

Act on religious communities, as amended

SFS 1998:1593

Promulgated 26 November 1998.

Pursuant to a decision by the Riksdag the following is prescribed.

General provisions on religious communities

Section 1

Provisions about freedom of religion are contained in the [Swedish Instrument of Government](#) and in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Section 2

For the purposes of this Act, religious community means a fellowship for religious activities in which the holding of services is included.

Section 3

No one is under any obligation to belong to a religious community. Any agreement or promise contrary to this provision is invalid.

Section 4

Children who have reached the age of 12 cannot join or leave a religious community without their own consent.

Registered religious communities

Section 5

Registered religious communities refers to:

1. the Church of Sweden, and
2. religious communities that have been registered in accordance with this Act.

Section 6

Basic provisions about the Church of Sweden as a religious community are contained in the Church of Sweden Act (1998:1591).

The provisions contained in Sections 7-12, Section 13 paragraphs 1-3 and Section 17 do not apply to the Church of Sweden.

Registration

Section 7

A religious community shall, at its own request, be registered by the authority authorised for this purpose by the Government if the religious community has:

1. statutes containing provisions about the religious community's purposes and about how decisions concerning its affairs are taken, and
2. a governing board or equivalent body.

A religious community may only be registered if its name is such that it distinguishes its activities from those of others. The provisions in Section 10 of the Trade Names Act (1974:156) concerning obstacles to registration of companies shall also apply to the names of religious communities.

Limited companies, cooperative economic associations or foundations may not be registered under this Act.

Section 8

Registration shall include:

1. the name and postal address of the religious community,
2. the statutes of the religious community,
3. the members of the governing board or equivalent body or of those who are otherwise authorised to represent the religious community, including their names, postal addresses and civic registration numbers or, if they do not have such a number, their dates of birth.

Any changes concerning any of the above conditions shall be reported for registration without delay.

The Government or an authority authorised by the Government may issue instructions about fees in connection with registration pursuant to this Act.

Section 9

A religious community that has been registered in accordance with Section 7 may acquire rights and assume obligations and be party to legal actions before courts or other authorities.

The religious community's legal status as defined in paragraph 1 shall terminate when liquidation has been completed pursuant to Section 11, when its name has been struck off the register pursuant to Section 12 and, if the religious community has been declared bankrupt, when the bankruptcy proceedings are terminated without a surplus.

Section 10

Liability for obligations assumed on behalf of the religious community prior to registration will pass to the registered religious community upon registration, if the community has previously been a non-profit association. Rights are similarly passed to the registered religious community upon registration.

Section 11

The registration authority shall decide that the religious community be entered into liquidation if:

1. the registration requirements in Section 7 paragraph 1 are no longer fulfilled,
2. the religious community is obliged to go into liquidation according to its statutes, or
3. the religious community has been declared bankrupt and the bankruptcy proceedings are terminated with a surplus.

The liquidator will be appointed by the registration authority. With regard to liquidation, the provisions of Chapter 11, Sections 9-11, 13, 15 paragraph 1 and 16 of the Cooperative Societies Act (1987:667) shall also apply.

Liquidation has been completed when the liquidators have submitted their final accounts. This shall be reported for registration without delay.

Section 12

A religious community that fulfils the requirements of Section 7 paragraph 1 can, at its own request, be struck off the register by the registration authority without having been entered for liquidation. It shall then become a non-profit association, and assume the rights and obligations of the religious community.

Organisational parts

Section 13

Independent organisational parts of a religious community that has been registered in accordance with this Act may also be registered if they fulfil the requirements in Section 7. The provisions in Section 8, Section 9 paragraph 2 and Sections 10-12 shall apply to registered organisational parts. Organisational parts that have been registered according to this Act may individually acquire rights and assume obligations and be party to actions before courts and other authorities.

If the religious community loses its legal status pursuant to Section 9 paragraph 2, and its organisational parts do not request to be struck off the register in accordance with Section 12 within one month or such a request is rejected, the registration authority shall decide that the organisational parts be entered into liquidation.

Parishes, associations and dioceses belonging to the Church of Sweden are registered organisational parts of the Church of Sweden.

Names of registered religious communities

Section 14

The name of a registered religious community or a designation that may be confused with this name may not be used publicly by anyone else without permission, except as the designation of the religious community in question.

Should paragraph 1 be breached, Sections 15 and 18-20 of the Trade Names Act (1974:156) shall apply. The provisions concerning infringements of a company name shall apply to infringements of the name of a religious community. Section 16 of the Trade Names Act shall also apply to infringements of the name of a registered religious community.

Paragraphs 1 and 2 also apply to the names of registered organisational parts.

Registered religious communities' relations with third parties

Section 15

A religious community's obligations in a relation to a third party shall only apply to the religious community's assets.

Obligations in relation to a third party incurred by a religious community's registered organisational part shall only apply to the assets of the organisational part.

State help with fees to registered religious communities

Section 16

(amended by 1999:956)

The Church of Sweden has the right to receive help from the state with the setting, debiting and accounting of fees from members of the Church of Sweden and with the collection of these fees. Provisions concerning routines shall be announced in a separate Act.

The Government can decide that other registered religious communities besides the Church of Sweden can receive such help. The Government can decide to discontinue help to a religious community that has previously been granted such help.

Help may only be given to a religious community that:

1. contributes to maintaining and strengthening the fundamental values upon which society is based, and
2. is stable and plays an active role in the community.

Appeals

Section 17

Appeals against a decision made by a registration authority may be lodged with a general administrative court within two months of the date of decision in the case of:

1. decisions to dismiss an application for registration or to refuse registration in accordance with Sections 7 or 13,
2. decisions to refuse a request to be struck off the register in accordance with Section 12, and
3. decisions pursuant to Section 11 or Section 13 paragraph 3.

A review permit is required in order to lodge an appeal with an administrative court of appeal.

1. This Act enters into force on 1 January 2000.
2. With the entry into force of this Act, the Act concerning Freedom of Religion (1951:680) is abrogated.

(Translation : Swedish Government Offices, Information Department. Update : PRISME – Société, Droit et Religion en Europe.)