

Statutes
of the religious denominational community
“Atheist Religious Society in Austria”
of 13 April 2018

Name of the religious denominational community

§ 1. Our religious denominational community is named ‘Atheist Religious Society in Austria’. This name can be abbreviated to “ARG” [from German Atheistische Religionsgesellschaft, ‘Atheist Religious Society’].

Presentation of the religious doctrine

§ 2. (1) We, the members of the ‘Atheist Religious Society in Austria’, when trying to explain the shaping of the world and our position as humans in this world, denominate ourselves in free religious self-determination as ‘atheists’ and

(a) believe that not deities created us humans, but that in each case humans created and/or create, respectively, their deities (and their narratives and so on), so that all these deities (and so on) in the end always only exist as deities (and so on) that have been created by humans, and

(b) want this religious denomination to be recognized, in an inclusive sense, as a religious denomination in Austria.

(2) We therefore believe that not deities gave us our ethos but that our ethos in each case has been and is, respectively, developed and negotiated by us humans.

(3) We consider it desirable to contribute that a good life becomes possible for all people, no matter where and how they were born. We consider basically any form of love based on partnership and any form of living together as a family, regardless whether homosexual or heterosexual, monogamous or polyamorous, with or without children in parental/familiar care, as a valuable building block for a good life.

(4) We recognize that there is much that lies beyond our horizons of knowledge and experience, and we can accept the reality of this non-known and non-experienced without any statement of last grounds as well. We also recognize that there are desirable things that transcend the horizon of what we have achieved.

(5) In terms of our physical life, we see our existence as the transient result of a long chain of evolutionary processes which connect us in many ways with the world we observe. Biological evolution is a process that has spawned and brought forth a multitude of living beings, including us as humankind. It connects us with other living beings. The matter we came from evolved again over long periods of time in nuclear fusion processes, which makes us in a figurative sense to children of the stars.

(6) In terms of our cultural life, we see every human being as part of a long generation succession. Each generation is born into an already existing human culture, develops its own culture against this background (further) and thus lays the foundation for what the next generation will come upon.

(7) Dialogue with others and with different-minded people helps us with seeing and understanding our own life in a broader context. By engaging with the worlds of others, we transcend our own horizon of experience.

(8) At death, our physical body (mostly from life on earth) is metabolized and our cultural dimension continues to exist in the form of the traces that we left behind.

(9) We see death as the irreversible end of our existence/being as active, perceiving/feeling beings. Therefore, we see the state of being dead (*das Totsein*) as a state in which no suffering is felt.

(10) We consider it desirable to contribute that, when we die, we leave the world in better shape for future generations than we found it, when we were born.

(11) We are aware that the state laws on religion that are currently in force do offer special opportunities for making legal allowance for rites. In this context we believe and want that it shall be possible for each member

(a) to live, by its own request, in a vegetarian way (vegetarian rite), and

(b) to live, by its own request, in a vegan way (vegan rite), and

(c) to live, by its own request, in a pacifistic way (pacifistic rite).

Purposes and aims of the religious denominational community

§ 3. (1) As religious denominational community 'Atheist Religious Society in Austria' we strive for the long-term aim of getting full judicial equality and full recognition as a religious society in Austria. We thereby want to open new spaces of cultural participation, and we want to make visible a process of social/societal change of what is perceived and acknowledged as religion and how it is lived.

(2) We join in a religious denominational community to jointly deal with the questions arising from the religion doctrine mentioned in § 2. A central purpose is to develop concepts for effective and salutary religious care (*See/sorge*) and then to put this religious care into practice. As part of the religious care concept, we can foresee at the present time that we want to use concepts such as 'temple' and 'monastery' for religious care in our understanding.

Rights and duties of the members

§ 4. (1) All members have the right of being members free of charge (compare § 7 section 1) and of ending the membership at any time and free of charge (compare § 4 section 2).

(2) All members have the right of submitting suggestions/proposals to the Presidium, regarding all affairs of our religious denominational community.

(3) All members, specifically the members of the Presidium, are bound to the Statutes of the religious denominational community if they explicitly act as members and/or organs of the 'Atheist Religious Society in Austria'.

(4) Members who have personally opted for a life according to one of the rites mentioned in § 2 section 11 are bound to the rite they have opted for until the point of time when they revoke their option. They have the right to get an appropriate written certification about this.

Beginning and ending of membership

§ 5. (1) Everyone who wants to join, who is legally entitled to opt totally on his/her own for or against the membership to a religious denomination, who has a legal residency in Austria and who is neither member of a registered religious denominational community according to the Act on the Legal Status of Religious Denominational Communities 1998 (BGBl. I 1998/19, in the current version) nor member of a church or religious society recognized by Austrian law can join the 'Atheist Religious Society in Austria'. The ritual of joining consists of filling in the provided form appropriately and of signing it by one's own hand; as an alternative to a signature by one's own hand, authentication by a court of justice or by a notary is also sufficient. The membership begins at the point of time of valid joining and becomes effective upon the arrival of the suitably completed and duly signed or legally signed joining form by the Presidium.

(2) The members of our religious denominational community can end their membership at any time on their own and free of charge. To this end, it is sufficient to declare one's leaving at the respective district administration authority that is competent according to the Act on the Legal Status of Religious Denominational Communities 1998 (BGBl. I 1998/19, in the current version); however, a short, written note to the 'Atheist Religious Society in Austria', personally signed or legally digitally signed (or authenticated by a court of justice or a notary), is also sufficient. The membership ends at the point of time of valid leaving and at death.

Organs of the religious denominational community

§ 6. (1) Organs of the religious denominational community are

(a) the Presidium, and

(b) the Supplementing Committee, and

(c) the Replacing Committee.

(2) Their territorial sphere covers the entire territory of the Republic of Austria. The Presidium is officially located in Vienna and can be reached at the e-mail address praesidium@atheistisch.at, Supplementing Committee and Replacing Committee can be reached each at the personal residence of the respective chairperson.

The Presidium

§ 7. (1) The Presidium is the only and, thus, also the highest decision-making body of our religious denominational community. The sphere of competence of the Presidium covers all affairs of our religious denominational community.

(2) The Presidium can be validly convened by at least the tenth part of its members. Physical presence is not necessary for decisions, it is sufficient to ascertain the will of each single member of the Presidium; thereby, each member of the Presidium must be contacted and informed preferably at an early point of time and successfully. Seven days after the first contacting via phone, SMS message and e-mail, the member is considered sufficiently contacted. In addition, the Presidium can adopt rules of procedure, which in their current version are made available to all members of the Presidium.

(3) Decisions of the Presidium always require at least a consenting quorum of the absolute majority of all members of the Presidium; changes of the Statutes and an exclusion from the Presidium require a consenting quorum of three quarters of all members of the Presidium; a decision of the Presidium to self-liquidate our religious denominational community requires the consent of all members of the Presidium.

(4) All members of the Presidium are entitled to be represented, in case of their prevention, in the Presidium in their capacity by other members of the Presidium to which they have given via SMS message, via e-mail or by a personally signed document the power to represent; a declaration of resignation is not possible in this way.

(5) The Presidium can at any time incorporate members and only members of our religious denominational community into the Presidium. Such a member, with at least one officiating member of the Presidium being present, reads the Statutes in their current version entirely and accurately. Then it has the opportunity to formulate questions and remarks and to discuss them. The member confirms its readiness for incorporation with the words: "I have read. I have understood. I am ready." It then signs the incorporation protocol, which is testified by signature by the attending members of the Presidium. By this testimony, the incorporation becomes valid and – if it is not specified differently in the protocol – also immediately effective.

(6) The membership in the presidium ends by

(a) voluntary resignation by means of informal resignation, signed and scanned, or legally digitally signed and sent from the e-mail address of the respective member, or personally signed and personally handed over to another member of the Presidium, who then informs the Presidium immediately;

(b) Exclusion: An exclusion presupposes that the member concerned has grossly neglected his duties and obligations according to § 8. This neglect must be presented in a comprehensible manner in a written statement of grounds and this statement of grounds be made accessible to the respective member of the Presidium. According to § 7 section 2 an exclusion presupposes the decision by three quarters of all members

of the Presidium. The exclusion is effective with the resolution and must be communicated to the respective member immediately;

(c) end of membership in the religious denominational community (see § 5 section 2).

(7) The first presidium under the Statutes of 15 March 2016 consists of the members named in their preamble.

(8) At the request of a member of the Presidium, the Presidium may decide to grant, for the time being, the status of an associates member of the Presidium to that member of the Presidium. The Presidium can end this status at any time.

(9) The Presidium can at any time entrust members of our religious denominational community who agree with exercising the function of a presidium assistant or presidium secretary or regional contact person, respectively, and can end such an entrustment at any time. All these presidium assistants and presidium secretaries and regional contact persons are obligated

(a) to treat the memberships of all members of the 'Atheist Religious Society in Austria' as confidentially as possible; this obligation extends especially to the time after the end of their entrustment;

(b) and, as far as they participate in their function at work of the Presidium or in the environment of the Presidium, to contribute to a productive and appreciating working atmosphere.

Functions and duties of the Presidium

§ 8. (1) The Presidium manages all business and makes all decisions of the 'Atheist Religious Society in Austria' (compare § 7 section 1).

(2) The members of the presidium should be aware of being especially representatives of the 'Atheist Religious Society in Austria' and, also notably, to have the task of contributing to a far-sighted, open-minded and sustainable development regarding the content and organization of the religious denominational community.

(3) The members of the Presidium are obligated to treat the memberships of all members of the 'Atheist Religious Society in Austria' as confidentially as possible; this obligation extends also to the time after their membership to the Presidium.

(4) The Presidium has the task of organizing votes or decisions of the Presidium and to ensure the logging and storage of the protocols/minutes or written documents and the list of members of the 'Atheist Religious Society in Austria'. Furthermore, the Presidium has the task of notifying without any delay the respective federal ministry that is competent according to the Act on the Legal Status of Religious Denominational Communities 1998 (BGBl. I 1998/19, in the current version) of the names and addresses of the members of the organs entitled to represent our religious denominational community as well as of any change of the Statutes.

(5) The members of the Presidium shall contribute to a productive and appreciating working atmosphere within the Presidium.

(6) When speaking to the outside - especially to the media - members of the Presidium should make it clear whether a statement is about their personal opinion or a decision taken by the 'Atheist Religious Society in Austria'.

(7) The respective Presidium has the task of making reasonable provision for the disclosure of the information required according to § 9.

(8) In the case of termination of the legal personality of our religious denominational community, the last Presidium has the task of ensuring the settlement of claims against the religious denominational community (see § 12).

(9) Associated members of the Presidium are partly exempted from tasks and duties; especially they are exempted from the tasks and duties presented in § 8 sections 4 and 7. An associated member of the Presidium is subject to an obligation in accordance with § 8 section 5 only in the period in which he or she participates in the work of the Presidium.

Supplementing Committee and Replacing Committee

§ 9. (1) The Supplementing Committee appears if the Presidium, for whatever reason, has no longer a member anymore. It is responsible for the election of a new Presidium. It is made up of those members who are listed on a respective list of the previous Presidium. If possible, the members of the Supplementing Committee are to be informed about this special situation without any delay by the temporally last previous member of the Presidium. Each of these members can resign, in the form of a personally signed or legally digitally signed notice to the committee, at any time from being a member of this committee; such a resignation is irrevocable. The functions of the Presidium are, meanwhile, transferred to this committee up to the valid election of at least five new members of the Presidium. Any change of the Statutes by the Supplementing Committee is excluded. Only members of our religious denominational community can be elected as new members of the Presidium, and only those who agree with it.

(2) If the Supplementing Committee does not manage to validly elect at least five members of the Presidium within half a year, then those members of our religious denominational community who are listed on another relevant list (Replacing Committee) of the previous Presidium become members of the Presidium; at the same time, then, the mandate of the Supplementing Committee is completed. The respective Presidium has the task of making adequate provision for the disclosure of the information required in each case (compare § 8 section 7).

Outward representation of the religious denominational community

§ 10. (1) The members of the Presidium, acting jointly as the Presidium, do the outward representation of our religious denominational community 'Atheist Religious Society in Austria'.

(2) Toward to the state, the Presidium may also authorize a single or several members of the Presidium to represent our religious denominational community. The respective

authorization must contain information about the scope and duration of the respective authorization.

(3) Written certifications according to § 4 section 4 can also be issued by a member of the Presidium or by a person authorized by the Presidium to do so; they are then, in their certification effect according to § 4 section 4, equivalent to a certification by the Presidium.

Way of acquiring resources necessary for the fulfillment of economic needs

§ 11. (1) The simple membership of our religious denominational community is free of charge.

(2) Resources that may be necessary for the fulfillment of the economic needs of our religious denominational community shall be acquired specifically by means of donations and/or gifts. In addition, we can imagine financing rituals and events through cost-covering contributions or prizes. The simple membership remains unaffected and free of charge.

(3) The religious denominational community commits to deal with its resources that may be at hand in a responsible, sustainable and sparing manner.

Regulations for the case of dissolving the legal personality

§ 12. (1) In the case of dissolving the legal personality of our religious denominational community, resources that may be possessed by our religious denominational community must not be used for purposes that contradict its aim.

(2) In the case of dissolving the legal personality of our religious denominational community the last Presidium, if necessary, cares for the correct handling of claims against the religious denominational community.

(3) A decision of the Presidium to self-liquidate our religious denominational community is valid only if the Presidium consists of at least five members; such a decision requires a unanimous positive vote by all members of the Presidium. In the case of a valid self-liquidation of our religious denominational community by a decision of the Presidium, the Presidium takes care that all (hitherto existing) members of our religious denominational community are immediately informed and notifies this self-liquidation in writing to the respective federal minister who is competent according to the Act on the Legal Status of Religious Denominational Communities 1998 (BGBl. I 1998/19, in the current version).