

## Work aid: Setting up an office

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To promote the further development of the association and reduce the burden on the executive committee, it may make sense to set up an office with paid employees.

### Advantages of an office

- The additional capacity an office frees up time for new tasks and additional services. This may entice additional people and organisations to join as members.
- It enhances presence, availability, continuity and expertise.
- Executive committee members are relieved of some of their day-to-day tasks, allowing them to concentrate on strategy and get involved in operational matters as needed.
- More and other people can get involved in executive committee work as an office will reduce the time commitment needed for committee members.

### An office comes with high demands

- The executive committee will need to become an employer and have to take on the role of manager. This is a change to its existing role: Management instead of cooperation, clear assignment of tasks, leadership even in difficult situations.
- Long-term funding for the office must be secured. Third-party funds (donations, foundations, etc.) aren't really an option. Funding (or at least a large part of it) must come from the association's own funds. The financial means have to cover not only salaries, but also ancillary costs such as social security contributions, infrastructure and unforeseen circumstances.
- The distinction between paid and unpaid work needs to be clearly defined and communicated. Ambiguity creates misunderstandings and uncertainty.
- The executive committee needs to take care of administrative aspects related to personnel and ensure that any absences can be covered.
- Often, expectations are too high because the workload is too small and efforts required for the work are not clearly defined. Or members of the executive committee expect employees to dedicate as much time and effort to the role as they do themselves, which often exceeds the benefits from paid work.
- If employees are paid too little for the work they do, this runs the risk that they are putting in more effort than they are getting back in payment. This creates a dependency for the association, as finding a replacement is hard at short notice and under the same conditions.

## How to set up an office

- The executive committee decides to establish an office in principle and weighs up the risks and opportunities (including financial matters).
- The members are informed and a resolution may need to be passed by the general meeting (in compliance with the articles of association! Who has the decision-making power here?).
- Tasks previously undertaken by the executive committee are quantified (time tracking!) and new tasks are defined in terms of content and time requirements. Here, it's important to distinguish between what is desired and what is feasible (create a specification sheet).
- On this basis, the tasks to be undertaken by the office are distinguished from those to be undertaken by the executive committee and a job profile is created.

The executive committee's new tasks include securing funding, management tasks and running the office, while clear and measurable goals need to be defined for the office. Funding must be planned for at least two to three years because, by employing people, the executive committee is making a commitment.

It's important to ensure broad-based support within the association, with members being kept in the loop and able to get involved. Depending on the size of the office, a work group may be set up or an external person or specialist may be consulted to assist with the preliminary work.

Setting up an office costs time and money!

## Possible employment options

- **Employment** based on an hourly wage or as a part-time option (contract): Third persons or members of the executive committee or association can be employed.
- **Mandate** for third persons, other offices or specialist departments, service providers or executive committee or association members.

In both cases, if a member of the executive committee or association is employed or given a mandate, the obligation to refrain from involvement (as set out in Article 68 of the Swiss Civil Code) must be observed and stipulated.

The advantages and disadvantages of the different options must be closely examined:

- **Expertise:** Is the necessary expertise available or can it be acquired quickly?
- **Continuity:** Is longer-term involvement likely?
- **Peak times:** Can more work be performed if needed?
- **Availability:** What times can the managers be contacted? Via which channels (meetings, telephone, email, WhatsApp or other online media, etc.)?
- **Absences:** How can absences (illness, holidays, etc.) be covered?

- **Expansion:** Can the office's workload be expanded if needed?
- **Dependence:** Can a competent replacement be found at short notice?
- **Personnel administration:** How much work will this entail?
- **If members of the executive committee are involved:** How to distinguish between paid work (mandate or employment) and unpaid executive committee work? What happens if the person leaves the executive committee?

### Other recommendations

Always obtain different offers or compare different applications. Seek the advice of a specialist when drawing up employment/mandate contracts. Inquire about salary and mandate rates. High levels of expertise must be compensated accordingly.

By employing someone, the association must register as an employer (social security contributions). Insurance matters (accident, sick pay, liability) must also be clarified. The infrastructure (office premises) must be provided – performing work from home is usually more cost-effective, but may have a negative impact on the association's presence. Shared offices may be an option.

The employment or mandate contract must clearly set out which tasks are counted as working time: meetings/communication, workload outside of normal working hours, travel time (to executive committee meetings, gatherings, etc.). For a smaller workload in particular, - agreements on how peak times can be covered and how times without work can be handled are important.

Business rules set out responsibilities, competencies, communication and signatory powers. It's always recommended to have two people as signatories. Rules on expenses create clarity (approval by cantonal tax authorities is necessary). The entry in the commercial register needs to be checked.

It must be defined who in the executive committee will be responsible (and who will be the deputy) for managing the office in terms of personnel and expertise. The competencies of the office and the executive committee must be clearly defined. Communication structures must be defined: Who needs to provide information in which situations? Who will be the communicator in problem situations? The executive committee must be aware that managing paid employees will place high demands on the voluntary executive committee, as the employees in the office often have more working hours available and often have more expertise.

**Other work aids**

- Work aid on labour law/social security law
- Work aid on model employment contracts
- Work aid on function charts
- Work aid on expenses and compensation
- Work aid on signatory powers

These and many other work aids are available at <https://www.vitaminb-e.ch/tools/work-aids/>