

European Association of Free Church Social Welfare Organizations

(Europäischer Verband freikirchlicher Diakoniewerke)

Articles of Association

The commission of the Church is to make everyone aware of God's love for the world in Jesus Christ. One way in which it does so is in social welfare provisions directed in particular to those suffering physical pain, mental distress and social injustice. As the deepest plight of human beings is their alienation from God and spiritual well-being is an essential aspect of their overall well-being, diaconal social welfare provisions are undertaken as a holistic service in word and deed. They are provided regardless of church affiliation, political conviction, ideological stance, race, nationality and social standing.¹

The European Association of Free Church Social Welfare Organization (hereafter the 'Association') expresses its solidarity with the social welfare institutions of the protestant churches in Europe and worldwide by its membership in the

- European Alliance for Social welfare *Eurodiakonia* and the
- World Alliance *Diakonia* within its Africa-Europe region.

1. Name

The social welfare organizations and institutions listed (separately) as members have affiliated to form an association under the name *Europäischer Verband freikirchlicher Diakoniewerke (European Association of Free Church Social welfare Organizations)*.

2. Object

The object of the Association shall be to provide mutual support in the realisation of social welfare goals. This shall be achieved, above all, by

- promoting spiritual empowerment
- engaging with topical issues of social welfare and related theological questions
- meeting together and exchanging experiences
- debating questions of its member-organisations and those regarding the forms which a service community may take
- facilitating bilateral contacts.

3. Membership

3.1 All social welfare organizations and institutions of Free Churches in Europe shall be eligible as members.

3.2 Applications for membership shall be made in writing enclosing the following documents:

¹ This preamble is related to the preamble of the Social welfare Organization of the EKD

- a letter of recommendation from those with leadership responsibility for the church or federation
- the statutes (articles of association) of the applicant organization/institution
- a description of the organization's engagement in social welfare
- a letter of motivation which also reflects what the applicant expects from the Association.

3.3 Applications shall be approved on the recommendation of the board at General Meetings, subject to a two thirds majority.

3.4 Members can terminate their affiliation to the Association, giving at least three months' notice in writing, at the end of a calendar.

3.5 The General Meeting shall be entitled to terminate the affiliation of any member to the Association if that member is no longer engaged in social welfare or acts in violation of these articles of association.

4. Organs

The organs of the Association are:

- the General Meeting
- the Board.

5. The General Meeting

5.1 The General Meeting shall be the policy- and decision-making body of the Association. As a rule, it shall be held every two years. It shall be properly convened with at least four weeks' notice by a written invitation specifying the agenda. Decisions taken by the General Meeting shall be recorded in the minutes.

5.2 Each member organization shall be entitled to appoint two delegates with voting rights; further representatives sent by member organisations may participate at General Meetings in an advisory capacity, as may also guests, by decision of the Board.

5.3 Decisions made by the General Meeting shall require a two thirds majority of the members present.

5.4 The president of the Association shall be elected upon recommendation of the Board by the General Meeting.

6. The Board

6.1 The Board shall consist of at least six and no more than ten persons including the president, his or her deputy, and the treasurer. Each member organisation shall be entitled to nominate one representative for election to the Board.

- 6.2** The members of the Board shall be elected from among the representatives nominated by member organisations. Voting shall be by (secret) ballot, unless unanimously agreed otherwise. Those candidates receiving the most votes are elected. In the event of an equality of votes, lots shall be drawn.
- 6.3** Each member of the Board shall be elected for a four-year term and eligible for re-election. Due care shall be taken to ensure continuity in the work of the Board.
- 6.4** The president of the Association of Free Church Social Welfare Organizations in Germany (a registered association under German law) shall be a member of the Board.
- 6.5** The Board shall designate a treasurer and a vice-president from among its members.
- 6.6** The Board shall manage the affairs of the Association, prepare the agenda for and implement the decisions made by the General Meeting.
- 6.7** The Board shall meet as required at the invitation of the president. A meeting of the Board shall be mandatory if requested by a third of its members.
- 6.8** The Board shall have a quorum if at least four of its members are present. Each decision of the Board shall require at least a two thirds majority of the members present. Every effort shall be made to achieve decisions by consensus.

7. Budget and Accounts

- 7.1. Affiliation (i.e. membership) subscriptions shall be levied. The amount levied shall be determined by the General Meeting upon recommendation of the Board.
- 7.2. Over and above these subscriptions, additional contributions can be agreed with members so as to secure the funds required by the Association to fulfil its remit.
- 7.3. The General Meeting shall appoint two from among its number as auditors.

8. Dissolution of the Association

The dissolution of the Association can only be resolved upon by a three-quarters majority of all members at an Extraordinary General Meeting convened for this purpose. In this event, all steps shall be taken to wind up outstanding business correctly and, in particular, to settle any financial obligations. If there remain any assets, they shall be distributed between the Protestant Free Churches represented in the Association.

9. Postscript

The above articles of association were adopted in this form at the General Meeting on 14th September 2013 and took effect immediately.