

THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION OF YOUTH WITH RHEUMATISM

Constitution

Introduction

The International Organisation of Youth with Rheumatism from now on referred to as IOYR, is an association of national (and local where there is no national) organisations of young people aged 18 - 35 (not yet 36) years with rheumatism. English is the official language of IOYR. Its Executive Officer is the chair of the IOYR Board (the Board) for the time being.

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§1 Aims

- (1) The overall aim of IOYR is to improve the situation of young people with rheumatism through information exchange, self-help and policy influence.
- (2) The association's aims are purely charitable in the sense of the section "tax-deductible activities" of the tax regulations. They are carried out under the following specific aims to:
 - exchange information and experiences and to learn from each other;
 - encourage the development of self-help in each country;
 - empower young people with rheumatism and enable them to get their voices heard;
 - raise public and professional awareness of the situation of young people with rheumatism and change attitudes;
 - exert policy influence, both internationally and nationally;
 - develop links between medical professionals and young people with rheumatism and increase understanding;
 - stimulate intensive research of the experiences of young people with rheumatism;
 - co-operate with other organisations with similar interests, as appropriate.
- (3) The association functions as a charity; it does not seek financial gain. The association funds may only be used for the purposes laid out in the association's constitution. Members of the association receive no monies from the association funds. No person may gain financial advantage through expenses not compatible with the association's aims or through excessively high fees.
- (4) All officers of the association act in a voluntary capacity. Every decision on changes to the constitution must be presented to the Inland Revenue before being officially registered.

§2 Powers

In order to pursue its aims, IOYR shall have powers to employ staff, organise conferences, run training courses, publish reports, issue publicity material, organise study visits, give grants and raise funds, including determining fees.

§3 Membership

- (1) Full membership of IOYR is open only to national organisations. Where there is no national organisation the Board can accept a local group. Full membership includes the right to vote and the right to stand for election.
- (2) Associate membership is open to one individual young person with rheumatism aged between 18 and 35 (not yet 36) years from a country without an organisation and other organisations, who support the aims of IOYR. Associate membership involves receipt of information about IOYR's activities. Associate members do not have the right to vote.
- (3) Any young person with rheumatism aged 18 – 35 (not yet 36) years, who is a member of their national youth organisation, can participate in IOYR activities subject only to constraints on space and resources.
- (4) Any organisation or emerging organisation of young people with rheumatism, or involving young people with rheumatism is allowed to become a member organisation of IOYR.
- (5) However, only one organisation of young people with rheumatism in each country may have full membership of IOYR.
- (6) Therefore if more than one organisation from one country wish to have full membership, they should either choose one of their number to represent them jointly or appoint a joint representative.
- (7) If this agreement (3.6) cannot be achieved at a national level, the IOYR Board should decide which national organisation is to be accepted as the full member of IOYR. The organisation(s) denied full membership has the right to appeal before the General Assembly. If the Board cannot decide, the decision will be made at the next regular General Assembly.
- (8) The Board decides on applications for full and associate membership. The application must contain the data on the organisation and/or the persons named as their representative. If the Board refuses membership, giving reasons for the refusal, this can be appealed by the organisation applying for membership. The Board must receive the appeal within one month of the refusal of application. A decision on the appeal is made at the next regular meeting of the General Assembly.
- (9) Membership is ended by one of the following:
 - a) *voluntary resignation*
If a member no longer wishes to be a member of IOYR their representative must write to the Board to inform them of this decision
 - b) *the dissolution of the member organisation*
If the member organisation ceases to exist their representative must write to the Board to inform them that it is no longer possible for them to be a member of IOYR
 - c) *cancellation of the membership list*
If IOYR ceases to exist or cancels its membership list the Board will inform its members that membership of IOYR is no longer valid
 - d) *expulsion from the organisation*
The Board can expel a member of IOYR in the following circumstances:
 - 1) when payment of dues has not been forthcoming after two reminders have been sent. The expulsion becomes valid when three months have expired after the second reminder has been sent out. The member is to be notified of the expulsion.
 - 2) when a member has committed a serious violation of the interests of the organisation.

Before expulsion, the member will receive adequate opportunity to respond to the expulsion decision personally or in writing. Any written statement on the part of the member is to be read at a meeting of the Board. Reason for the expulsion must be given and sent to the member in writing. A member has the right to appeal in writing to the Board within one month of the expulsion decision. If the appeal is received on time, the Board must call a meeting of the General Assembly to decide on the expulsion. If this does not happen the expulsion is not considered valid. The process of appeal has the effect of putting the expulsion on hold. If the member does not exercise the right of appeal or does not do so within the time allocated, they are fully subject to the expulsion decision and membership is ended.

§4 Representation

(1) Each organisation with full membership of IOYR should appoint a representative, who acts as the point of contact between the member organisation and IOYR, and who is allowed to vote on behalf of the organisation at meetings of the General Assembly. The appointed representative should be a person with rheumatism, aged between 18-35 (not yet 36) years.

(2) All appointed representatives are understood to speak for the member organisation they represent. They should have authority to carry out agreements, unless:

- these actions are against international law or national law of the member organisation's country or
- an appointed representative explicitly states that approval of a policy needs to be agreed with their member organisation.

(3) If an organisation that is a full member is unable to be present at a meeting, they may authorise someone else to vote on their behalf. This may be someone else from their national organisation or the appointed representative of another member organisation.

§5 General Assembly

(1) Composition and invitation

The General Assembly is made up of one appointed representative of each full member organisation. It is held every three years. Members shall be advised of the date of the General Assembly at least six months in advance of the meeting. The Board will send out written invitations to the members at least three months before the meeting.

(2) Representatives

Each full member informs the General Assembly of the name of its appointed representative, authorised to vote and speak on its behalf at the General Assembly.

(3) Quorum and voting

A quorum of the General Assembly is at least 50% + 1 of its membership being present or represented, including either the chair or the treasurer. The General Assembly votes by raising hands unless a member requests a secret written vote. All decisions are voted on by simple majority. Whenever voting is equal, the issue will be debated again and a second vote taken. If the vote remains equal the issue will be carried over and decided at the next board meeting, or General Assembly, whichever is most appropriate. If this occurs the decision made will be communicated to members as soon as possible after the meeting.

(4) Limits of authority

The General Assembly is fully empowered to realise IOYR's aims and objectives. It can only rule on a subject on the agenda, which has been prepared by the Board and adopted by the General Assembly. The General Assembly debates and decides on the direction and activity of IOYR on the basis of the reports from the Board. The General Assembly's powers include:

- Being the supreme decision making body for IOYR;
- The determination of the overall policies and priorities of IOYR;
- The election of a Board and chair
- Holding the Board to account every three years.

(5) Agenda

The following items should be on the agenda of the General Assembly:

1. Establish if members were notified properly about the General Assembly
2. Name the representatives and set up a register of voters
3. Agree the agenda
4. Election of functionaries
 - a) Independent Chair for the meeting
 - b) Secretary for the meeting
 - c) Two people to check the minutes
 - d) Two independent people to count the votes
5. Accepting of annual reports for the last three years
6. Accepting of financial reports for the last three years (including accountant's report)
7. Suggestions/motions from the Board
8. Suggestions/motions from the member organisations
9. Aims, directions and activities for the coming three years
10. Accepting of budget for the coming three years
11. Agree the membership fee
12. Election of the Board
 - a) The Chair
 - b) Six board members (each member can vote up to six board members)
13. Election of two accountants
14. Agree freedom from responsibility of the retiring board

(6) Validation of decisions

Decisions taken at the General Assembly are valid from the moment they are taken.

(7) Changes to the constitution

The constitution can be changed by a decision of the General Assembly when it accepts a proposal circulated in writing at least three months before the meeting, when at least two thirds of the General Assembly agree. The Board decides on changes to the constitution that are necessary because of changes in charity or tax laws and informs the members within one month about the changes.

(8) Minutes of the General Assembly

The General Assembly chooses a secretary to write the minutes of the meetings. These are to be signed by the chair of the meeting as well as by the secretary writing them. The minutes of the General Assembly should be sent to members within 6 months of the meeting taking place. The following details are to be included in the minutes:

- 1) place and time of the General Assembly meeting
- 2) members present
- 3) agenda
- 4) individual voting results
- 5) the type of vote taken
- 6) suggestions for future work.
- 7) If changes are made to the constitution, the exact words must be written down.

(9) Extraordinary General Assembly

An extraordinary General Assembly must be called if the General Assembly is not quorate. It may also be called at any time on written request to the Board of two-thirds of the members of the General Assembly, or by the Board provided at least two thirds of the members of the Board agree. It will work like an ordinary General Assembly.

§6 Board

(1) A Board made up of appointed representatives from seven full member organisations is elected by the General Assembly for a period of three years to:

- develop and implement policies between meetings of the General Assembly;
- manage IOYR's affairs and finances;
- represent IOYR externally;
- keep full and associate members informed of progress.

(2) If possible, the composition of the Board should reflect the diversity of the member organisations.

(3) A country may change its appointed representative during the three-year period of office.

(4) All representatives standing for election to the Board must be supported by their country's organisation and must be nominated by their organisation at least two months before the date of the General Assembly.

(4) When standing for election for the Board a representative must be aged 18 – 35 years and must be replaced by their organisation when becoming 36 years.

(6) The Board meets at least once a year.

(7) A quorum for the Board is at least 50% + 1 of its membership being present including either the chair or the treasurer.

(8) The Board has the power to establish working groups from time to time as required.

(9) If the chair resigns during his/her three-year period of office, the member organisation that provided the chair should replace him/her. If the organisation is not able to find a new chair, they should provide a boardmember and the Board votes for a new chair by simple majority. In the event that none of the Board members or their organisations wishes to be chair, the board may co-opt a chair until the next General Assembly.

(10) The Board elects its own treasurer. The treasurer must be a different person to the chair. The treasurer can change during the three-year period.

(11) The tasks of the Board are set by the General Assembly.

(12) The Board has the power to employ people of any age, on a paid or voluntary basis, to assist in its work.

§7 Finance

(1) Membership fees are collected from full members and organisations that are associate members.

(2) The level of membership fees is determined by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Board. Organisations, which are unable to pay, can apply for assistance.

(3) Funds can also be raised from companies, trusts, governments and other fund-raising sources.

(4) IOYR's financial year for accounting purposes is January to December.

- (5) The treasurer, who reports IOYR's financial position to each meeting of the Board and General Assembly, manages IOYR's funds
- (6) The General Assembly appoints independent accountants to audit the accounts annually and report to the Board and the General Assembly.

§8 Administration

(1) As its executive officer, the chair provides for the preparation and maintenance of IOYR's records including:

- the minutes of all meetings of the Board and General Assembly;
- the roll of full member organisations and their appointed representatives;
- the roll of all associate members;
- all other such records as the Board or General Assembly requires to be kept.

(2) The chair and, if the chair is not available, the treasurer and one other member of the Board are the official spokespersons for IOYR both legally and publicly.

§9 Dissolution

In case of dissolution of the organisation or loss of tax privileges the funds of the organisation shall be transferred to Arthritis and Rheumatism International, who shall use the funds exclusively for the benefit of youth with rheumatism.

Date of ratification: _____

Signed: _____

(chair)

Signed: _____

(board member)

Signed: _____

(witness)