



DI-203-1

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A MEMBER ? -A Federation Guideline-

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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A MEMBER? – A FEDERATION GUIDELINE-

This guideline was written by the working group on “membership” in 2016/2017 building upon the recommendations emerging out of the Commitment and Belonging process (2009-2012). The main content on this guideline is found in the annex (DI-203-2).

*The annex "Membership in L'Arche – a contextualization" helps to understand the recent evolutions around membership and references to previous membership policies that have nurtured the reflections for this policy.
You will also find further documents on the intranet.*

Its purpose is to give a direction and a vision for membership policy in L'Arche; one that fosters unity and honours the commitment and presence of all who actively participate in the *Mission of L'Arche*.

“Participating in the mission of L'Arche is choosing to live out the fundamental principles and values of L'Arche.” (C&B)

This commitment seeks to make the mission a reality in our world:
be it locally, nationally or internationally in whatever capacity within the Federation of L'Arche.

Everyone,

- **with or without an intellectual disability**
- **who has asked¹ to be part of L'Arche in whatever capacity;**
- **who has successfully fulfilled the requirements of a trial period (formal or informal);**
- **who has been formally welcomed into L'Arche by the appropriate authority² and**
- **who engages in an ongoing dialogue with L'Arche**

is a member.

¹ Typically, when a person with a disability arrives in a L'Arche community, someone else has asked on his/her behalf.

² On a local level for example the community leader in liaison with or delegated to the appropriate structure in the community, e.g. community council, leadership team, community life coordinator, or another commission that is created to deal with welcoming new members on a local level. On a regional or national level for example Regional Leader, National Leader, or a Delegate. For isolated communities the International Envoy or a Delegate.

Mutual responsibilities

What needs to be addressed in L'Arche today is not necessarily, "How to obtain membership in a L'Arche community?", because we propose that everyone who has been accepted to participate in the mission should be recognised as a member. What needs to be clarified in communities and in international and national offices is,

**“How to engage in an on-going dialogue about mutual responsibilities
with each member”**

Here are some examples of mutual responsibilities:

Responsibilities of L'Arche:

- to provide on-going formation concerning L'Arche and its mission.
- to provide training for the specific roles and responsibilities of members.
- to facilitate an on-going dialogue with members concerning their journey in L'Arche.
- to invite members to participate in activities on the local, national and international levels.
- to consult members concerning important decisions that affect them (priorities for L'Arche, naming of leaders, changing the structures in which they live and/or work, opening new long-term projects etc.)

And some examples of responsibilities of members:

- to cultivate mutual relationships,
- to participate in an on-going dialogue concerning their journey in L'Arche.
- to continue to deepen their understanding and commitment to the principles, values and mission of L'Arche;
- to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for their roles and responsibilities.
- to be faithful to their path of personal growth and maturity.

The challenge is to accompany all members as they journey on their path toward personal growth, responsibility and the desire to contribute to the mission of L'Arche. Much of this will happen through the experience of relationships and just living L'Arche, but it takes time and a commitment to dialogue, accompaniment and formation.

***Being committed to the mission of L'Arche means
being on a journey together.
It is a commitment grounded in relationships***

-extract from the Commitment & Belonging process