DIGITALISATION POLICY

OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

Digitalisation is a megatrend in society. Our current policy creates a good foundation for promoting digitalisation at the Finnish Red Cross. The Strategic Programme of the Finnish Red Cross emphasises the development of digital services for volunteers and people in need of help, in particular. The premise of developing digital services is always the need for help. Digital services allow us to efficiently identify and even anticipate changes in the need for help. The Strategic Programme for 2024–2026 identifies the changes in the operating environment: "We will reach aid recipients and volunteers increasingly often online. The organisation has an operating model for online aid that responds to the need, in addition to functional online platforms." "The aim of digitalisation is to support the efficient activities of Red Cross branches and volunteers and the changes in the operations. We will use shared digital systems and procedures actively at all levels of the organisation." "We will develop procedures to get an overview of the need for help and our aid resources in sudden aid operations. We will be able to respond to the need for help in Finland also through online training and online aid methods."

For many of us, the extensive shift to remote work and distance learning brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic introduced new digital platforms for communication and coworking. Even before the pandemic, the possibilities of digital-based tools extended much further than simply digital documentation. They had an intensive effect on cooperation methods, decision-making, and measuring results, for example. Similarly, the pandemic caused organisations' volunteer activities, such as training courses, to move online. Aid recipients, such as young people who need help and support, are increasingly found online. Phenomena such as neighbourhood aid, community volunteer work and campaigning organised outside of conventional organisation activities are using social media platforms that are constantly evolving. Information-based management is increasingly significant in society. Systematic collection, retention and utilisation of data are required for operations to develop. The laws on data protection require careful and purposeful data processing and data retention. The regulation of digitalisation is constantly developing. In addition to digitalisation, the Red Cross activities are also affected by other societal phenomena. Organisations are expected to communicate openly and in real time. Organisations are expected to react to societal changes increasingly rapidly. Financiers and the public expect organisations to provide reliable information on how efficient and effective their operations are.

One of the most significant phenomena influencing and accelerating digitalisation is the increase in the use of artificial intelligence (AI), which can be seen in the use of large language models (LLMs) becoming more commonplace. AI can be used to analyse large amounts of data rapidly and precisely, which allows for better decision-making and resource allocation. Similarly, AI-based solutions, such as chatbots and automated customer service systems, can also improve the user experience by offering fast and personalised service 24/7. The use of AI can also free up employees and volunteers to focus on more effective and challenging tasks that involve human interaction. The Finnish Red Cross adopted guidelines for using AI for work in 2024. As with other tools, the purchase and adoption of AI features and applications must first involve the definition of the target and the benefits sought. Ethics and accountability must always be taken into account when using AI. It must be ensured that the use of AI does not cause social, environmental or other types of harm. The influence of AI will grow even further in the coming years once it becomes an established part of technologies and processes, even for creative work, such as design. The development of digital systems and the changes in the processes allowed by digitalisation must also be assessed from the perspective of parallel societal trends. All changes, including digitalisation, involve new risks. The strategic-level risks of digitalisation may arise in situations where we are unable to keep up with the general development of the non-governmental and volunteer sector. The risks of advancing too quickly include hasty prioritisations and short-sighted choices of technology. To control risks, the prioritisations and resource allocation in digitalisation made by the organisation must be prepared with particular care. The risks related to digitalisation are recognised and controlled as a part of the Finnish Red Cross risk management system, with special attention paid to matters of information security and data protection.

DIGITALISATION POLICY

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DIGITALISATION AND OBJECTIVE OF THE DIGITALISATION POLICY

As a result of the changes in the operating environment and the Red Cross development work, digitalisation has become increasingly significant since the organisation's digitalisation policy was first approved in April 2020. Digitalisation is a prerequisite for continuing the organisation's aid operations. The Finnish Red Cross must succeed in utilising digitalisation for it to achieve the objectives set in the Strategic Programme. The Strategic Programme requires that the needs of the operators and aid recipients outside of digital services are also taken into consideration at the same time. The principles identified in April 2020 have steered operations appropriately, and they remain valid even in the policy updated in January 2025. The objective of the Finnish Red Cross digitalisation policy remains providing guidelines for the development of digital services required to achieve the strategic goals of the Finnish Red Cross. A shared understanding of the significance and possibilities of digitalisation allows for long-term decision-making and prioritisation. This policy helps us manage the changes related to digitalisation and identify and control the related risks.

DIGITALISATION DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES OF THE FINNISH RED CROSS

1. VOLUNTEER SERVICES ARE PLANNED TOGETHER.

The services aimed at volunteers are designed together with the volunteers. The collection of volunteers' digital services is also developed in cooperation with volunteers. The direction of the development is communicated openly. The design should pay attention not only to the expectations of the volunteers, but also the community as a whole, aid recipients included. Through co-creation, we can better understand what the users of a service need. The tools for co-creation include statistics compiled from surveys and systems, interviews and collaborative design sessions. Understanding needs and service design based on this understanding require new competencies and even new management methods from employees. Digital cooperation platforms are also suitable for developing services other than digital services.

2. DIGITAL SYSTEMS SUPPORT THE SHIFT IN VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES.

The Finnish Red Cross is actively collecting information about the scope and quality of its activities. Data is an important management tool at all levels of the organisation, used by both employees and volunteers. It is important that information is modified for the needs of different user groups and used to communicate about the development, changes and significance of volunteering both to the volunteers and the community. By utilising data, the organisation's operations can be steered in a whole new way. Even today, each new volunteer shares their personal interests and skills. Once we know these things, we are able to personalise activities for them. Through information-based management, needs for help can be responded to faster and in a more suitable manner. Digital platforms allow for the open flow of information within the organisation, which helps spread and develop best practices more efficiently.
The supporters, financiers and donors of the Red Cross activities also require information about the success of our work. Systematic data collection and processing creates the conditions for automation and the use of AI. Our systems also produce information on the areas of volunteering in which digital services are the primary means of supporting volunteer activities. Even at this moment, digital systems already provide a platform for volunteers and networks that is not bound to time and place. Digitalisation facilitates the trends involved in the shift in volunteering, such as the increased need for online aid and short-term volunteering becoming increasingly common.

3. IN THE DIGITALISATION OF A PREPAREDNESS ORGANISATION, CRISES ARE PREPARED FOR IN ADVANCE.

Digital solutions are designed by keeping in mind that the Red Cross is a preparedness organisation whose activities place specific requirements for digital systems. By using methods that utilise digitalisation, we can adapt quicker in exceptional situations and incidents that require new kinds of aid operations. Systems that support our operations must be designed so that they – or their backup systems – function even in such exceptional conditions for which we prepare. Questions related to data protection and

security are taken into special consideration in the design and procurement processes, potential problems are prepared for and anticipated, and the procedures in such situations are practised in advance.

4. DIGITALISATION IS TODAY'S ORGANISATIONAL SKILL AT ALL LEVELS.

In a large and multi-disciplinary organisation, digitalisation plays many roles. For a branch, it may still mean adopting social media. In an employer organisation, digitalisation already affects almost all positions through new procedures, systems, data sources and communication channels and similar. The increasingly extensive collection, processing and analysis of data are changing the work done by Red Cross employees and volunteers and require new kinds of competencies. Participating in the development of digital services and being responsible for systems in production is included in the job description of an increasing number of employees. The roles, procedures and communication related to data processing may change rapidly in the coming years, and this development must be actively monitored. This requires constant development of competencies, procedures and management. Digitalisation is not the only change that affects Red Cross operations. Organisations are simultaneously affected by questions of data security and changes in regulation, financiers' demands and authorities' operations. The overall impact of these changes must be constantly assessed as a part of general operational planning.

5. VOLUNTEERS ARE SUPPORTED IN USING OUR DIGITAL SERVICES.

Even the best services designed together with volunteers is not without problems. We are all unique when it comes to using digital services. New systems are designed in a user-centric fashion from that start, with varying user needs and overall accessibility in mind. We offer volunteers, members and donors support with using digital services. Support can be provided at in-person events and training sessions or remotely by phone or chat. Digital proficiency and supporting others in using digital systems will also be a part of organisational competencies in the branches and among volunteers.

6. WE DEVELOP SERVICES BY USING EXISTING SOLUTIONS AND PROVEN TECHNOLOGIES.

Often, we try to solve problems that others have already encountered before us. Designing secure and easy-to-use digital services often takes much longer than users are willing to wait. A development process that has begun is difficult to finish fully, and continuous development requires resources. One may encounter such situations locally or nationally. As such, development work related to digitalisation must be based on existing systems and solutions. Similarly, when using AI, we always assess the suitability of existing technologies' AI features for our needs first. If the existing systems do not meet the needs of the organisation, the resources allocated to the systems built from the ground up must be sufficient, and the adoption and the system's lifecycle must be well prepared for.

In future development, compatibility with authorities' data structures and systems must also be ensured to allow for information sharing and reporting in special situations. The development of AI and other new technologies must be actively monitored even outside the non-governmental sector and as a part of the international movement. If possible, we will plan and negotiate on the development together with other national societies and the International Federation and Committee. Existing solutions, technologies and licence agreements will be utilised efficiently when we establish good and long-term cooperation with IT operators and the members of the International Movement.

7. THE RED CROSS PROCESSES DATA IN A FAIR AND APPROPRIATE MANNER. WE ANTICIPATE THE IMPACT OF REGULATION.

We only collect and store data that is necessary and useful for the Red Cross activities. In particular, the collection, retention, processing and removal of data related to persons must be open and transparent to the persons themselves. Authentication of both employees and volunteers in digital services is easy. It is implemented in a centralised manner that allows for all data on a person to be processed and removed if the person so requests. If Red Cross volunteers or employees access the digital services of other organisations or operators in their activities, we primarily aim to use our own authentication system with them.

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Anyone should be able to use the Red Cross online services, and their content should be easily comprehensible. When procuring new public web services and volunteer systems, we are committed to a high level of accessibility. In 2025, this means meeting level AA WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) Standard 2.1 requirements. The regulation related to data protection, AI and accessibility will provide guidelines for the development of digital systems and support the functional use of the systems. We follow the guidelines of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies regarding the ethical and responsible adoption of AI. We will anticipate the changes and impact of regulation related to digitalisation. Through anticipation, we can direct our development resources appropriately and ensure sufficient competencies.

SUCCESS IN DIGITALISATION IS A REQUIREMENT FOR FINNISH RED CROSS AID OPERATIONS TO CONTINUE

The use of digitalisation is a requirement for achieving the objectives defined in the Finnish Red Cross Strategic Programme and the strategy of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The digitalisation policy should also pay attention to any changes in these documents. This way, we can ensure that the opportunities provided by digitalisation are used in the organisation's activities and the development is progressing in the right direction in terms of achieving the objectives. Due to the rapid changes in the operating environment, the digitalisation policy should be reviewed annually. The practical deployment of the principles detailed in the digitalisation policy is ensured in connection with the action plans prepared by all Finnish Red Cross organisational units.

Privacy: Public

Owner: Aleksi Aalto, Central Office

Version: 1.0.

Last update: 31.1.2025

Approver: The Board of the Finnish Red Cross

Approval: 31.1.2025, Protocol 01/2025