



DI-313-2

THE ROLE OF THE BOARD IN L'ARCHE: A FEDERATION POLICY

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THE ROLE OF THE BOARD IN L'ARCHE: A FEDERATION POLICY

Part one

1. Introduction

A L'Arche community is a medium for revealing the gifts of people with intellectual disabilities so that society can benefit from these gifts and become more human. This is our primary Mission. The role of the board in L'Arche is fundamental so that L'Arche's action of love and social justice can thrive around the world and that our Identity and Mission can be supported, resourced and lived out to the full.

2. The purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to define the role of the board in L'Arche in a manner which is clear and coherent with the Identity and Mission of L'Arche, with the Federation constitution and with the consequent demands of governance at community, country and Federation levels.

Our Identity

We are people, with and without intellectual disabilities, sharing life in communities belonging to an International Federation. Mutual relationships and trust in God are at the heart of our journey together. We celebrate the unique value of every person and recognise our need for one another.

Our Mission

In our local communities, in our countries and at the Federation level, we work together to:

- *make known the gifts of people with intellectual disabilities revealed through mutually transforming relationships.*
- *foster an environment in community that responds to the changing needs of our members, while being faithful to the core values of our founding story.*
- *engage in our diverse cultures, working together towards a more human society.*

Our governance

The principles of governance in L'Arche, based on 50 years of experience and re-affirmed through the international Constitution, guide our practices.

Servant leadership: Roles and structures of the Federation are at the service of the mission. People are called to leadership for limited terms after discernment processes. Those in authority gain wisdom through listening and taking counsel.

Partnership: Trust and collaboration operate freely within L'Arche. The structures are to foster that dynamic and embrace the partnerships among the spiritual, legal, financial, and communal elements.

Subsidiarity: Matters affecting L'Arche are dealt with at the most appropriate level closest to the people affected, and only when they cannot be solved in that context are they referred to another level.

Accountability: Those who hold specific responsibility and authority in L’Arche must be accountable to report back to the individual(s) or body through whom authority was given. Accountability is about being responsible and being linked to the wider body. It is also about taking responsibility for the consequences of one’s actions.

Participation: Effective communication is essential in L’Arche. Processes are defined, published, and open. They include people with and without intellectual disabilities.

Inculturation: L’Arche communities live in various cultures. L’Arche embraces this diversity while engaging in an on-going process of reciprocal and critical interaction, adaptation and challenge.

Solidarity: All in L’Arche share a common humanity and a fundamental equality. We have a shared responsibility for each other and are committed to the common good.

The role of boards in L’Arche cannot be defined in isolation but is best understood through the relationship that boards have with their key L’Arche partners. At the community level these key relationships are with the community leader and the Federation representative. At the country level, with the national leader and the Federation representative. (*See Annex 2: Best Practices.*)

Today, there exists a wide variety of board structures across the Federation; some are centralised at the national level, others are decentralised and legally incorporated at the community or regional level. Different terminology is used depending on the structure and the culture. In this document, we will use the term ‘board’ which is interchangeable with the term ‘committee’. (*See Glossary of terms in the Annexes.*)

3. Boards and the history of L’Arche

The history of L’Arche shows us the importance of the role of the boards in supporting our Identity and Mission as lived out in our communities, in our countries, and throughout the Federation. In founding L’Arche in Trosly in France in 1964, Jean Vanier quickly discovered the need for responsible governance and the important role of the board. This role has evolved significantly over the years as L’Arche itself has developed and grown. Once seen as somewhat separate and distinct from the communities and from the Mission of L’Arche, today it is a key ‘partner’ in the Mission and an integral part of the structure of governance at community, country and Federation levels. For this reason, it is essential for the future of L’Arche that board members understand and support the Identity and Mission of L’Arche.

4. Governance based on partnership

Governance in L’Arche is based on partnership, which is clearly expressed in article 13 of the international Constitution, termed “Governing the Federation”:

In between meetings, the Federation assembly delegates authority to the international leaders and to the international stewardship board. This authority is exercised through their specific and complementary roles at the service of the mission. They work in close collaboration and partnership.

Responsible governance in L’Arche involves boards and leadership at all levels of the Federation working in partnership, each with its distinctive role, responsibilities and authority, at the service of our Mission. Partnership, dialogue and collaboration of boards with the Federation and its leadership is key:

- at the community level (with the community leader, community council and the Federation representative, be it the regional/national leader, international envoy or international delegate for communities)
- at the regional level in confirmed countries (with the regional leader)
- at the national level (with the international delegate for countries, with the national leader and leadership team)

- at the international level (with the international leaders and leadership team)

The same model and spirit of partnership and collaboration between the boards and the Federation representatives applies at all levels. However, there is a difference between the nature of governance responsibilities at local and country levels, on the one hand, and at the international level, on the other. The demands of legal governance and compliance in relation to 'service provision' is very exacting in many countries and communities, and this is a key responsibility of boards at community and country levels (see *Annex 3: Key Responsibilities*). This does not apply at the level of the international stewardship board.

5. Authority and responsibility

Within this model of partnership and shared authority, board members and Federation leaders have clear and distinctive responsibilities:

- At the international level, the Federation leaders have authority for the Mission of L'Arche and ensure that as L'Arche evolves and grows in depth, diversity and number of communities and countries, it remains L'Arche and is faithful to the Identity and Mission.
- The stewardship board carries legal and financial authority for the work and mandate of the Federation.

At country and community levels, L'Arche boards carry authority and responsibility in the following key distinct areas (see Annex 3 for details):

- Supporting the community in living the Mission by studying and understanding the Identity and Mission of L'Arche, and the Federation mandate.
- Supporting the community to implement its mandate and to grow in the true spirit of L'Arche, as outlined in the Charter, the Identity and Mission statements, and other relevant documents.
- Ensuring the legal and financial integrity of the community by overseeing that L'Arche is acting within the law, is maintaining high standards of financial accountability, and is developing the financial capacity to meet its current and future needs.
- Ensuring the credibility of the community with local authorities and promoting the message of L'Arche in the local environment. Boards do this by ensuring compliance with care and quality standards, and by advocating strongly for L'Arche and for the gifts and human rights of all people with an intellectual disability. In this way, L'Arche is engaged with its local culture and is working to create a more human society for everyone.
- Contributing to the future development and growth of the community and the Federation by developing, in collaboration with the appropriate L'Arche leaders, an on-going strategic planning process to support the implementation of the community, country and international mandates, and by working in solidarity with the larger family of L'Arche in the Federation.

At country and community levels, the international delegates and international envoys carry the authority of the Federation in their respective countries or communities with regard to the Mission of L'Arche. National and regional leaders lead and represent L'Arche and have delegated authority in their particular country. All Federation leaders provide guidance, support, orientation and direction to the communities and their boards, at the appropriate level.

They have authority to ensure implementation of:

- the international and national membership agreements
- the rules, policies and procedures of the Federation

- the nomination/discernment and evaluation processes for local and national L'Arche leaders and board chairs

6. Some key considerations

In our model of partnership and 'shared authority' there are generally two key agreements that boards must honour (amongst others):

- a. The membership agreement with the Federation.

The agreement with the international leaders and board is signed by both the national chair and the national leader. The agreement between the community and the national structure is signed by the local chair and community leader, and by the national chair and national leader.

- b. The 'service agreement' with government (where this exists).

In certain processes, such as nomination/discernment processes and evaluations of the national leader and the national board chair, the Federation representative has a key role. (*See Annex 1.*) These key policies and procedures from the Federation need to be incorporated and integrated into the by-laws and code of conduct of the boards, in so far as legally possible

As in any partnership, for example, marriage or business, there exists an inherent tension in the relationship. One of the key insights of the Identity and Mission process was articulated by the anthropologist and consultant to the process, Gerry Arbuckle:

"The fundamental tension in every faith-based organisation is between the mission and the business. In this tension, which is very human and fundamental, the danger is always that we demonise one pole of the tension while over-exalting the other. There is no resolution to this tension except through dialogue. We need mission and business; both are essential, but the mission should be driving the business."

This tension is normal, and more often than not, a source of enrichment, creativity and growth. It calls board members and leaders to mutually support and challenge each other, as appropriate.

However, tension can sometimes lead to misunderstanding and conflict, especially when mutual trust breaks down, and in this case the tension can become destructive rather than constructive.

The board chair and community leader, in close liaison with the Federation representative, have a key role in managing this tension, as well as in anticipating, monitoring and resolving it in case of conflict. In some cases, this may involve a dispute resolution process (*see Annex 1:D*).

7. Conclusion

L'Arche continues to evolve. Boards which understand the Identity and Mission of L'Arche and continue to grow in this understanding are imperative for this growth. We are partners in the Mission of L'Arche, each with our own distinct responsibilities and authority. Working together to this end ensures that people, with and without an intellectual disability in our L'Arche communities, can continue to thrive and to live with respect and dignity.

"Today I am still discovering what L'Arche is. It is important to keep this openness to what is given to us each day." (Jean Vanier)

Part two: Annexes

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Glossary

Governance determines clearly who has authority, who makes decisions, how other stakeholders make their voices heard and how account is rendered so that the Mission of L'Arche is fulfilled.

Identity and Mission process: the Federation-wide three-stage process facilitated by L'Arche International from 2002–2005. This process culminated in the official **Identity and Mission Statement** for all of L'Arche which defines who we are and states our purpose.

L'Arche Federation, International Federation or Federation: the International Federation of L'Arche Communities.

Federation levels: the community, national, regional or international level of L'Arche.

Board: the board of directors of an incorporated L'Arche entity at a particular level of the Federation, also referred to as 'committee' in a number of countries.

Federation representative: a person who has the delegated authority of the international leaders at various levels of the Federation. This could be an international envoy, international delegate, national leader or regional leader.

International stewardship board: the L'Arche board at the international level. The primary function of this board is to ensure the financial and legal integrity of the organisation. It works in close collaboration with the international leaders.

Service provision: the services and care given to persons with an intellectual disability, often defined in a legal agreement with and funded by government.

Collaboration: working together as equals in spirit of mutual trust and respect, sharing different perspectives and gifts towards a common goal.

Mandate: a course of action derived from the authority of people most concerned, developed through a discernment process and entrusted to an individual or group to implement.

Commitment and Belonging Process: a Federation-wide three-stage process facilitated by L'Arche International from 2009–2012. This process was a reflection on our lived experience of commitment to our mission in L'Arche and what it means to belong as a member of L'Arche. It led to a number of recommendations and actions to be undertaken at the individual, community, country and international levels.

Council: a group of people mandated to offer their counsel and wisdom on key issues and priorities to L'Arche leaders at various levels of the Federation.

Annex 1: Basic Policies and Rules

A. Criteria, selection and eligibility of board members and overall composition of the board

The appropriate selection of board members is very important and should be a priority.

The following are general criteria for the selection of new board members:

1. They should be well known by a committed L'Arche person (e.g., a current board member, the community leader or other community member) who makes the recommendation.
2. They should be open to discovering the gifts and values of persons who have an intellectual disability.
3. They should know and understand – or be open to learning about and understanding – L'Arche's Identity and Mission.
4. They should come from a variety of backgrounds and professions and offer to the board the different skills and gifts it needs, including legal and financial expertise.
5. Ideally, they should be people who can work as team members who respect the gifts of others and who are competent, caring and compassionate.
6. According to L'Arche policy, the following persons are **NOT** eligible to be L'Arche board members:
 - relatives of L'Arche community members
 - assistants or employees of the L'Arche community
 - former assistants who were assistants during the past three years
 - people who are paid for goods or services rendered to the L'Arche community (e.g., various health professionals, suppliers, local business people)
 - priests, pastors or ministers who serve the spiritual needs of the community
 - persons elected to political office.

The process of evaluating the needs of the board and looking for potential new board members should be happening on a continual basis, and not just once a year, often in a rush, for the annual general meeting of the corporation.

It is recommended that board candidates be invited for a trial period to 'Come and See', and make a point of visiting the community during this period.

When new members join the board of directors, it is essential that they become active in the work of the board as soon as possible. Every board member wants to feel that he/she is making a contribution, and it is particularly the responsibility of the chair of the board and the executive of the board to see that the gifts and talents of each board member are put to the service of the community.

B. Nomination of board chair and the role of the Federation representative in the process

The role of the chairperson of the board is very important. He/she must provide the necessary leadership and coordination for the board to function effectively and for the community, with its board, to fulfil its mission on an on-going basis. Thus, the chairperson of the board must be selected with care and

reflection, according to a nomination process which is led by the Federation representative and which is similar to the one used to choose the community leader. It would include the following elements:

- a) Appointing a discernment team to write a mission letter outlining the term of office and priorities for the chairperson in view of the mandate and strategic plan of the community. (The board chair's term of office should ideally be fixed for a period that is typically between 2 and 4 years at a time, with a maximum of 12 years, in total, which would be regularly evaluated.)
- b) Consulting each board member and the community leader.
- c) Proposing a nomination to the board for a decision based on the by-laws of the board.

C. Conflict of interest

"Conflict of interest" refers to a conflict, or the appearance of a conflict, between the private interests and the official responsibilities of a person in a position of trust. A conflict of interest may arise between the personal/private or competing interests of a board member and the L'Arche board or the interests of a L'Arche community and L'Arche board.

Conflicts of interest are inevitable in any organisation, particularly those with multiple constituencies and competing interests. A conflict of interest should not disqualify a person from office unless it is persistent and pervasive. What is most important is that any conflict be managed in an open and transparent manner.

Members of the board shall act at all times in the best interests of L'Arche. This means setting aside personal self-interest or the interests of their constituent community and performing their duties in transaction of the affairs of L'Arche in such a manner that promotes member and public confidence and trust in the integrity, objectivity and impartiality of the board.

If a board member is of the view that the best interests of L'Arche are materially at odds with the personal interests of the board member, then this will be properly recorded in the minutes.

D. Dispute resolution: introduction and principles

1. Introduction

Our experience in L'Arche teaches us that conflict will be experienced and that when we face it honestly and directly rather than as something to be avoided at all costs, it can lead to truth and growth. We are inspired therefore to resolve conflict as it arises by direct dialogue with one another and in a manner that attempts to accommodate and respect the needs, views and best interests of those involved or touched by the dispute or its outcome.

2. Principles

- a) Each community is responsible for resolving disputes between its members at the community level and so should have in place a defined grievance or dispute-resolution policy approved by its board of directors.
- b) The community's policy should utilise local resources, and the implementation of this policy, with exceptions, need not involve the regional or national leader, or the international envoys or delegates.

- c) In certain difficult situations of conflict and in particular those directly involving the community leader or the board, the involvement of the Federation representative is recommended.
- d) The principle of subsidiarity will be otherwise be applied at all levels (local, regional, country and international).

Accordingly, a dispute should be resolved, to the extent possible, at the level where it originates:

- Conflicts between members of the community or between a member and the community should be resolved at the community level.
- Conflicts between communities in the region or between a community in the region and the regional council or regional leader should be resolved at the regional level.
- Conflicts between a community or region and the national structure or between a community or region and the national leadership council or national leader should be resolved at the country level.

Annex 2: Best Practices

A. Board relationships and communications

With the community leader

- a) The board is a place of support and of accountability for the community leader.
- b) Trust and communication are essential between the board and the community leader.
- c) To maintain a good working relationship, the community leader and board chair must have a good understanding and respect for each other's role, authority and responsibilities.
- d) This relationship between the community leader and the board chair, rooted in the desire to serve the Mission, is key to the community fulfilling its mandate.
- e) The chairperson and the community leader should meet at least monthly to share about common concerns, establish mutual expectations for fulfilling tasks and prepare for board meetings.
- f) The board appoints the community leader according to the guidelines established by L'Arche International and must confer authority on him or her. (s. *DI-302-02-Mandates-LimitedTerms-Evaluations-V3-EN*, available on the intranet of www.larche.org)
- g) The community leader should be present at all meetings of the board. Although appointed and employed by the board after a discernment process, the community leader is a full and equal partner in the mission with the board members and has a unique leadership role in this regard unlike in most typical NGOs. In some cases, where permitted by law, the community leader is an 'ex officio' member of the board.

With assistants

- a) The board empowers the community leader to give support to the assistants and volunteers in ways that help them deepen their motivation in their work and develop their vocation/personal mission in life and in L'Arche.
- b) The community leader is the sole link between the board and the members of the community. This is especially relevant during times of tension or crisis in the community.
- c) A small problem can become a major tension when an assistant bypasses the normal channels of authority in the community and goes directly to a board member with a complaint. Each community should have a clear complaints-and-grievance procedure.
- d) The assistants need much encouragement and affirmation. The board must allocate resources to help assistants find the nourishment, motivation and skills they need to enable them to stay. Money spent on L'Arche meetings, retreats, renewals and skills' training is money well allocated.
- e) Today there are many practical issues facing communities regarding the needs of assistants, e.g., salaries, health insurance and benefits, retirement, and serious illness. The board must work on these issues using Federation policies (which include regional, national and international policies) so that it can define more clearly what is the mutuality and security in the long-term commitment of an assistant to L'Arche.

With people with an intellectual disability

- a) Board members need opportunities to meet and get to know the people with an intellectual disability.
- b) Board members must discover – with time and in their own way – the gift and value of people with an intellectual disability, and deepen their belief in their mission and in the possibilities for their own growth.

With the community as a whole and the community council

- a) Because the board is legally responsible for the community and carries a real authority, it is also essential that the board members come to know the community and what people are living. There is always a difficult balance to be sought in this regard.
- b) On the one hand, the board must be kept informed of the life of the community and be encouraged to enter into this life through participation in various community events and celebrations, and thereby have contact with members of the community. On the other hand, the board should not be involved in the details of the day-to-day life of the community. A certain distance from the daily life allows the board to be objective, which is what the community also needs. Good governance implies a certain distance.
- c) The board must also keep in mind that its relationship with the community will evolve and change significantly as the community goes through various stages of maturation and growth. The board's involvement with the founding of the community may be very intense, but it needs to make the transition to allow the founding community leader and assistants to take their rightful place. As a community grows and matures over time it is the leadership of the community in collaboration with the body of community members, who live its daily life together, who will determine the local priorities and directions of the community based on the Identity and Mission of L'Arche.
- d) As the community matures and each community member becomes more confident and competent in taking ownership for the Mission, the board will be called to let go of certain decisions.
- e) The community must write its constitution, outlining the roles, responsibilities and authority of various members and groups in the community.
- f) It is important that the board and community council meet together once or twice a year to review and reflect on issues of common concern with regard to the mandate and Mission of the community and of the Federation.

With the Federation and Federation representative

- a) Since its beginning in 1964, L'Arche has grown considerably. This implies that we have much experience and best practices to share with one another and much support to give to one another.
- b) It is essential that the board and the community welcome the authority, support and friendship of the Federation. This implies that there will be times when the board and community may be challenged to grow and to look at certain issues or questions.
- c) Boards are expected to implement the policies, guidelines and official documents of L'Arche.
- d) The boards/board chairs of L'Arche are expected to work in collaboration with the L'Arche leaders who represent the Federation (regional leaders, national leaders, international

envoys, international delegates and international leaders) to ensure that the community remain faithful to our Identity and Mission. It is important that board members collaborate constructively with them and respect their authority.

- e) It is important that boards take every opportunity to meet and share with the leaders in L'Arche and with other boards of directors, and participate in L'Arche events at all levels of the Federation.

In general, the board chair/board of directors:

- Communicates regularly and meets when possible with the Federation representative.
- Shares minutes of the board with the Federation representative.
- Receives the results of the evaluation of the community from the Federation representative.
- Participates in the discernment process for the community leader and the local board chair led by the Federation representative
- Participates in the evaluation of the community leader led by the Federation representative.
- Works with the Federation representative to improve the board's functioning (see below: Board Self-Evaluation Tool).
- Participates in the training and formation of the board led by the Federation representative.
- Works with the guidance, counsel and directives of the Federation representative to implement Federation policies.

B. Decision making and relationships among board chair, community leader, and Federation representative

A Working Partnership

The community leader, board chair and Federation representative are committed together, as partners in the Mission of L'Arche, each one with a specific role. In this endeavour, the relationships and contributions of each partner are in need of regular review.

These charts below are a work tool to help board members, and board chairs in particular, to better understand and put into practice an effective three-way working relationship between these three key partners. It is neither a procedure nor a reference which is to be imposed on everybody, rather it is a support for dialogue which, in the concrete circumstances of each community and country, can help each partner to best live out his/her role. It is not about reducing the complexity of this reality to a chart but about helping the exercise of decision making in relation to concrete situations.

See the International Leadership Team Organigram and Charts 1 to 4 on the following pages which apply to the following charts:

- **Chart 1:** single communities which have an international envoy; for example, the communities in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and other countries, such as the Philippines, Japan, Slovenia, and Ukraine, etc.
- **Chart 2:** countries which have a national leader and an international delegate for countries; for example, Poland, Belgium, Germany/Austria, Switzerland, India, Australia, and Ireland/N. Ireland
- **Chart 3:** a confirmed country (with a centralised structure); for example, the UK

- **Chart 4:** confirmed countries with a decentralised structure; for example, France, Canada and the USA



INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP TEAM (LTM)



National Leaders of confirmed countries



International Delegate for countries



International Delegate for «single» communities



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Chart 3: Summary table for role distribution between a local board chair, community leader and regional leader for a confirmed country with a centralised legal/national structure - UK

ROLES					DISTRIBUTION		
3 dimensions			Nature		Community Leader	Local Board Chair	Regional Leader
Spiritual	Service Provision	Community					
			1	Developing a vibrant and meaningful community life (internal)	A	B	B
			2	Examining/implementing the means required to guarantee quality care for people with an intellectual disability	A	B	B
			3	Drawing up/discerning community projects, changes, extensions, etc.	A	B	B
			4	Developing the means to ensure the quality/freedom of spiritual life	A	B	B
			5	Developing the influence and reputation of the community in the local area through a spirit of openness and by announcing the multifaceted gifts of people with an intellectual disability (external)	A	B	B
			6	Promoting the community in the local area and expanding the network of support/friends	A	A	B
			7	Strengthening ties with the family of L'Arche (information, contribution, solidarity, twinnings, etc.)	A	B	B
			8	General guidance and evaluation of the community in relation to the 3 dimensions	C	C	A
			9	Enforcing the law and local regulations	A	B	B
			10	Human resources management and role distribution within the community	A	B	B
			11	Appointing and evaluating the community leader and board chair	C	B	A
			12	Drawing up and managing a budget	A	B	B
			13	Fundraising (RC or BP, according to the situation)	A	A	B
			Taking initiative and leading		A		
			Participating and confirming/ratifying		B		
			Participating and/or consulted		C		

Chart 4: Summary table for role distribution between board chair, community leader and regional leader for a confirmed country with a decentralised legal/national structure: France, Canada, USA

ROLES				DISTRIBUTION			
3 dimensions			Nature	Community Leader	Local Board Chair	Regional Leader	
Spiritual	Service Provision	Community					
			1	Developing a vibrant and meaningful community life (internal)	A	B	B
			2	Examining/implementing the means required to guarantee quality care for people with an intellectual disability	A	B	B
			3	Drawing up/discerning community projects, changes, extensions, etc.	A	B	B
			4	Developing the means to ensure the quality/freedom of spiritual life	A	B	B
			5	Developing the influence and reputation of the community in the local area through a spirit of openness and by announcing the multifaceted gifts of people with an intellectual disability (external)	A	C	B
			6	Promoting the community in the local area and expanding the network of support/friends	B	A	C
			7	Strengthening ties with the family of L'Arche (information, contribution, solidarity, twinnings, etc.)	A	B	A
			8	General guidance and evaluation of the community in relation to the 3 dimensions	C	C	A
			9	Enforcing the law and local regulations	A	B	B
			10	Human resources management and role distribution within the community	A	B	C
			11	Appointing and evaluating the community leader and board chair	C	B	A
			12	Drawing up and managing a budget	A	B	C
			13	Fundraising (RC or BP, according to the situation)	A	A	C
				Taking initiative and leading	A		
				Participating and confirming/ratifying	B		
				Participating and/or consulted	C		

C. Orientation, formation, nourishment and development of board members

1. Partners in the mission

- a) It is the mission of L'Arche which unites, inspires and motivates us as members of L'Arche, and calls us to be partners in this Mission whatever our role may be.
- b) Every board must have formation in the Identity and Mission of L'Arche and an understanding of how its role supports the Mission (see below in Annex 3 – Summary of Identity and Mission process). Boards must also have a good sense of how L'Arche is different from a group home or NGO. For example, in a typical NGO, rule-making and reflection on the organisation's mission is done by the board. In a L'Arche community, rule-making and reflection on the organisation's mission is done in partnership with the community leader, community council and Federation representative.
- c) Board members must be familiar with the Charter of L'Arche and the Identity and Mission Statement which clearly articulate the values which unite all L'Arche communities. Thus, the board must have a clear sense of what is essential and unique to L'Arche.
- d) Board members need times of reflection and of nourishment on a regular basis which enable them to benefit from the spirituality of L'Arche and which also support their motivation and commitment.

2. Some key L'Arche values and recommendations for board members

- a) People with an intellectual disability need an environment characterised by unity. If they sense this unity, they will become peaceful and able to progress and develop according to their unique gifts and abilities. Thus, each member of the community – as well as the board of directors – is responsible for safeguarding an environment of unity.
- b) It is essential that board and community members work to build a sense of trust among themselves. A breakdown of trust is the worst crisis a community can face.
- c) Thus it is important that we find the means to engage in dialogue on the issues, concerns and questions which face us as a community or board. It is also important that we work towards consensus and unity on these questions.
- d) We must be realistic about expectations of one another, about people's weaknesses and the imperfections of L'Arche, and accept the fact that there will always be a 'gap' between the ideal we wish to live and our reality. Having said that, we must always strive to live our Identity and Mission in L'Arche with high standards of integrity and competence and to narrow 'the gap' as much as possible.
- e) Every board must have clarity about the structures needed for its good functioning. For example, the board's by-laws must clearly articulate the goals and principles of the Federation and the means by which these goals are to be fulfilled. They must outline the roles and responsibilities of the officers of the board, how these people will be chosen and their terms of office.
- f) It is also essential that the chair of the board know how to facilitate board meetings in an efficient and effective manner and ensure that accurate minutes and financial records are kept. In general, it is recommended that the board of directors meet once a month.
- g) Committees/sub-committees are part of the essential structure of the board and are used to accomplish the work necessary to support the community. Clarity of roles, responsibilities, authority, and accountability is essential.
- h) We believe that God has called L'Arche into existence and is watching over it. We ask our boards to have a healthy respect for the role that Providence has played in our past and will play in our future.

D. Decision making as a board: some key considerations and recommendations

1. In general, consider how any particular decision will impact the lives of community members.
2. After an open discussion of the pros and cons of a particular question, the board attempts to reach a consensus. If this is not possible, a decision can be made by a majority vote.
3. Although it is important to listen to and take into consideration the minority position(s) expressed, it is essential that board members work as a team and not allow one or two voices to dominate board discussions. In other words, it is important to ensure that the board not be 'held hostage' by a few members and become paralysed for fear of conflict.
4. Board decisions should always be publicly supported by all members of the board.
5. Decision-making processes used by the board should focus first on listening well to what the community desires and reflecting on the following quote from Jean Vanier:

"There is often the danger of failing to take a decision because we are afraid of making the wrong one, afraid of being unpopular, afraid of entering into conflict with others. And some people just have difficulty in making decisions. They like analysing a situation, seeing all the pros and cons, but they have trouble in deciding to make changes. But not to take a decision is, in fact, to take one. People with responsibility certainly need patience; they should not act in the flush of anger. They have to know how to listen, find out the facts and take their time. But, after prayer and discussion, they also have to be able to take decisions and not let themselves be controlled by circumstances or past events."

Jean Vanier, *Community and Growth*

E. L'Arche Board Self-Evaluation

The issue of the effective functioning of L'Arche boards is a common preoccupation throughout the Federation.

Many board members recognize the need to understand L'Arche better: its mission, values and structures. They want to improve their contribution in their role as board members.

The purpose of this tool is to help the boards evaluate their role and functioning.

The questions relate to the basic purpose of a L'Arche board, which is different from that of a typical charity or NGO. It is always useful for an individual or an organisation to take a break from all the busyness of day-to-day life and identify what is working well and also what needs to be changed or improved.

This exercise will prove to be useful if the board can identify one to three key items that it can commit to working on in the foreseeable future. It can be especially interesting to use it during the discernment process for a new chair.

This checklist can be used during one of the board meetings or, even better, in a specific meeting that the chair will organise to work on this health-check. Although the terminology of this evaluation tool is for a national board, it can easily be adapted to a local board. In the case of a local board, it is recommended that the community leader and the Federation representative be involved in the process. The content and questions can also be adapted, as appropriate, in liaison with the Federation representative.

Self-Evaluation of a Board of L'Arche - Evaluation criteria

List of elements of self-evaluation for a national board, to be filled in by the members of the board.

Please give a score of 1 to 4

(1-Excellent; 2-Good; 3-Average; 4-Below Average) in each box and comment on each point, explaining your score and offering some possible ideas/proposals for improvement.

	Item to evaluate	Rating (1–4)	Comments
1. Main characteristics of a L'Arche board and ways of welcoming new members			
1.1	Recruitment process for new members Do we have a formalised process, criteria? What is our integration process? What means do we give to new members to discover the unique identity and mission of L'Arche? (documents, books, videos, international website access, meetings, etc.)	1 to 4	
1.2	Is our board diverse enough in terms of gender, age, profession, social class, seniority with L'Arche, etc.?	1 to 4	
1.3	Does our board encompass all necessary skills to efficiently play its role (e.g., finance and administration, legal, social welfare, buildings, medical, communication, entrepreneurship skills, etc.)	1 to 4	
1.4	Do we have fixed-term mandates for the chair? Do we have fixed-term mandates for the members?	1 to 4	
2. Meetings of the board and teamwork			
2.1	Do we have the appropriate meeting frequency?	1 to 4	
2.2	Are our meetings well prepared? How is the agenda developed and set? Are preparatory documents established and sent in advance? Do we write minutes, circulate, review, approve and store them?	1 to 4	
2.3	Is members' attendance at board meetings regular? Are members committed and engaged in their participation? What do we do with board members who never come? Is there a rule about this?	1 to 4	
2.4	Are our meetings well managed? Are the topics discussed fully and is there room for debate? Is there freedom to speak? Is the atmosphere friendly and constructive? How does the board deal with conflict or with serious differences of opinion?	1 to 4	

2.5	Are we working on the appropriate topics?	1 to 4	
2.6	Is our decision-making process clear enough? Are decisions followed through?	1 to 4	
2.7	What is the place of the national leader in the meetings? Can he/she express his/her views adequately? Are community members or outside people invited if needed?	1 to 4	
2.8	How do we communicate relevant information about our agenda, minutes, decisions to the communities? Does the national leader have a role to play in this?	1 to 4	
3. Relations with the communities, the national leader and the leadership council			
3.1	Are roles and responsibilities clear with respect to a) the board b) the national leader c) the leadership council	1 to 4	
3.2	Does the national leader have enough authority to fulfil his/her mandate? Are his/her recommendations listened to and implemented? Are our working relationships based on trust and mutual respect for our respective roles of leadership and governance?	1 to 4	
3.3	Does the board have enough feedback and adequate reporting from the national leader to fulfil its own responsibilities?	1 to 4	
3.4	Do we provide enough support to the national leader?	1 to 4	
3.5	Are the joint meetings with the leadership council effective and helpful in deepening our relationships and common understanding?	1 to 4	
3.6	Are there opportunities for board members to meet with community leaders and members, especially members with a disability? Are they frequent enough? Do we feel that trust exists between all the component partners? Do we benefit from the rich spirituality and celebratory life of L'Arche?	1 to 4	
3.7	Is the yearly general assembly a moment of meaningful gathering? Does it confer a real authority for mission and vision on its members? Is L'Arche a vibrant reality in our country?	1 to 4	

4. Links with the wider environment and statutory responsibilities			
4.1	What is the quality of relations with national authorities, with the churches, with other charities?	1 to 4	
4.2	Are we aware of our responsibilities regarding legal and financial integrity and compliance, and how do we fulfil them, especially in relation to funding (public and private)? How do we organise our fundraising?	1 to 4	
4.3	Are we aware of our responsibility regarding quality-of-care compliance and regulation, and how we fulfil it?	1 to 4	
4.4	Do we have enough opportunities to promote L'Arche in our environment?	1 to 4	
4.5	How aware are we about our country's need for L'Arche to grow? Do we support the growth of the mission of L'Arche in our country?	1 to 4	
4.6	Are we aware of the situation of people with an intellectual disability in our area?	1 to 4	
5. Belonging to L'Arche and Links with the International Federation of L'Arche			
5.1	Does our board organise events and sessions in order to deepen our knowledge of L'Arche, its mission and spirituality?	1 to 4	
5.2	Do we feel responsible for the mission of L'Arche and for the implementation of the recommendations of processes such as Identity and Mission, and Commitment and Belonging?	1 to 4	
5.3	Are we informed and interested in what happens in L'Arche elsewhere? Are we willing / able to participate in international meetings? How do we feel we live our belonging to the wider family of L'Arche and to the international Federation?	1 to 4	
5.4	What kind of relationship do we have with our Federation representative? Do we understand his/her role?	1 to 4	
5.5	Do we have relationships and bonds of solidarity within L'Arche, with other countries/people?	1 to 4	

Profile of qualities required for the role of chairperson of a L'Arche board (both local and national):

- Previous L'Arche experience
- Understanding of and enthusiasm for L'Arche and its mission
- An ability to lead
- A commitment to teamwork, collaboration and partnership
- A commitment to be present at L'Arche events and to represent the board at L'Arche regional, national and international events
- An ability to consult and delegate
- An ability to work well with others in a way which creates trust
- An ability to facilitate decision making
- A commitment to uphold a high standard of good governance
- Willingness to complete the term of office
- Willingness to give the necessary time and energy
- Willingness to work within the boundaries of the authority of the role

Role and responsibilities of a chairperson of a L'Arche board

(template for both national and local board chairpersons)

The role of the chair is to ensure integrity in the manner in which the board and its members function as a L'Arche board. The chair is a key partner in the Mission of L'Arche. The chair ensures that the work of the board is done in a competent and effective manner, and in collaboration and partnership with the Federation and its representatives and other key stakeholders. The chair of the board is responsible for the good and effective governance of the board and ensures that the board members operate as a team.

- a) The chair presides as the 'manager' of the board's activities, ensuring that the board and its members follow Federation and board policies and those obligations legitimately imposed by contract, statute or regulation.
- b) The chair will set the agendas for meetings of the board in consultation with the national leader/community leader and with input from the members of the board. The chair ensures that its meetings are well run and focused on matters of board priorities and responsibility.
- c) The chair will ensure that the board is aware of key developments between board meetings and has the necessary information to undertake effective and transparent decisions and actions, which are then accurately reflected in board minutes.
- d) The chair, without diminishing the national leader's/community leader's accountability to the full board, will develop a supportive and effective working relationship with the national leader/community leader.
- e) The chair participates in a regular performance evaluation of the national leader/community leader by way of a process led by the Federation representative.
- f) The chair will strive to ensure that the board works effectively as a team and that any areas of overlap between board, management and staff responsibilities are managed constructively.
- g) The chair is responsible for ensuring that conflict-of-interest issues and other conflicts or disputes are addressed sensitively and resolved constructively.

- h) The chair is responsible for ensuring that the board self-evaluation is conducted on a regular basis.
- i) The chair, with the support of the board and the national leader/community leader, is responsible for ensuring adequate communication and accountability to members, the Federation and other key stakeholders.

F. Code of Conduct

The board and individual members make a vital contribution to the success of L'Arche. The code of conduct is a succinct statement of essential principles intended to govern the conduct of the board of L'Arche. It encourages the development of a spirit of collective decision making, shared objectives and shared ownership of and respect for board decisions. It outlines the serious commitment that members undertake when they join the board. Respect for confidentiality is the cornerstone of trust and confidence.

Board members are expected to comply with the Code of Conduct upon assuming office:

Code of Conduct

Board members of L'Arche will at all times conduct themselves in a manner that:

- a) supports the mission, values and objectives of L'Arche
- b) serves the overall best interests of L'Arche rather than any particular constituency
- c) brings credibility and good will to L'Arche
- d) respects principles of fair play and due process
- e) demonstrates respect for individuals in all manifestations of their physical, mental, cultural and linguistic diversity and life circumstances
- f) respects and gives fair consideration to diverse and opposing viewpoints
- g) demonstrates due diligence and dedication in preparation for and attendance at meetings, special events and in all other activities on behalf of L'Arche
- h) demonstrates good faith, prudent judgement, honesty, transparency and openness in their activities on behalf of L'Arche
- i) ensures that the financial affairs of L'Arche are conducted in a responsible and transparent manner with due regard for their judiciary responsibilities and public trusteeship
- j) avoids real or perceived conflicts of interest
- k) conforms with policies approved by the board, in particular this Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest provisions and with the terms of the membership agreement with the Federation of L'Arche
- l) accepts – in the case of gross misconduct or on-going flagrant breach of L'Arche policy – the right of the Federation representative to recommend the removal of a board member or board chair
- m) publicly demonstrates acceptance, respect and support for decisions legitimately taken in transaction of L'Arche's affairs

Annex 3 - Key Responsibilities

A. Key responsibilities of the board in L'Arche

1. Provides the community with support to live the Mission

- a) The board studies and understands the Identity and Mission of L'Arche and supports the community to be faithful to its mission and to grow in the true spirit of L'Arche, as outlined in the Charter, the Identity and Mission statements, and other relevant documents of L'Arche.
- b) The board exhibits care and compassion in responding to the changing needs of the members of the community, especially the long-term members.
- c) The board actively participates in the community's leadership discernment process which is led by the Federation representative; and hires/employs the community leader.
- d) The board engages in regular and transparent communication with the Federation representative (board minutes are to be made available to same) and participates in community evaluation processes led by the Federation representative.
- e) The board signs the membership agreement with the Federation or the local country entity and ensures on-going faithfulness to its provisions.
- f) The board ensures that the recommendations of international processes, such as Identity and Mission and Commitment and Belonging are honoured and implemented.

2. Ensures the financial and legal integrity of the community

1. Legal responsibilities: The board ensures that L'Arche is acting within the law.

- subject to legislation common to any non-profit corporation (or society)
- subject to legislation under which L'Arche may be receiving funding from a governmental body
- subject to the by-laws of its corporation (or society)
- subject to national and local laws (e.g., employment standards, immigration, human rights, public health, etc.)

2. Financial responsibilities: The board ensures that L'Arche is developing the financial capacity to meet its current and future needs.

- finds the financial resources necessary for the community to live its daily life and to plan for the financial resources needed for the community to grow and to develop
- has an annual audit and is transparent in sharing reports
- establishes, with the community leader, the annual operating budget for the community and monitors the community's expenditures on a regular basis
- maintains accurate financial records and has an annual audited financial statement for each fiscal year
- adopts financial policies regarding salaries, benefits, pensions and other matters (e.g., signing authority and limits) in conjunction with the policies of the Federation
- secures the financial resources to support L'Arche on the regional, national and international levels, as applicable

- provides resources to enable training and formation and spiritual nourishment for assistants.
(s. below : *Commitment and Belonging recommendations.*)

3. Ensures the credibility of the community with local authorities and promotes the message of L'Arche in the local environment

- Ensures that L'Arche is living up to the standards set by various government regulations for quality of care and services provided, and other necessary areas of compliance.
- Helps L'Arche to find its place in the social services and/or health system of the country (or region, province or state).
- Advocates strongly and consistently for L'Arche and the gifts and human rights of all people with an intellectual disability so that L'Arche is engaged with its local culture and working to create a more human society for everyone.

4. Contributes to the future development and growth of the community and the Federation, and so is responsible for the following tasks:

- to establish sound policies and procedures consistent with local laws and regulations, as well as L'Arche policies and practices, both international and local, in areas of human resources, financial operations, governance and decision making, grievances and dispute resolution, etc.
- in collaboration with the appropriate L'Arche leaders to develop an on-going strategic planning process based on the appropriate mandates (international, national and local) to determine the short- and long-range goals and priorities for L'Arche
- to work in solidarity with the larger family of L'Arche in the Federation
- to establish appropriate risk-management planning, policies and practices to mitigate the possibility that adverse consequences may flow from an action or failure to act
- to ensure the board's effectiveness, including regular evaluations, monitoring term limits for board chairs, recruiting and orientating new board members and the organisation of the board's work

B. Problematic behaviours of a board, community leader and Federation representative

Problematic behaviours of a board

- staying in a formal relationship without trying to develop personal relationships
- intervening in the day-to-day operations and bypassing the authority of the community leader
- taking decisions without consultation and participation
- not taking enough time to listen and understand the issue
- creating confusion between close relationships and roles to be played
- not allowing any challenging positions, avoiding conflicts
- ignoring real or potential conflicts of interest

Problematic behaviours of a community leader

- a) keeping information from the board or the Federation representative
- b) controlling information that is shared with the board or the Federation representative
- c) not using supervision well
- d) claiming too much or too little authority
- e) creating his/her own 'little kingdom'
- f) difficulty in making decisions
- g) taking decisions too independently
- h) creating disunity between the board chair and the Federation representative
- i) trying to please everyone

Problematic behaviours of a Federation representative

- a) bypassing the community leader
- b) giving too much support to the community leader to the detriment of the community
- c) becoming too involved in personal conflicts
- d) enabling unhealthy patterns in the community or board
- e) refusing to challenge and exercise authority
- f) unaware of personal limits
- g) lack of investment in personal and professional development
- h) unable/unwilling to seek support when necessary
- i) not informing or sharing pertinent information verbally or in writing
- j) not engaging with the board

C. Identity and Mission: summary and conclusion

The Identity and Mission process refers to the Federation-wide three-stage process facilitated by L'Arche International from 2002–2005. The first stage named the positive aspects of L'Arche and the experience of 'Relationship, Transformation and Sign' as key elements of our identity. The second stage named some of the negative aspects of L'Arche, the major obstacles which prevent us from fully living our identity and from fulfilling our mission in L'Arche. The third stage of the process articulated the purpose of L'Arche in an official mission statement for all of L'Arche. It also named the ways in which L'Arche is called to develop and grow in order to fulfil our Identity and Mission more fully in the world today. The Identity statement was agreed as the final step in the process and defines who we are for all of L'Arche. See the special edition of *Letters of L'Arche* (n° 116) plus a good summary of process (*available on the intranet at www.larche.org*)

D. Commitment and Belonging

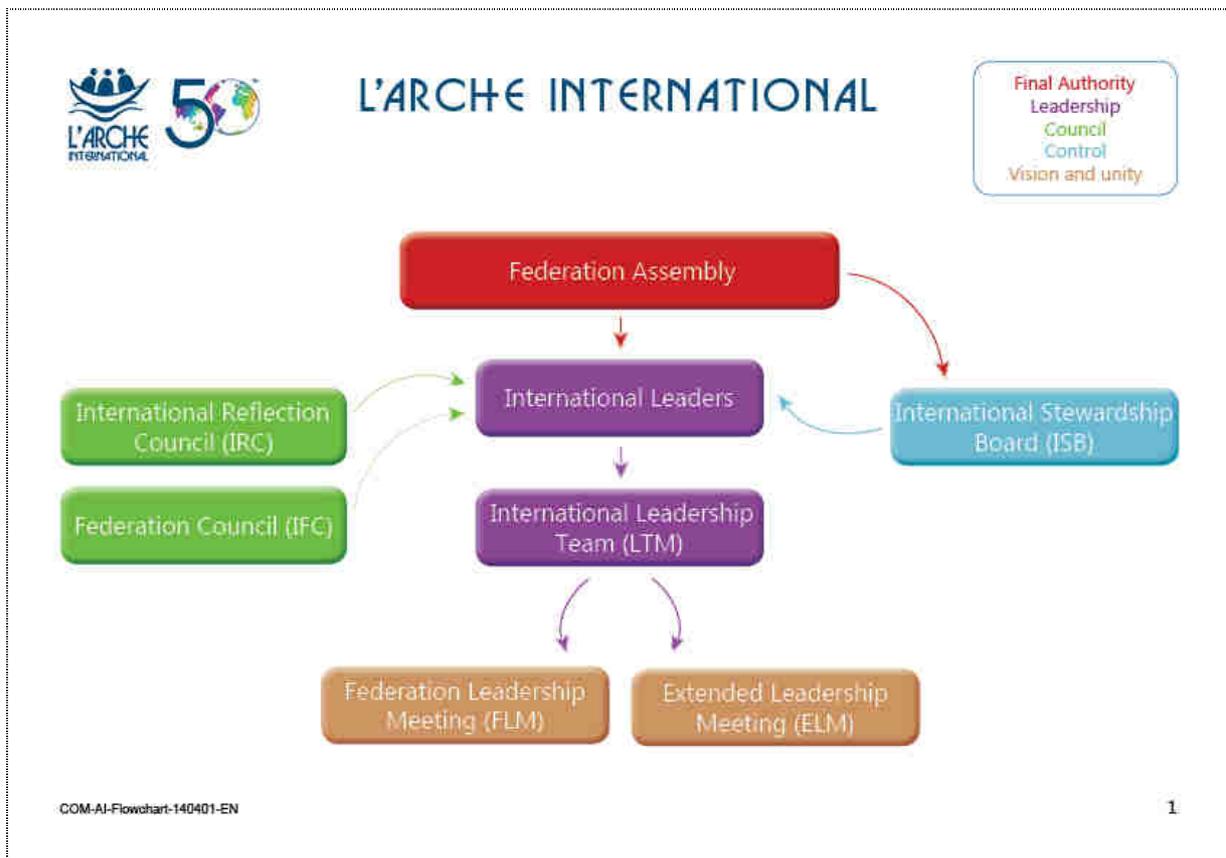
The Commitment and Belonging process refers to a Federation-wide three-stage process facilitated by L'Arche International from 2009–2012. This process was a reflection on our lived experience of commitment to our mission in L'Arche and what it means to belong as a member of L'Arche. It led to a number of recommendations and actions to be undertaken at the individual, community, country and international levels. (Documents available on the intranet at www.larche.org)

E. Organisational charts of L'Arche International

The following charts illustrate:

- the organisation of L'Arche International
- the international Leadership team (2014)
- the international Support team (2014)
- the International Stewardship Board (2017)

It should be noted that the individuals in the international leadership chart as seen in photos will change on a regular basis due to our system of limited terms.





INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP TEAM (LTM)



Stephan Posner
International Leader

International Leaders



Stacy Cates-Carney
Vice-International Leader

National Leaders of confirmed countries



Hollée Card
National Leader
Canada



Pierre Jacquand
National Leader
France



John Sargent
National Leader
UK



Tina Bovermann
National Leader
USA

International Delegate for countries



Tim Kearney
International Delegate



Karol Okecki
Deputy International Delegate



Rajeevan Cheriya Chaill
National Leader
India



Cornelia Mayingier
National Leader
Switzerland



Mairead Boland Brabazon
National/Federal Leader
Ireland, Northern Ireland



Claus Michel
National/Federal Leader
Germany
International Envoy
Austria



Basia Wójcik
National Leader
Poland,
International Envoy
Ukraine



David Treanor
National Leader
Australia
International Envoy
New Zealand



David Doat
Joint National leader
Belgium
(French speaking)



Johan Roose
Joint National leader
Belgium (Dutch speaking)
International Envoy
Netherlands

International Delegate for «single» communities



Zoël Breau
International Delegate



Jean-Christophe Pascal
In charge of
West africa



Baska Pestka
International Envoy
Bangladesh, Kenya,
Uganda, Zimbabwe



Robin Sykes
International Envoy
Spain, Croatia,
Slovenia



Stan Dubourg
International Envoy
Egypt, Palestine,
Syria, Haiti



Maria José Revaz
International Envoy
Argentina, Brazil



Manca Kastelic
International Envoy
Lithuania, Italy



Su Wen
International Envoy
Japan, Philippines



Azucena Bustamante-West
International Envoy
Mexico, Honduras,
Dominican Republic

COM-Organigramme-EDI-LTM-170925-EN



SUPPORT TEAM



Stephan Posner
International Leader

International Leaders



Stacy Cates-Carney
Vice-International Leader

Administration & Finances



Georges de Chaisemartin
Finance and Administrative Director



Astrid de Cagny
Financial Management Controller and Treasurer



Sophie Destenay
Book-keeping Accountant



Valérie Péchard
Financial Management (20%)

Secretariat



Odile Skjellaug
International Secretary



Shannon Crowther
Deputy for the International Secretary (80%)

Communications



Louis Pilote
Director of Communications



Christine Lang
Logistics and Translation



Nancy Jacob
Webmanager



Caroline Robinet
Assistant for internal Communications (50%)

Solidarity



Jean-Christophe Pascal
Director of Solidarity



Valérie Péchard
Solidarity Manager (80%)

Human Resources



Tobias Gerken
Director of Human Resources



Christine Bruggeman
Coordinator of Formation (80%)



Jane Langlet
Assistant Training Coordinator (70%)

Development of Spiritual Life



Michèle Dormal
Director for the Development of Spiritual Life (60%)



Anne Chabert d'Hières
Director of inclusion (50%)

Strategic Development



Sophie Baché Cougnon
Director of Strategic Development (80%)

Fundraising



Curt Armstrong
In charge of Fundraising Europe



Anne Chabert d'Hières
French-Speaking Copywriter (20%)



Jim Cargin
English-speaking Copywriter (20%)

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INTERNATIONAL STEWARDSHIP BOARD



**Jacques
Jaubert**
Treasurer



**Andrew
Kennedy**
Secretary



**Natalia
Bordun**
Member-at-
large



**Habib
Cachecho**
Member-at-
large



**Sylvain
Brabant**
Member-at-
large

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