

Reimbursement Recommendations for Volunteer's Expenses

1. The background and purpose of the recommendations

In 2002, the general assembly of the Finnish Red Cross approved the FRC's first volunteer service policy, which defines the status, rights and obligations of the organisation's volunteers and provides a direction for the further development of the service. The policy was updated in 2008. According to this policy, a volunteer is a person participating in the Finnish Red Cross's volunteer service of their own free will. Their motive for participation is neither material nor financial gain. Volunteers act without pay 'from one person to another'.

According to the volunteer service policy, the organisation's volunteers include:

- active members and volunteers (who, for the most part, are required to be members, e.g. elected officials, organisers of individual events, promos, instructors, trainers, active participants in the operations) who take part in the operations regularly
- volunteers taking part in a one-off activity (e.g. collectors).

In order to implement the policy, an action plan was created. It recommends that volunteers be reimbursed for expenses incurred while carrying out volunteer duties and not considered reasonable or included in the volunteer service. The purpose of this recommendation is to provide everyone an equal opportunity to participate in volunteer work and to make the reimbursement practices clearer and more uniform throughout the Finnish Red Cross.

2. Expenses incurred through normal volunteer service and administrative duties

Every volunteer is responsible for their own personal expenses connected to routine volunteer work. Sometimes, volunteer tasks can be long in duration, causing excessive meal, travel or accommodation costs, which the organisers must take into account when making their arrangements and planning their budget.

Volunteers may also make purchases on behalf of the organisation, in accordance with prior agreement. The action plan and budget form the foundation of the Finnish Red Cross's operations, and any reimbursements must also be based on these. The purpose of the reimbursements is to cover costs incurred by the organisation's operators and event organisers when carrying out FRC activities. Purchases made for a branch, district or the headquarters may be reimbursed by the organisational unit in question for a receipt.

When working for the voluntary rescue service, the unit's own reimbursement and insurance guidelines will apply, except when assisting authorities, which will be governed by applicable law.

3. Expenses incurred from participation in occasions, events and meetings

Volunteers must pay for their own expenses incurred from participation in occasions, events and training connected to the volunteer service. If a unit decides that a volunteer should take part in an occasion, event or a meeting, the unit in question must reimburse some or all of the expenses, if this has been agreed on with the participant in advance. Taking part in meetings and events is an excellent way to motivate the volunteers, which must be taken into account in the organisational units' action plans and budgets.

4. Reimbursements

4.1 Travel

Normally, travel expenses are reimbursed based on the cheapest mode of public transport. If suitable connections cannot be found, trips made with a private vehicle may be reimbursed according to Matkahuolto's express bus ticket prices. Car-pooling is highly recommended. On justified grounds and based on a prior agreement, the state's travel regulations may be applied for expenses incurred from the use of a private vehicle. The recommended amount is half of the reimbursement amount defined in the state's travel regulations.

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4.2 Telephone Normally, if a branch carries out a lot of work that requires frequent use of a phone or the internet, the branch will acquire its own contract. However, if a volunteer's duties require the volunteer to use their own phone often, the volunteer may, in advance, negotiate with the unit in question for a reimbursement. When applying for a reimbursement for phone calls, the applicant must state the total amount and the start and end dates of the use. The applicant must submit a credible account of the phone bills to be reimbursed.

4.3 Equipment Volunteers use their own clothes and equipment without any reimbursement. For a special reason, a unit may assume responsibility for procuring and managing PPE required in a volunteer operation. Purchase of private equipment will not be reimbursed. If the use of a volunteer's private equipment, such as tools, is necessary, a prior agreement must be made. In that case, the unit in question will be liable for any damage caused.

4.4 Subsistence allowance No loss of earnings from a volunteer's paid job will be compensated for. A subsistence allowance is only payable if a volunteer takes part in an event that is long in duration and held outside of the volunteer's district. This must be agreed on in advance. Subsistence allowances may only be paid, after careful consideration, to volunteers with demanding roles. It is recommended that no subsistence allowance be paid for participating in the general assembly or a district's annual meeting.

5. Reimbursement for different organisational roles

National level, District level, Branch level, Elected offices

Council, board and the bodies governed by the board – Expenses reimbursed in advance as agreed – A right to reimbursed travel costs and a subsistence allowance
District board and the bodies it governs – Expenses reimbursed in advance as agreed.

A branch and the bodies it governs – Expenses reimbursed in advance as agreed

Representation duties

General assembly – A branch reimburses its official representatives' expenses (travel, accommodation, meeting package) – A district reimburses its representative's expenses (travel, accommodation, meeting package) – The organisation reimburses the board members' expenses (travel, accommodation, meeting package).

Young people's annual meeting – A branch reimburses the expenses of the observers it has appointed – A district reimburses its official representatives' expenses.

Annual district meeting – A branch reimburses its official representatives' expenses (travel, accommodation if necessary).

Other events – A branch reimburses the expenses of the representatives it has appointed.

A branch meeting – The participants are responsible for their own expenses.

Other representation – A branch reimburses the expenses of the representatives it has appointed.

Training

- A branch reimburses some or all of the expenses of the participants it has sent to receive training. A district may support participation in training agreed on in advance. If a district sends a participant to receive training, it will also be responsible for the expenses.
- A branch reimburses some or all of the expenses of the participants it has sent to receive training. A participant may also take part in training arranged by a district at their own expense.
- A participant is responsible for some or all of their own expenses.
- Reimbursements for trainers are defined in the trainer's instructions.