertise the general vote with posted advertisements, an advertisement in newspapers and/or on the radio, an advertisement on the website of the member organizations or in another way to ensure that members are informed sufficiently early about the voting."

The essence of the proposals is that advertising elections and meetings will be done in the following way: on VR's web sites and the largest news media, or in another verifiable way.

In this way, the main focus will be on VR's web media (the union's website and social media) and the main news media web sites, but it is also possible to use other media, e.g. print media or radio, if deemed necessary.

Proposal 5.

Art. 14. Consultative Council, paragraph 2

Current version:

"The Consultative Council shall consist of the Board and their alternates, the departmental boards that are created with the merger of other commercial employee unions of the regions and 82 representatives elected in a general election for a term of two years at a time. The chairman of the union is also the chairman of the Consultative Council, and he/she convenes it to a meeting at least 4 times a year and as needed."

Will be:

"The Consultative Council shall consist of the Board and their alternates, **the board of the Youth Council of VR**, the departmental boards that are created with the merger of other commercial employee unions of the regions and 82 representatives elected in a general election for a term of two years at a time. The chairman of the union is also the chairman of the Consultative Council, and he/she convenes it to a meeting at least 4 times a year and as needed.

Notes with proposal 5.

VR's Board established VR's Youth Council in September 2023. The council consists of six representatives of VR's younger members aged 18-35. This change proposes that the board of VR's Youth Council automatically have the right to sit on VR's Consultative Council.

VR's Board approved at board meeting #1252 operating rules and the role of VR's Youth Council. It says in Article 5.: „Elected representatives in the VR Youth Council automatically have a seat in the VR Consultative Council“. To achieve this, paragraph 2 of article 14 must therefore state that the elected representatives in the Youth Council of VR shall be part of the Consultative Council of VR.

Proposal 6.

Art. 10. The Board

Current version:

„The Board of the union shall consist of 15 principal members and three alternates. The chairman shall be elected for a term of two years. Other principal members shall be elected 7 at a time for a term of two years, thus 7 members alternately leave the Board each year. Alternates shall be elected for one year at a time. If a Board member leaves employment in commerce, services or offices or begins employment under the auspices of another union, a member shall be elected in his/her place at the first Board meeting thereafter. The Board of the union shall set its own Rules of Procedure. The Board elects a vice chairman and secretary and allocates its tasks in other respects.“

Will be:

„The Board of the union shall consist of 15 principal members and three alternates. The chairman shall be elected for a term of two years. Other principal members shall be elected 7 at a time for a term of two years, thus 7 members alternately leave the Board each year. Alternates shall be elected for one year at a time. If a Board member leaves employment in commerce, services or offices or begins employment under the auspices of another union, a member shall be elected in his/her place at the first Board meeting thereafter. The Board of the union shall set its own Rules of Procedure. The Board elects a vice chairman and secretary and allocates its tasks in other respects.“

A majority of the Board is needed to bind the union.“

Notes with proposal 6.

The union's laws do not state who can bind the union. In general, it is stated in the laws or bylaws of associations and unions how many directors are needed to bind the association or union in question. The Board of VR has always followed the rule that a majority of the board is needed to bind the union. Currently, all board members must sign if one name is missing on a power of attorney when documents are being notarized, as there is nothing in the union's bylaws on how many board members are needed to bind the union. The Board therefore proposes to include in the law the following clause: „A majority of the Board is needed to bind the union.“ This does not call for a change in practice, it is merely to clarify that a majority of the Board is needed to bind the union.

Proposal 7.

Art. 3. Membership

New paragraph:

„A full member who bases his full membership on the payment of membership fees from a fee for sitting on boards or councils of the union or on behalf of it in part or in whole does not have the right to stand for office. This provision does not apply to elected representatives who are also employees of the union.“

Notes with proposal 7.

The proposal is based on the fact that those who are elected or appointed to confidential positions must, upon initial election or appointment, meet the general eligibility criteria, i.e. to be employed in the union's field of work. If the person concerned quits his/her job, membership fees from the commission due to sitting on the board of the union can automatically lead to the maintenance of eligibility even if the person is demonstrably no longer working according to the union's collective agreements. However, the amendment is not intended to deprive an elected person of the right to stand for office if the person is also an employee of the union, e.g. the chairman.

Proposal 8.

Art. 11. The qualifications of Board members

Current version:

„Board members according to Article 10 and, as applicable, Board members of funds according to paragraph 3 of Article 26 shall be employed in the area of operation of the union, shall be financially independent and may not, in the past 5 years, have suffered a judgement for a punishable offence. Board members may not own more than a 5% share in a company operating in the area covered by the union and it is not permissible for them to be employed as managing directors of a company, institution or organization where they have the same legal position as if they were the employer. Board members who cease to qualify according to the above during the term of office are automatically and immediately removed from the Board and replaced by their alternates until qualifications are satisfied anew. Candidates for the Board of VR shall fulfil the above qualifications before the candidacy deadline, cf. 20.3.

If disputes arise regarding qualifications, the Election Committee shall decide.

In the deliberation on individual issues, a Board member shall vacate his/her seat if he/she has a vested interest that may conflict with the interests of the union.

If a Board member loses his/her qualifications during his/her term of office, he/she shall immediately resign from the Board of VR. The same rule applies to other elected representatives serving on the Boards and Councils of the union.“

Will be:

„Board members according to Article 10 and, as applicable, Board members of funds according to paragraph 3 of Article 26 shall be employed in the area of operation of the union. **The same rule applies to other elected representatives on the union's boards and councils. A Board member** shall be financially independent and may not, in the past 5 years, have suffered a judgement for a punishable offence. Board members may not own more than a 5% share in a company operating in the area covered by the union. **The same applies even if their share of ownership is less than 5%, if the spouse of a Board member or his/her children have a controlling share in such a company.** Board members may not be employed as managing directors of a company, institution or organization where they have the same legal position as if they were the employer. Board members who cease to qualify according to the above during the term of office are automatically and immediately removed from the Board and replaced by their alternates **until the end of the term. The same rule applies to other elected representatives in the union's boards and councils.** Candidates for the Board of VR shall fulfil the above qualifications before the candidacy deadline, cf. 20.3, **paragraph 3, taking into account paragraph 7 the same article.**

If disputes arise regarding qualifications, the Election Committee shall decide.

In the deliberation on individual issues, a Board member shall vacate his/her seat if he/she has a vested interest that may conflict with the interests of the union.“

Notes with proposal 8.

It is important to clarify what is meant by the field of work and that a person who does not receive a salary according to the union's collective agreements and does not work for an employer who is bound by the agreements directly or indirectly according to law 55/1980, even if membership fees are returned to VR, does not have the right to stand for office as he does not have a common wage or social interest with other members of the union.

Article 11 the union's law is intended to prevent employers or their representatives from standing for office at the union. It is possible to bypass the provisions of Article 11 by transferring shares to a spouse or children. In that situation, the owner of a small share is in practice, due to financial solidarity with the spouse and expected heirs, in a position that may be incompatible with the interests of the members of the VR, e.g. in connection with the conclusion of collective agreements, but the union's board of directors is its negotiation committee, cf. Article 17 of the laws of the union.

Furthermore, it is proposed that the last paragraph be changed, a part being included in par. 3. while the first part of the final paragraph is deleted as the current paragraph 3 already deals with the same topic. Furthermore, it is proposed that business owners and others who generally can not stand for office in the union, weighing possible conflicts of interest due to their position in the business world, cannot make changes to their registered status in order to gain those rights again. With a proposal to change paragraph 4 candidates are enabled to correct incorrect or contradictory information that may affect their right to stand for office.

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Proposal 9.

Art. 20.1 On the election of the chairman and the Board

Current version:

„The chairman shall be elected in individual elections every other year. Seven Board members shall be elected annually for a term of two years and three alternate members for a term of one year in individual elections.

If there are more candidates standing for office than vacancies, an electronic election open to full fledged members shall be held.

If an insufficient number of candidates stand for election, the Board of the union shall present a proposal for Board members that is put to the Consultative Council for approval. If more proposals appear at the meeting of the Consultative Council, a vote between them shall be held at the meeting. Issues shall be decided by a majority vote.“

Will be:

„The chairman shall be elected in individual elections every **four years**. Seven Board members shall be elected **every other year** for a term of **four years** and three alternate members for a term of **two years** in individual elections.

If there are more candidates standing for office than vacancies, an electronic election open to full fledged members shall be held.

If an insufficient number of candidates stand for election, the Board of the union shall present a proposal for Board members that is put to the Consultative Council for approval. If more proposals appear at the meeting of the Consultative Council, a vote between them shall be held at the meeting. Issues shall be decided by a majority vote.“

Proposal 10.

Art. 10 The Board

Current version:

„The Board of the union shall consist of 15 principal members and three alternates. The chairman shall be elected for a term of two years. Other principal members shall be elected 7 at a time for a term of two years, thus 7 members alternately leave the Board each year. Alternates shall be elected for one year at a time.“

Will be:

„The Board of the union shall consist of 15 principal members and three alternates. The chairman shall be elected for a term of **four years**. Other principal members shall be elected 7 at a time for a term of **four years**, thus 7 members alternately leave the Board **every other year**. Alternates shall be elected for **two years** at a time.“

Proposal 11.

Art. 10 The Board

Current version:

„On the election of the Board:

Candidates shall be ranked on the ballot in a random order and voters shall mark at least one and at most seven. In order to maintain gender equality in the VR Board, the candidate receiving the most votes shall receive the first seat on the Board. The next seat shall be awarded to the person of the opposite gender receiving the second-most votes, etc. This gender arrangement shall also apply to the ranking of alternates. The seven candidates who receive the most votes according to the above shall be deemed the duly elected principal Board members of VR for the next two years. The next three shall be deemed to be the three duly elected alternates to the VR Board for a period of one year.

Will be:

On the election of the Board:

„Candidates shall be ranked on the ballot in a random order and voters shall mark at least one and at most seven. In order to

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maintain gender equality in the VR Board, the candidate receiving the most votes shall receive the first seat on the Board. The next seat shall be awarded to the person of the opposite gender receiving the second-most votes, etc. This gender arrangement shall also apply to the ranking of alternates. The seven candidates who receive the most votes according to the above shall be deemed the duly elected principal Board members of VR for the next **four years and the next three shall be deemed to be the three duly elected alternates to the VR Board for a period of two years.**

Proposal 12.

Art. 20.2 On the election of the Consultative Council

Current version:

„An annual election shall take place to elect 41 representatives in a list election for the Consultative Council for a term of two years.“

Will be:

„**Every other year** an election shall take place to elect 41 representatives in a list election for the Consultative Council for a term of **four years.**“

Proposal 13.

Art. 14 Consultative Council

Current version:

„The Consultative Council shall consist of the Board and their alternates, the departmental boards that are created with the merger of other commercial employee unions of the regions and 82 representatives elected in a general election for a term of two years at a time. The chairman of the union is also the chairman of the Consultative Council, and he/she convenes it to a meeting at least 4 times a year and as needed.“

Will be:

„The Consultative Council shall consist of the Board and their alternates, the departmental boards that are created with the merger of other commercial employee unions of the regions and 82 representatives elected in a general election for a term of **four years** at a time. The chairman of the union is also the chairman of the Consultative Council, and he/she convenes it to a meeting at least 4 times a year and as needed.“

Proposal 14.

Art. 15 Departments

Current version:

„The Board of the union is authorised to operate departments within the union by professions/sectors and regions. The role of a department is, inter alia, to promote the joint interests of employees in professions/sectors and regions, support their education and deal with wage issues for the professions/sectors and regions. The Board of a department is elected at a departmental meeting. A departmental Board is composed of not less than 3 members who divide tasks amongst them, and alternates shall be equal in number. The term of office is 2 years. The departmental Board can receive funds pursuant to the further decision of the Board of the union to use for purposes of education and culture within the profession. A department shall set further rules of operation for itself that the Board of the union confirms.“

Will be:

„The Board of the union is authorised to operate departments within the union by professions/sectors and regions. The role of a department is, inter alia, to promote the joint interests of employees in professions/sectors and regions, support their education and deal with wage issues for the professions/sectors and regions. The Board of a department is elected at a departmental meeting. A departmental Board is composed of not less than 3 members who divide tasks amongst them, and alternates shall be equal in number. The term of office is **4 years**. The departmental Board can receive funds pursuant to the further decision of the Board of the union to use for purposes of education and culture within the profession. A department shall set further rules of operation for itself that the Board of the union confirms.“

Proposal 15.

Provisional provisions in the law due to these changes in the law – Variants of elections in 2025 and 2026:

„Elections in 2025 must be with the new format in art. 20.1 and 20.2. In 2026, seven seats in the central board are elected for one year and 41 seats in the Consultative Council for one year. In 2027, seven seats in the main board are elected for four years and in the deputy board for two years. 41 representatives are elected to the Consultative Council for four years.

The next election after that will be in 2027 and then every other year, in full according to the new rules.“

Notes with proposal 9 - 15.

The Board of VR proposes changes to the union's laws aimed at holding elections in the union every other year instead of annually as is the case now. The term of office of the chairman, Board members and representatives on the Consultative Council would be extended from two years to four. Changes like these have been discussed in recent years.

The last few years has shown the disadvantages to holding elections every single year. Voter turnout is very low, especially when only the Board and the Consultative Council are up for election, only 4% of members voted in the 2020 Board elections. The issues discussed in the Board of the largest trade union in the country are complex and numerous and safe to claim that Board members feel they have just begun to fully grasp the job when their term of office is over. Four-year terms have been considered appropriate both in local government and parliamentary elections and elsewhere.

If the proposed changes are approved, the arrangement will be that the chairman would be elected for four years at a time, seven members of the Board would be elected for four years at a time, and seven members of the Board would alternate every other year. Deputies would be elected for two years at a time.

The proposal also extends to the elections to the boards of departments in order to ensure consistency. In the same way, the term of office of the Consultative Council would be extended so that every other year 41 representatives would be elected in a list election. If the changes are approved, it is necessary to add a temporary provision on a special type of election in order to adapt the new system to those who have been elected under the old law.