

Act relating to religious communities, etc.

Chapter I. Concerning freedom of religion and religious communities

Section 1. Everyone is entitled to engage in religious activities alone or together with others and to establish a religious community if this does not violate the law or normal standards of decency.

Section 2. No-one may bind himself legally to belonging or not belonging to a religious community, religious organization or order. Nor may anyone bind another person to such a body.

Section 3. Anyone over the age of 15 may join or resign from a religious community.

Section 4. No-one under the age of 20 may give a life-long promise to belong to a religious order, a monastery or similar organization. It is unlawful to accept such a promise.

Section 5. Children who are born when their parents are married shall belong to the same religious community as their parents.

If the parents belong to different religious communities outside the Church of Norway they shall decide together after the child has been born whether the child shall belong to a religious community and if so which community.

If the parents are not married when the child is born, the child shall belong to the same religious community as the mother.

Section 6. When the parents do not both belong to the Church of Norway they may together make the child a member of a religious community or withdraw the child from such a community as long as the child is under 15 years of age.

When only one of the parents has parental responsibility for the child, he or she may make this decision alone.

If neither of the parents has parental responsibility for the child, the guardian may make the child a member of a religious community or withdraw the child from such a community.

If possible, children of 12 years of age or more shall be allowed to express their opinions concerning registration or resignation of membership.

Section 7. No person who is not a Norwegian national and does not reside in the realm is regarded as belonging to a Norwegian religious community pursuant to this Act.

No one may belong to a religious community unless he also fulfils the conditions laid down by the community.

Section 8. No-one may pursuant to this Act belong at the same time to a registered religious community and to the Church of Norway, or to more than one registered religious community.

Section 9. The religious community itself decides procedures for registering new members of the community.

Any person who wishes to resign from a registered religious community or from the Church of Norway must either appear in person or send written notice to this effect to the spiritual or administrative leader of the community.

The spiritual or administrative leader ensures that the statutory conditions are fulfilled. He shall register new members and resignations and certify them.

Section 10. No one may employ improper arguments, promises or threats or proceed by other questionable means for the purpose of persuading another person to join or resign from a religious community.

Section 11. The provisions of this chapter shall also apply to members of the Church of Norway unless otherwise specified in this Act or in a separate Act relating to the Church of Norway.

Chapter II. Religious communities outside the Church of Norway

Section 12. A religious community may not use a name that may be confused with that of another religious community.

When a religious community submits its name to the Ministry decided by the King¹, the community may have the sole right to the name. The Ministry ensures that the name is not already in use, that it does not offend anyone and that it may not be confused with the name of another religious community. If approval is not prevented by such factors, the Ministry shall certify that the name has been submitted and approved.

If the religious community changes its name or is dissolved, the board shall notify the Ministry without delay.

Section 13. A religious community may be registered if its activities and doctrine do not conflict with the law or with public morals. Registration makes it subject to statutory rights and obligations.

Section 14. If a religious community wishes to be registered, it must notify the County Governor and provide the following information

- 1) name and address of the religious community,
- 2) its creed and doctrine,
- 3) its organization, activities and membership,
- 4) the name of each member of the board,
- 5) the name and sphere of responsibility of each spiritual and administrative leader,
- 6) the rules of the community with regard to its objectives, who may be a member, voting rights, spokesmen, servants, amendments to the statutes, dissolution, etc.

¹ The Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs.

The Ministry¹ may issue further regulations concerning notification of registration, its form and contents.

For the purpose of this Act, *spiritual or administrative leader of a registered community* shall mean the person or persons who have statutory duties in the religious community.

Section 15. When a religious community has been registered, the County Governor shall issue the community a certificate to this effect and announce the registration in the *Norwegian Gazette*.

Section 16. Registered religious communities shall send the County Governor a short report every year concerning their activities and any changes in the information registered.

Section 17. Registered religious communities shall immediately notify the County Governor if a spiritual or administrative leader is hired, transferred or resigns.

The County Governor shall ensure that the spiritual or administrative leader carries out his statutory duties in a responsible manner.

Section 18. The King or the agency thereby authorized¹ may consent to a registered religious community having a separate cemetery and may lay down conditions for this.

The Act relating to cemeteries, cremation and funerals applies correspondingly insofar as is appropriate.

Section 19. Registered religious communities are entitled to an annual grant from the Treasury. The grant shall be proportionately approximately equivalent to the sum budgeted for the Church of Norway, and shall be calculated on the basis of the number of members of the community.

All religious communities that receive state grants may every year claim a corresponding grant from municipalities in which a member of the community lives. This grant shall be calculated on the basis of the budgeted disbursements from the municipality to the Church of Norway.

Public disbursements that apply to all citizens shall not be included in the calculation of the grant. The Ministry¹ may issue further regulations concerning the manner of calculation and payment.

The grant shall be used for religious purposes. Accounts shall be submitted for grants that have been received.

The religious community may appeal municipal decisions to the Ministry.

Section 19 a. The provisions laid down in section 19 also apply to grants to other organized religious communities.

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The grant may only be claimed for members who are not also members of the Church of Norway or any other religious community that receives grants pursuant to this Act or to the Act relating to grants to religious communities.

The Ministry¹ may issue regulations concerning the keeping of membership lists and certification by a lawyer or auditor.

The King will decide whether a religious community meets the requirements for a grant pursuant to this section.

Section 20. Religious communities are entitled to annual grants from the municipality for religious education of children belonging to the community when the children are exempted from teaching in Christianity in primary or lower secondary school.

The grant shall be of a size that is approximately proportionate to the amount disbursed by the state and the municipality for teaching in Christianity for each pupil and shall be calculated on the basis of the number of pupils belonging to the religious community who are exempted from such teaching. The Ministry¹ shall issue regulations concerning the education, the size of the grant and payment.

Municipalities that have expenses pursuant to the provisions of the first paragraph are entitled to state grants pursuant to the provisions governing grants for ordinary expenses for approved education.

The religious community may appeal decisions concerning grants to the Ministry.¹

Section 21. If the conditions for registration are no longer fulfilled, or if a religious community fails to carry out statutory duties, the County Governor shall send a written warning with a time limit for correcting the omission. If this is not done within a time limit of at least four weeks, the County Governor may decide that the religious community is to be struck off the register.

The County Governor may immediately strike a religious community off the register in the event of a particularly serious fault or negligence.

Section 22. If a registered religious community has been dissolved or is no longer registered for other reasons, the person who keeps the official books of the community shall immediately turn them over to the County Governor.

When a religious community is no longer registered, the County Governor shall place an announcement to this effect in the *Norwegian Gazette*.

Section 23. The records¹ belonging to a registered religious community shall be delivered to the public archives in accordance with the provisions that apply to the official records of the Church of Norway.

¹ The Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs.

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¹ Cf. section 25.

Section 24. No person who is a spiritual or administrative leader of a registered religious community may be under 23 or over 75 years of age. He must live an honourable life and be capable of carrying out his statutory duties.

Before taking up office, he shall submit to the County Governor a written assurance that he will conscientiously carry out all the duties of his office prescribed by or pursuant to statute.

When the County Governor receives such an assurance he shall send the spiritual or administrative leader a written acknowledgement.

Section 25. A spiritual or administrative leader of a registered religious community shall keep such records as are prescribed by the Ministry.¹

He is publicly entrusted to certify services he has performed and contents of the records.

The spiritual or administrative leader shall supply such reports, information and testimony as are prescribed by the Ministry¹ or the County Governor.

The spiritual or administrative leader of a registered religious community shall be under such supervision as is considered necessary by the Ministry or the County Governor for the duties enjoined on him by or pursuant to statute.

Section 26. The spiritual or administrative leader of a registered religious community has the same responsibility as a public servant with regard to duties enjoined on him by or pursuant to statute.

Section 27. If a spiritual or administrative leader of a registered religious community neglects the duties enjoined on him by or pursuant to statute, the County Governor shall issue him with a written warning and notify the board of the community. If there is no improvement in the situation or if his duties are seriously neglected, the County Governor may withdraw his right to serve as a spiritual or administrative leader.

The same applies in the event that the statutory conditions for his being a spiritual or administrative leader are no longer fulfilled in some other way.

Chapter II. The right to leave to celebrate a religious holiday

Section 27 a. Any person who does not belong to the Church of Norway has the right to leave from work, school, official duties and the like for up to two days every year in connection with holidays observed in accordance with his or her religion.

¹ The Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs.

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The employer has the right to require that these days off be compensated for by the employee working an equivalent number of hours on other days. The days on which these hours are to be worked shall be agreed in advance between the employer and the employee.

An employee who wishes to avail himself of this right to leave shall give the employer a minimum of 14 days notice.

If the religion concerned has more than two religious holidays a year, and if these occur outside the holidays that otherwise apply in the realm, the person concerned may choose which two days of leave he will take as religious holidays.

The hours worked in compensation of days off pursuant to the provisions of this section shall not be counted as overtime even if the working hours exceed the number set out in sections 46 and 47 of Act of 4 February 1977 No. 4 relating to worker protection and the working environment.

Chapter III. Miscellaneous provisions

Section 28. The King¹ may issue further regulations concerning the implementation of this Act. He may stipulate forms for reports and certificates and books for registers and accounts.

Section 29. Any person who violates the provisions of section 4, second sentence, sections 10, 12, 16, 17, 22, 23, 24, second paragraph, or 27a may be subject to a fine.

Chapter IV. Transitional provisions, entry into force and amendments to other Acts

Section 30. ---

If such a reservation is not registered within this time limit, the reservation shall fall within the scope of the provisions of section 22.

Section 31. The King determines when the Act shall enter into force.¹

The Act of 27 June 1891 relating to Christian dissenters and others who do not belong to the state church shall cease to apply from the same date.

The following amendments shall be made to other Acts as from the same date:

¹ The Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs.

¹ 1 January 1970, pursuant to a Royal Decree of 10 October 1969.