International Search and Rescue Dog Organisation

CONSTITUTION

October 2026

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Section 1: GENERAL

§ 1 Name, Description, and Headquarters

1.1 The International Search and Rescue Dog Organisation (IRO in its abbreviated form) is the world-wide union of National Organizations, which are engaged in Search and Rescue Dog matters and in the related assistance in national and international disaster emergency situations. The term „disaster“ has a wide scope in these statutes and covers both the disasters explicitly identified by the law (§ 4a (2) Z 3 lit. c EStG – Income Tax Act) namely floods, landslides, mudslides and avalanches, as well as other major emergencies such as earthquakes, conflagrations, rockslides, technical disasters (e.g. gas explosions causing a structural collapse) as well as other humanitarian catastrophes.

1.2 The Organization was founded May 18th, 1993, is active world-wide and is headquartered in Austria at the following address: A-5020 Salzburg, Moosstraße 32. The organisation is therefore entitled to establish subsidiaries or branch-offices in whichever legal-form in every country of the world.

§ 2 Objective and goal of the organization

2.1 The IRO's purpose is the support in national and international disaster emergency situations, by the means of the preparation and deployment of highly qualified search and rescue dog teams. Furthermore, the IRO aims to achieve the optimal preparation (Department for Training and Judges) and the enhancement of the operational mission readiness (Department for Deployment) for disaster emergency situations through the international distribution of search and rescue dog standards and certification of search and rescue dog teams. Moreover, the IRO certifies search and rescue dog teams and search and rescue dog organizations.

The IRO shall not carry out activities with the intention to make profits and shall pursue exclusively and directly non-profit and charitable goals, as defined by §§ 34 pp BAO (Austrian Fiscal Federal Code).

As an umbrella organization, it shall be the goal of the IRO to use its resources for the support of its national member organizations (NRO`s) worldwide in their non-profit-oriented activities aiming at the preservation of life and health of people that have run into difficulties.

This transfer of funds is carried out by the organisation to a completely subordinate extent with a maximum of 10% of the total activity of the organisation.

2.2 Funds of the IRO may only be used for statutory purposes as defined by the constitution. No person or institution may profit by, nor claim expenses, nor receive excessive compensation for anything which is not directly related to their official duties.

2.3 The IRO is dedicated to assisting people in need, without regard to their national origin, race, religion, political views, or ability to pay.

2.4 Members of the Organization are obliged to conform to all animal welfare regulations and standards relating to dogs and their handling. Any confirmed violation of the International Prohibition of the Illegal Dog Trade will be vigorously disciplined.

§ 3 Resources to reach the goal of the IRO

3.1 The goal of the IRO shall be achieved by means of idealistic and financial resources, as mentioned in the following paragraphs.

3.2 The following shall serve as idealistic resources:

a) By means of co-ordination, the IRO shall support the exchange of information about rescue missions.

b) The IRO shall inform the authorities and other aid and rescue organizations about the performance and the efficiency of search and rescue dog handlers and their dogs.

c) coordination and execution of assistance operations in major national and international disaster emergency situations.

d) has adopted one set of standards for the evaluation of dogs, dog-handlers, and testing-related persons.

e) selects, calls, and trains Assessors from within the Search and Rescue Dog Discipline (LRRH in its abbreviated form) on an on-going basis.

f) ensures that evaluations standards (IPO-R in its abbreviated form) are adhered to.

g) represents the interests of the Search and Rescue Dog Discipline to all agencies and institutions.

h) all over the world, the IRO shall seek collaboration with the disaster relief organizations of the UN and other international rescue services, as well as with the Federation Cynologique Internationale (FCI).

i) organizes and executes events which serve to evaluate the training level of Search and Rescue Dogs and Search and Rescue Dog Handlers, in particular National and International Search and Rescue Dog Exercise Days, and Exercise Weeks as well as National and International Championships, Competitions and Evaluations.

j) organizes and executes symposiums, continued-training events, courses, and exercises which support the training and continued-training of Search and Rescue Dogs and their Handlers in order to ensure the maximum level of preparedness in case of emergency or natural catastrophe.

3.3 The required financial resources shall be raised through:

a. all sorts of advertising activities with the objection to provide the public with a presentation of the efficiency and readiness for duty of both the IRO and its NROs and, additionally, by the free and paid circulation of brochures and other information material with the objection to raise various sorts of financial resources.

b. the realisation of information and advertising events for raising financial resources (e.g., by recruiting of both active and supporting members, donors etc.)

c. membership fees of the NROs and the supporting members.

d. subsidies granted by public authorities

e. donations, legacies, and other sources

f. profits from IRO events, brochures, and sales of various advertising media (pins, stickers, labels, lighters, caps, pins, key rings, stationery, t-shirts etc.)

g. earnings from symposia, publications, lecture and training events and documentations

h. other earnings

§ 4 Legal Foundation

4.1 The IRO is governed by its constitution, by-laws and regulations as well as decisions and resolutions of the Meeting of Delegates, provided these do not contravene the constitution.

4.2 Changes to the Constitution may not be implemented on a Fast-Track basis. Any proposed changes to the Constitution must first be forwarded to:
   a) The National Search and Rescue Dog Organization(s)
   b) and The Executive Board of the IRO.

4.3 Changes to the Constitution must secure the approval of 2/3 (two-thirds) of the assembled, eligible voters.

4.4 By-laws regarding business, training, assessment, and assessor guidelines must conform to the Constitution and do not supercede it. Any intended changes to these regulations must be presented by the Executive Board of the IRO to the Meeting of Delegates where a simple majority of the assembled voters is required to adopt the proposed changes.

Section II: MEMBERSHIP

§ 5 Organizational Structure

5.1 Various NROs of a country are entitled to IRO membership; however, they must not be a sub-organization of an existing IRO member organization.

5.2 National search and rescue dog organizations, which are independent search and rescue dog organizations or search and rescue dog organizations connected to a rescue service are members of the IRO if
   a) they are organizations which are officially registered in their respective countries
   b) they have been existent for at least 3 years
      and either
   c) they have at least 6 tested dogs according to IPO-R level A and
   d) they have at least 3 teams with a positive IRO-Mission-readiness-test
      or
   e) they have at least 6 teams with a positive national or international IRO-Mission readiness-test.

5.3 National search and rescue dog handling organizations, which are independent search and rescue dog handling organizations, or search and rescue dog handling organizations connected to a rescue service, or canine organizations which operate search and rescue dog training services are members of the IRO if
   a) they are organizations which are officially registered in their respective countries
   b) they have been existent for at least 1 year
   c) they have at least 6 tested dogs according to IPO-R level A

5.4 The associated member organizations, which are either government and private organizations with humanitarian goals, organizations that support search and rescue dog activities, other canine organizations or independent search and rescue dog organizations and search and rescue dog handling organizations, which do not fulfil the criteria required in 5.2 b – e or 5.3. b – c are also members of the IRO.
   a) If these are private organizations, they shall show their official registrations in their countries.

5.5 The classification of membership according to § 5.2, § 5.3 and § 5.4 shall be performed every two years through the Executive board of the IRO, in accordance with the required criteria of the applicable §§.

5.6 Both natural and legal persons are entitled to become **supporting members** of the IRO.

5.7 Both natural and legal persons are entitled to become **honorary members** of the IRO.

§ 6 Membership Admission

6.1 Written application of membership must be sent in German or English language to the IRO's office. The application must include:

a) a copy of the registered NRO Constitution and/or a copy of the NRO's incorporation.

b) a list of executive members and their addresses.

c) the protocol of the NRO Members Meeting in which the membership application was approved.

d) Certificate about the required state of training of the search and rescue dogs

6.2 After evaluation, the Executive Board may approve or reject the membership application without comment.

Admission is subject to a probationary period of three years. During this period, membership can be terminated by IRO or the organisation with immediate effect. After 3 years, the Executive Board decides on the conversion to permanent membership.

6.3 Personal Memberships are granted upon receipt of the signed application form and the initial membership fee.

§ 7 Rights and Duties of Members

7.1 The Constitution, By-laws and Resolutions of the IRO and its bodies are binding on all members.

7.2 Payment obligations to the IRO are the responsibility of the NRO and must be paid by the due date. Any written correspondence required by the Executive Board must also be furnished upon request.

7.3 The Membership Rights of a NRO and/or its members may be suspended by the Executive Board of the IRO if the NRO becomes delinquent in the payment of its dues and disregards subsequent demands for payment.

7.4 All costs involved in the notification and collections of late payments are the responsibility of the delinquent organization or person(s).

7.5 In the General Assembly, associated members shall be entitled to be present and heard but shall not be entitled to vote. However, they shall be entitled to send a delegate in order to guarantee the flow of information.

7.6 Sponsoring Members possess neither active nor passive voting rights. They may attend the General Assembly but may not vote. They do, however, enjoy the right to participation in all demonstrations and exercises provided they adhere to all instructions issued by the Event Leader.

§ 8 Membership Fees

8.1 An annual subscription fee is due to the IRO from each NRO. The subscription fee and possible common cost–sharing arrangements are negotiated and approved at the Meeting of Delegates.

8.2 The annual membership fee is the same for every NRO and must be tendered by the 31st of January of every year.

8.3 The membership fee of an NRO obtained during a running membership-year is determined by the Executive Board.

§ 9 Loss of Membership

9.1 Loss of IRO membership occurs when the NRO officially leaves IRO, its membership is revoked, it is expelled or by the disbandment of either the NRO or the IRO.

9.2 The cancellation of a membership of a NRO in the IRO becomes effective on the 31st of December of the given year if the NRO officially notifies the Executive Board of the IRO at least 3 months prior to that date. If the Notice of Cancellation is received after that deadline, the cancellation of membership of the NRO will not become effective until the 31st of December of the following year.

9.3 The membership of a NRO may be unilaterally revoked by the Executive Board of the IRO if, despite 3 warnings, the payment of dues by the NRO becomes more than 6 months delinquent. The accrued delinquent dues are not affected by the revocation of membership and must still be paid.

9.4 The Executive Board of the IRO can expel an NRO for:

a) acting contrary to the interests of the IRO
b) purposely, repeatedly, or grossly disregarding the constitution and/or regulations of the IRO
c) disregarding or disobeying relevant animal welfare laws or related regulations implemented by the IRO

An appeal of the Expulsion can be made at the following Meeting of Delegates. The decision of the Executive Board remains effective until that time.

9.5 The membership of a Sponsoring Member ends when the sponsor informs the IRO of his/her desire to cancel the membership or when the Sponsoring Member no longer meets his/her sponsoring commitments to the IRO.

Section III: BODIES OF THE ORGANIZATION

§ 10 Composition

10.1 The IRO consists of the following bodies:

a) The Meeting of Delegates
b) The Executive Board
c) The Presidium
d) The Technical Commission
e) The Legal Commission

§ 11 The Meetings of Delegates

11.1 The Meeting of Delegates, as a meeting of members, is the uppermost body within the IRO. The Meeting of Delegates is charged with:

a) receiving the Reports of the Executive Board and of any specially engaged Representatives
b) formulating and debating any proposed constitutional changes
c) initiating, debating and formulating any move to amend or change a regulation
d) debating and deciding other matters which may arise
e) setting membership fees
f) confirming, recalling and electing members to the various bodies
g) setting the venue, date, and time of the next Meeting of Delegates.

11.2 The Meeting of Delegates consists of:

a) The delegates of the member NROs
b) The Executive Board
c) The Presidium

11.3 If possible, Delegates meet on an international event of the IRO – e.g. the International Search and Rescue Dog Symposiums or the World Championship of the IRO. The Meeting of Delegates takes place every two years.

11.4 An extraordinary Meeting of the Delegates takes place, if it is claimed by 1/10 of the members through written application to the IRO office.

11.5 The Meeting of Delegates is being announced at least 6 months prior and has to be summoned by the Executive board through an invitation via email to the last known email address of the NRO in written form at least 8 weeks prior to the date of the meeting.

11.6 Every eligible NRO has one vote at the Meetings of Delegates. Proxy voting is not permitted.

11.7 Members of the Executive Board have one vote each, regardless of the number of functions they perform. This voting right ends when the member vacates membership in the Executive Board.

11.8 Any resolution to be presented at the Meeting of Delegates must be presented in writing or in electronic form of detailed explanations to the office/agency of the IRO at least 4 months prior to the date of the Meeting of Delegates. Requests not meeting that deadline may only be considered on an emergency basis. Those with the right of application are:

a) NROs
b) The Executive Board
c) The Presidium

The resolutions of the NRO are to be forwarded to the IRO with all necessary documentation and each member of the Executive Board is to receive a copy.

11.9 An official agenda with all relevant documentation must be furnished by the Executive Board to the participants, including all eligible resolutions, not less than eight weeks prior to the Meeting of Delegates (see §11.2).

11.10 The postmark is acceptable to the IRO in matters pertaining to 11.5 and 11.8. in regards to motions in writing.

§ 12 The Executive Board

12.1 The Executive Board is charged with carrying out the decisions and resolutions of the Meeting of Delegates in accordance with the constitution and the regulations of the IRO. The Executive Board is divided into:

a) The Executive Board
b) The Presidium

A quorum of 50% is necessary for each committee.

12.2 The Presidium is charged with the day-to-day business of the Organization and its members consist of:

a) the President
b) the First Vice President
c) the Second Vice President

12.3 The Presidium consists of the President, the 1st Vice-President, and the 2nd Vice-President. The President is the official representative of the IRO, internally and externally. The first Vice President and the Second Vice President represent the Organization when the President is unable to do so due to other commitments.

12.4 The Executive Board consists of:

a) The Presidium
b) The Spokesperson for Deployment
c) The Public Relations Spokesperson
d) The Treasurer
e) The Spokesperson for Training, Assessors and Dog Evaluation

The Executive Board is to establish by-laws and distribute duties and name deputies in accordance with those by-laws.

12.5 The financial officer should be Austrian and familiar with the Austrian tax and commerce laws.

12.6 Meetings of the Executive Board occur when necessary and must take place when at least one-third of its members so desire.

12.7 The Executive Board is empowered to establish Commissions with special tasks and to appoint representatives for specific tasks. The results of which must be presented at the following Meeting of Delegates.

§ 13 Auditors

13.1 The Meeting of Delegates is to elect 2 Auditors for the term of 4 years. Re-election is permissible.

13.2 The Auditors are responsible for the continual supervision of the day-to-day business activity as well as the Annual Financial Report, the results of which are to be presented at the Meeting of Delegates.

§ 14 The Technical Commission

14.1 Members of the Technical Commission have ongoing communication with the NROs thus enabling the commission to acknowledge and implement new techniques and expertise immediately.

14.2 The Technical Commission consists of:

a) the First Vice President
b) the Spokesperson for Deployment
c) the Spokesperson for Training, Assessors and Dog Evaluation

The Commission is chaired by the First Vice President. The Spokesperson for Deployment is the Deputy.

14.3 Members of the Technical Commission delegate duties and assign Deputies at their discretion following the guidelines set down by the commission.

§ 15 The Legal Commission

15.1 Members of the Legal Commission are responsible for the preliminary screening of the Applications of Membership by the prospective NROs as well as checking all other matters for their legal ramifications.

15.2 The Legal Commission consists of:

a) the Second Vice President
b) the Public Relations Spokesperson
c) the Treasurer

15.3 Members of the Legal Commission delegate duties and assign deputies at their discretion following the guidelines set down by the commission.

Section IV: BUSINESS AND ACCOUNTING

§ 16 Distribution of Funds

16.1 All positions within the IRO are honorary and voluntary.

16.2 Any costs incurred by a member while carrying out official business of the IRO can be refunded up to the amount of actual out-of-pocket costs, when requested.

16.3 The level and scope of IRO reimbursement must be established before the costs are incurred, provided no prior written approval exists.

Section V – FINAL CLAUSES

§ 17 Resolutions, Elections, Terms of Office

17.1 Any constitutionally convened Meeting of Delegates may pass resolutions.

17.2 Resolutions of the various Committees and Boards are passed by a simple majority of eligible votes cast. Abstentions are not counted as votes. In the event of a tied vote, the resolution is rejected.

17.3 The minutes of the meetings must be recorded and distributed to all attending members within 8 weeks. If so desired, the minutes must be read at the following Meeting of Delegates and after approval of the Secretary of the Meeting and the Chairperson, signed.

17.4 Abstentions are not permitted in votes taken in the Board of Directors.

17.5 The terms of elected officials in the IRO are 4 years, or from one Search and Rescue Dog Symposium to the second following Symposium. Officials remain in office until voted out of that office. Only members of a NRO may hold office in the IRO.

17.6 If an elected official leaves office prematurely, a temporary replacement will be appointed by the Executive Board if the next Meeting of Delegates is further than 6 months from the date the office was vacated.

17.7 Minutes of Meetings of Delegates must be recorded in neutral context, without opinion of comment. The Secretary of the Meeting must sign and present the minutes to the Chairperson of the Meeting to sign. Procedures are to be set down in the By-laws.

17.8 The NROs and the members of the Executive Board must receive a copy of the minutes of the Meeting of Delegates within 6 weeks of the meeting. The minutes of meetings are accepted unless written objections are lodged and received by the IRO within 8 weeks of receipt of the minutes.

§ 18 Disciplinary Action

18.1 The IRO may take disciplinary action against individual NROs and officials of the IRO for:

a) taking a stance detrimental to the Organization;

b) gross violations of the Constitution, Regulations, or Resolutions of the IRO.

Disciplinary Actions include:

a) Warnings

b) Reprimands

c) Loss of Office within the IRO

d) Temporary loss of membership rights

e) Expulsion from the IRO

18.2 Disciplinary actions may be taken individually or in combination with one another. The Executive Board is charged with enforcing the measures and may approve a resolution to inform other organizations of its actions.

§ 19 Arbitration

19.1 Any disputes arising within the Association are resolved through a Court of Arbitration.

19.2 The Court of Arbitration shall be composed of five representatives of the member organizations. The Court shall be formed through the notification of two members by each party to the dispute to the Board within a period of 42 days. The chairperson of the Legal Commission shall act as both fifth member and chairperson of the Court of Arbitration. In the event that the IRO is directly involved in the dispute, the four appointed arbitrators shall elect a chairperson of the Court of Arbitration by simply majority. In the event of a tie, the election shall be settled by drawing lots.

19.3 Decisions of the Board of Arbitration are made by a simple majority of all members of the Board who vote according to their best knowledge and conscience.

§ 20 Committees, Rules and Regulations

20.1 In order to meet specific and broad-based challenges, Expert Commissions with defined objectives and limited areas of responsibility may be formed according to the By-laws. Potential members are nominated by the Executive Board and confirmed by the Meeting of Delegates.

20.2 The following regulations have been used in formulating this constitution, but remain inferior to it: 20.2.1 International Testing Standards for Search and Rescue Dogs (IPOR)

20.3 The following regulations will be presented to the Meeting of Delegates for their approval upon completion, but remain inferior to the constitution:

20.3.1 Rules of Assembly (By-laws, IRO-GO)

20.3.2 Rules of the Technical Commission, (IRO-OTK)

20.3.3 Rules of the Legal Commission, (IRO-ORK)

20.3.4 Rules for Assessors in the Search and Rescue Dog Discipline (LRRH).

§ 21 Disbandment of the Organization

21.1 The disbandment of the IRO may only take place at a Meeting of Delegates convened specifically for that purpose. The notification of this meeting must be given at least 8 weeks prior to it and the Resolution of Disbandment must appear on the official Agenda.

21.2 The Resolution of Disbandment requires a ¾ majority of the assembled eligible voters to pass.

21.3 In the event of the liquidation of the organization or the loss of its previous charitable purpose, the assets of the organization remaining after the liabilities have been settled shall be used for the charitable purposes specified in this legal basis and eligible under § 4a Abs. 2 EStG 1988. The last executive board is to report the voluntary dissolution, in written form, within four weeks from the respective resolution to the responsible association authority and to hand over the organization's assets.

21.4 Decisions concerning the future uses of IRO assets may be carried out only after approval of the responsible tax authorities has been received.

21.5 The incumbent Presidium at the time of Disbandment functions as the liquidator.

The current version of the Constitution of IRO
was approved at the Meeting of Delegates 2026 in Salzburg, Austria.