

Assistance Dogs Europe

Guidance Note on Administration and Organisation

Introduction

Assistance Dogs Europe (ADEu) is an umbrella organisation for assistance dog organisations across Europe. To become a member of ADEu, organisations must meet the agreed standards. The aim of these standards is to ensure that the highest possible level of welfare is in place for all assistance dogs and, using the status attached to assistance dogs, to encourage responsible dog ownership amongst the general public. These guidelines are designed to advise members of ADEu on the key elements to be considered in relation to the welfare of the dogs involved in order to meet these standards.

The purpose of this Guidance Note is to explain some of the expectations that ADEu has in relation to the administration of an assistance dog organisation that wishes to become accredited.

1. Structure of an Organisation

All accredited members of ADEu/ADI must be registered as a not-for-profit organisation. There are different registration systems in different countries, but you will have to prove that your organisation is properly registered (by a notary) with the appropriate agency in your country. You will have some kind of Registration document and this must contain a clear written statement of what your organisation exists to do. Legally, it is always important that you only do what you are registered to do as doing activities that lie outside of your registered mission is normally illegal. So, you will need a registered mission statement that reads something like this:

“..... organisation exists to train assistance dogs and partner them with people with a disability”.

A statement like this allows you to train assistance dogs. It does not, for example, allow you to train assistance cats or horses!

One essential part of a not-for-profit organisation is that it has a Board of Directors (or trustees) that are unpaid (i.e. volunteers). The organisation may have paid staff, but they are ultimately accountable to the trustees/directors who have overall responsibility for ensuring the organisation meets its mission, uses its resources properly and meets its legal obligations.

To ensure accountability and transparency, it is important, whatever your size, that proper financial records are kept and that these should be verified by an outside person.

There may be very strict laws about this in your country and you will have to prove to ADEu that you meet these laws.

Although different countries may have different legal requirements for financial reporting, you must prove to the assessors that you regularly monitor your finances – income and expenditure. At a minimum, you should produce a full finance report every three months (quarterly) and ideally, monthly.

2. Organisation Chart

For people working in an organisation, it is very important that they know who has responsibility for what tasks and who they are answerable to. An organisation/staffing chart showing who reports to whom is a very useful and important thing to have. It will probably look something like the one in Appendix 1.

3. Insurance

Insurance is essential for any organisation. At a minimum, you must prove to ADEu that you have insurance covering the following:

- Public liability – protects a member of the public who may be injured as a result of your actions e.g. gets bitten by a dog in training, or trips and breaks a leg whilst at your training centre
- Employer's liability – ensures that employers can make a claim if you do something that harms them
- Vehicle insurance.

The main purpose of insurance is to protect the trustees/directors. If you do not have insurance, they may be personally liable to meet the cost of any claims against the organisation if someone successfully sues the organisation.

The usual recommended level of insurance for public and employers liability is at least 2m euros and ideally 5m euros.

4. Assessing the risks in your organisation

ADEu wants to be sure that you understand all the risks associated with running your business and are doing what you can to minimise those risks. This is good business practice as the more you think about what might go wrong, the less likely it is to happen. So, do you know what you would do if you could not find suitable dogs, you had a flood which meant you had to leave your centre for a year, your funding ceases etc?

5. Health and Safety

Everyone has the right to work and visit a place that is safe and free from dangerous hazards. However, this will not happen unless you work hard to create a safe environment for everyone. It is easy to forget about health and safety until something terrible happens – then everyone wishes they had done something to prevent the accident. ADEu assessors will want to know what you are actively doing to ensure you take your health and safety responsibilities seriously.

We will want to know:

- Do people working and staying at your centre know what they should do if there is a fire in the building?
- Do you have fire extinguishers and if so, do staff/volunteers know how to use them, are they regularly serviced? You will need to prove all these things to the assessors. If you don't have fire extinguishers, why not?
- What provisions do you have for emergency lighting? Are these sufficient for people to get out of your building if there is a fire? If you don't have emergency lighting, you will need to explain why not and show the relevant local law that permits you not to have emergency lighting.
- If someone does hurt themselves, do you have trained people to help them with first aid?
- Are your first aid kits kept up to date and regularly re-filled? Are first aid medicines kept in a locked cupboard that only a few agreed people have access to?
- If staff or volunteers have a minor accident, this must be recorded in a first aid accident book which is held on site. Assessors will want to see this book. Staff and volunteers will also be asked if they are aware of what they have to do in the event they have an accident.
- Do the people in your organisation who use potentially dangerous substances know how to use them safely?

6. Confidentiality

All members of staff, your clients and volunteers have the right for information you hold about them to be kept confidential. You may need this information, but not everyone necessarily needs to know it or have access to it. So, for example, ADEu assessors will want to see where you keep your client records and as these will contain information about people's disabilities, they must be kept in a locked cabinet or box. Information

about your staff should also be kept locked away. You must have a written policy showing how you deal with confidential information.

People also have the right to protect their own image and therefore, you should never use photographs of people without them agreeing first. The easiest way to do this is to have a simple Photography Consent Form for people to fill in when you start working with them – staff and clients.

7. Fundraising and Communications

If you need to ask people for money to carry out your work, it is important that you are open and honest in all your fundraising work. There may be local laws about this in your country and you will have to show the ADEu Assessor how you meet these laws. Even if there are not any laws, ADEu will want to be reassured that you are acting properly in matter relating to fundraising and finance. You must keep proper records of all your fundraising activities and where the money you raise comes from.

Honesty is an important value for ADEu members and you will need to prove that you are not making unrealistic or misleading claims in the information you produce – including your website.

Appendix 1

