

**Public Order Act**  
(612/2003; amendments up to 774/2010 included)

**Chapter 1**  
**General provisions**

Section 1  
*Purpose of the Act*

The purpose of this Act is to safeguard public order and security.

Section 2  
*Definitions*

For the purposes of this Act:

- 1) *a public place* means:
  - a) a road, street, pavement, market square, park, beach, sports field, water area, cemetery or similar area that can be used by the public;
  - b) a building, public service vehicle or similar, such as government office or other office, public transport station, shopping centre, business premises, or a restaurant which is in public use either for the duration of a particular event or otherwise;
- 2) *a built-up area* means a densely built up area as indicated by the relevant traffic sign.

**Chapter 2**  
**Endangering public order and security and causing disturbance**

Section 3  
*Disturbing public order and endangering public security*

- (1) It is prohibited to disturb public order or to endanger public security in a public place by:
  - 1) making a noise or causing other similar disturbance;
  - 2) making repeated threatening gestures, aggressive movements, verbal threats or other similar threatening behaviour likely to cause fear;
  - 3) shooting or throwing objects, or in any other similar manner.

- (2) Actions referred to in subsection 1 are also prohibited in other than public places, if the effects of such actions extend to a public place.

#### Section 4 (582/2005)

##### *Use of intoxicating substances*

- (1) It is prohibited to use intoxicating substances in public places in a built-up area, at a border crossing point as referred to in the Border Guard Act (578/205) and in a vehicle in use for public transport.
- (2) The provisions of subsection 1 do not apply to an area where alcohol is served under a specific licence or subject to notification, or in the interior of a vehicle in private use. Neither do they apply to the consumption of alcohol beverages in a park or similar public place, provided that the consumption of the alcoholic beverages and the associated sojourn and behaviour do not prevent or unreasonably restrict the right of others to use the area for its proper purpose.

#### Section 5

##### *Preventing a public danger*

The owner or occupant of a building or structure, or their representative, shall ensure that snow or ice, or any other object or substance falling from the building, structure or similar does not cause danger to people or property.

#### Section 6

##### *Advertisements and announcements*

- (1) It is prohibited to install dazzling or misleading lights that endanger public order or security, or advertisements that resemble traffic control equipment or otherwise constitute a safety risk. At the request of the police, a person having installed such lights or advertisements shall immediately remove the said lights or advertisement.
- (2) The unauthorised removal or vandalising of a public announcement or notification placed on public view by the authorities is prohibited.

#### Section 7

##### *Other activities causing disturbance*

- (1) It is prohibited to purchase sexual services or offer sexual services against payment in a public place. For the purposes of this Act, sexual services mean sexual intercourse and equivalent sexual acts as defined in Chapter 20, section 10(1) of the Criminal Code (39/1889). Provisions on penalties for abusing a victim of prostitution and for purchasing sexual services from a young person are laid down in Chapter 20, sections 8 and 8(a) of the Criminal Code. (744/2006)
- (2) Urinating and defecating in a public place resulting in a disturbance of public order or a public health risk is prohibited.
- (3) It is prohibited to organise a performance in a public place, if this performance violates the law or if it entails a risk to human health or property or causes considerable disturbance to public order. Provisions on organising public meetings and public events are laid down in the Assembly Act (530/1999).

## Section 8

### *Ensuring access to a building*

The owner or occupant of a building, or their representative, shall ensure that the contact information of a caretaker, building manager or other such person, with whose assistance the police, rescue and social welfare and health authorities or a process server can without delay and free of charge gain access to the building, are displayed in a visible manner in a multistorey building.

## Chapter 3

### **Banned objects and substances**

## Section 9

### *Dangerous objects*

- (1) The manufacture, importation, trading and possession in a public place and in a vehicle located in a public place of brass knuckles, stilettos and throwing stars, edged weapons disguised as other objects as well as electric stunners and stun batons, spring batons and precision rocket launchers and slings are prohibited, unless otherwise provided in subsection 2 or 3 or section 12.
- (2) Trade in telescopic batons is forbidden, unless the party to whom the baton is handed over is a guarding services supplier as referred to in the Private Security Services Act (282/2002) or a provider of special forcible means training for guards. Possession of a telescopic baton in a public place and in a vehicle located in a public place is prohibited, unless the possessor is a guard as referred to in the Private Security Services Act or a security steward as referred to in section 22 of this Act, in the performance of a work

assignment, or unless there is a valid reason for the possession of the telescopic baton associated with handing it over, or unless otherwise provided in section 12.

- (3) The provisions of subsections 1 and 2 do not apply to the State or possession of objects owned by the State, if such possession is justified by the performance of duties of a person employed by the State.

## Section 10

### *Possession of objects and substances suitable for injuring others*

- (1) The possession of the following objects or substances intended or suitable for causing serious injury to other people in a public place is prohibited:
  - 1) edged weapons, broken glass and other similar objects suitable for slashing or stabbing;
  - 2) batons, chains, bows, wires, cables, baseball bats and other similar objects suitable for hitting;
  - 3) darts, metal balls and other similar objects suitable for throwing;
  - 4) corrosive substances and substances that are suitable for seriously injuring or temporarily paralysing a person;
  - 5) air guns, spring powered weapons, harpoons, catapults, blowpipes and other similar objects suitable for shooting;
  - 6) laser pointers that are hazardous to health.
- (2) The possession of objects that bear a deceptive resemblance to a firearm or an explosive object is prohibited in a public place.
- (3) The provisions of subsections 1 and 2 do not apply to objects and substances whose possession is necessary for a work assignment or other valid reason.
- (4) Provisions on the possession of firearms and explosives are laid down in the Firearms Act (1/1998), the Explosive Substances Act (263/1953) and the Decree on Explosives (473/1993).

## Section 11

### *Handing over of air guns, spring operated weapons and harpoons*

Selling and otherwise permanently handing over air guns, spring operated weapons and harpoons to a person under the age of 18 without the permission of their guardian are prohibited.

## Section 12

### *Collecting of dangerous objects*

- (1) The manufacture, importation and trading of brass knuckles, stilettos and throwing stars, edged weapons disguised as other objects, as well as spring batons, telescopic batons, and precision rocket launchers and slings that are of historic or artistic value is permitted. The possession of such objects in a public place and in a vehicle located in a public place is permitted for a valid reason associated with trading, inclusion in a collector's collection or exhibiting.
- (2) An object is regarded as being of historic value if it has connections with a prominent person, event, place or era, or if, on account of its age, rarity, typical representativeness or other similar reason, it has artistic importance or significance in terms of weapons or military history or ethnology. The object is regarded as being of artistic value if, on account of its design, surface treatment or decoration, it represents a certain stylistic period or has significance as an artistic whole.

### Section 13

#### *Possession of substances suitable for painting graffiti*

Possession of spray paints and paints or other substances highly suitable for painting graffiti on the property of others is prohibited in a public place without a valid reason.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Animals**

### Section 14

#### *Control of dogs*

- (1) In order to maintain public order and security, the owner of a dog, or the person in whose possession the dog is, shall:
  - 1) keep the dog on a leash in built-up areas;
  - 2) ensure that an unleashed dog has no access to exercise tracks or other similar running tracks, and that the dog has no access whatsoever to a public beach, a children's playground, a market place during trading hours, or a ski track maintained for public use or a sports field, unless this is specifically allowed; (1195/2003)
  - 3) ensure that the dog's faeces are not left on the ground in a maintained section of a built-up area.
- (2) The provisions of subsection 1(1) and (2) do not apply to a State-owned dog used in the course of performing a public duty, a dog accompanying a guard performing guarding duties, a trained rescue dog on duty, a dog assisting a physically handicapped person, or a guide dog for a visually impaired person.

- (3) The provisions of subsection 1(1) do not apply to an enclosed yard, a dog training area or a specifically designated fenced-in exercise area. In such areas, however, the dog shall be under the supervision of its owner or the person in whose possession the dog is.
- (4) The provisions of subsection 1(2) also apply to a cat. The provisions of subsection 1(1) and (2) also apply to a horse and, as appropriate, to other domestic animals and pets.

#### Section 15

##### *Horse riding*

- (1) Riding a horse and driving a horse-drawn or other similar vehicle on an exercise track or other similar running track, a ski track maintained for public use and a sports field are prohibited unless otherwise indicated.
- (2) The provisions of subsection 1 do not apply to necessary service and maintenance work or to actions by the authorities associated with maintaining public order.

#### **Chapter 5**

#### **Sanctions**

#### Section 16

##### *Public order violation (774/2010)*

Provisions on a fixed fine as the only penalty for public order violations are laid down in the Act on violations giving rise to fixed fines (756/2010).

Section 16 as amended by Act 774/2010 will come into force on a date to be appointed by Act. Previously the section read as follows:

#### Section 16

##### *Public order violation*

- (1) A person who
  - 1) disturbs public order or endangers public security as referred to in section 3;
  - 2) uses an intoxicating substance in violation of the ban laid down in section 4;
  - 3) fails to comply with the duty of care as laid down in section 5 for the owner or occupant of a building or structure or their representative;
  - 4) uses a light or advertisement in violation of the ban in section 6(1) or removes or vandalises in violation of subsection 2 of the said section an announcement or notification as referred to in the said subsection;
  - 5) purchases or offers sexual services in violation of section 7(1),
  - 6) urinates or defecates in violation of the ban laid down in section 7(2),
  - 7) organises a performance in violation of section 7(3),
  - 8) fails to comply with the duty laid down in section 8 to ensure access to a building,

9) possesses a substance suitable for painting graffiti in violation of the ban laid down in section 13,  
10) fails to comply with the the duty of controlling an animal laid down in section 14(1) or  
11) violates the ban on horse riding and driving laid down in section 15(1),  
shall be sentenced for *a public order violation* to a fine, unless a more severe punishment for the act is provided elsewhere in the law.

(2) A sentence of a fine for a public order violation may not be converted into imprisonment.

#### Section 17

##### *Other penal provisions (533/2007)*

Provisions on penalties for violating the provisions on dangerous objects, possessing dangerous objects, possessing objects or substances suitable for injuring other persons, and giving a minor an object suitable for injuring other persons, are laid down in Chapter 41, sections 4-7 of the Criminal Code.

#### Section 18 (533/2007)

Section 18 is repealed by Act 533/2007.

#### Section 19 (774/2010)

Section 19 is repealed by Act 774/2010 effective from a date to be appointed by Act.  
Previously the section read as follows:

#### Section 19

##### *Fixed fine*

The provisions on a fixed fine as a sanction for a public order violation as referred to in section 16 are laid down in Chapter 2 a, section 9(4) of the Criminal Code and in a Government Decree issued under section 9(6) of the said Chapter.

#### Section 20

##### *Effecting necessary measures*

If a person, despite being urged to do so by the police, neglects to remove a light or advertisement that violates the provisions of section 6(1), the police have the right to effect this removal at the cost of the person guilty of such neglect. In an urgent case, the police have the right, without hearing the interested party, to effect the removal of the light or advertisement at the cost of the person guilty of this neglect, in order to prevent endangerment of public order or security.

## Section 21

### *Destruction and removal (533/2007)*

- (1) The police and, at a border crossing point and in a public service vehicle in which a border check is being conducted, also a border guard, may remove an object or substance manufactured, imported, traded or kept in possession in violation of section 9 or 10 from a person in whose possession it is found. The police may also remove a substance from a person who has it in his or her possession in violation of section 13. An official entitled to make an arrest has the right to demonstrably destroy an object or substance as referred to in sections 9 and 10 that can be seized, if it is of minor value and if it is obvious that a court would find it liable to be forfeited to the State. A commanding police officer also has the right to demonstrably destroy a substance, including its container, that is in possession of a person in violation of section 13, if the substance and the container are of minor value.
- (2) For the purpose of maintaining public order and security, the police and, at a border crossing point and in a public service vehicle in which a border check is being conducted, also a border guard, may remove from a person having consumed an intoxicating substance in violation of the provisions in section 4 the substance that this person has in his or her possession in an open or opened container and demonstrably destroy it.

## Chapter 6

### **Miscellaneous provisions**

## Section 22

### *Appointing a security steward*

- (1) A police department within whose area of jurisdiction a local social or health care unit, a local office of the Social Insurance Institution of Finland, an Employment and Economic Development Office, a shopping centre, or a public transport station, port or airport is located, or from where a public service vehicle departs, may, on application by the owner of the site or the vehicle, grant a licence to appoint security stewards as referred to in the Security Stewards Act (533/1999) for such premises or vehicle, to assist the police or the Border Guard in maintaining public order and security if maintaining public order and security by other means is not appropriate and this is required for a justified reason. In the licence to appoint security stewards, the operating area of the stewards shall be restricted to the site or vehicle specified in the licence, and their immediate vicinity if necessary. For the purposes of this Act, a reform school or child welfare institution is not a social service unit. (723/2010)
- (2) The licence to appoint security stewards is valid for no more than five years. Conditions pertaining to the training of the security stewards, the carrying of forcible means



equipment, their operating area, and positioning and number, may be attached to the licence.

- (3) The police department having issued the licence may, if necessary, cancel the licence to appoint security stewards and change the conditions or period of validity of the licence on account of changes that have a material impact on the maintenance of public order and security in the operating area.

### Section 23

#### *Duties of a security steward*

- (1) The duties of a security steward as referred to in section 22(1) above may only be accepted and performed by a guarding services supplier as referred to in section 3(1) of the Private Security Services Act. Security steward duties may only be performed by a security steward who is employed by a guarding services supplier and who has valid certification as a security steward and a guard.
- (2) The powers of a security steward performing security steward duties are determined under the Security Stewards Act. The security steward shall not, however, have the powers referred to in section 6, section 7(1)(3), section 7(3) and (4) and section 8 of the Security Stewards Act. When exercising the right to apprehend a person under section 7(2) of the Security Stewards Act, a security steward has the right to search the apprehended person and the goods in their possession to ensure that they are not in possession of objects or substances that they could use to cause danger to themselves or others. Security stewards have the right to take away any dangerous goods or substances found during a search. Objects and substances that have been taken away shall be handed over to the police without delay.
- (3) The provisions in sections 10-14 of the Private Security Services Act on good guarding practice, the provisions in sections 8, 17 and 19 on the drawing up of client contracts, action reports and work instructions, the provisions in section 2(1)(14) and sections 29 and 30 on forcible means equipment and the carrying of such equipment, and the provisions in section 43 on the authorities' right to access information shall apply to security steward duties. The guarding services supplier shall include information on the performance of assignments comprising security steward duties and the security stewards having taken part in performing these duties corresponding to the information referred to in sections 18 and 45 of the Private Security Services Act in the personnel and work shift files as well as the annual report of the guarding services supplier.
- (4) Persons carrying out security steward duties shall wear security steward uniforms. The provisions on the guard uniform in section 32(1) and (3) and section 33 of the Private Security Services Act apply, as appropriate, to the security steward uniform. Further

provisions on the insignia and text on security steward uniforms may be issued by decree of the Ministry of the Interior.

- (5) Penalties for violations of subsection 1 are laid down in Chapter 17, section 6(a) of the Criminal Code. The penalty for violations of subsections 3 and 4 are laid down in section 56 of the Private Security Services Act.

#### Section 24

##### *Appeals*

- (1) An administrative decision issued under this Act is appealed as provided in the Administrative Judicial Procedure Act (586/1996).
- (2) Decisions made under this Act to cancel licences or change their conditions shall be adhered to notwithstanding any appeal, unless the appellate authority orders otherwise.

#### Section 25

##### *Entry into force*

- (1) This Act comes into force on 1 October 2003.
- (2) This Act repeals the Decree of 1 June 1928 containing the public order ordinance for rural areas (219/1928), as amended.
- (3) Measures necessary for the implementation of this Act may be undertaken before the Act's entry into force.