

**CONSTITUTION OF THE  
WORLD AUTISM ORGANISATION  
ESTABLISHED ON 21 NOVEMBER 1998  
IN LUXEMBOURG**

**Revisions ratified in Herning, Denmark  
at the General Assembly  
20 October 2012**

# WORLD AUTISM ORGANISATION

## Preamble

*Since its foundation in 1983, the International Association Autism-Europe has had a vision that all people with Autism regardless of class, race, gender or creed are entitled to the benefits of diagnosis and appropriate education and life-long support and above all to be treated with respect and dignity.*

*To this end Autism-Europe prepared a Charter of Rights for People with Autism and in 1996 a Written Declaration on their rights was approved by the European Parliament. This states the right of people with Autism to the same rights enjoyed by all European Union citizens (where such are appropriate and in the best interest of the persons with Autism).*

*Autism-Europe in response to growing requests from associations dedicated to the welfare of people with Autism around the world decided to undertake the establishment of an international network on Autism, to provide a global response to the needs of people with Autism and their families and to promote the implementation the United Nations Standard Rules on Equalisation of Opportunities for Disabled People adopted in 1993 to mark the end of the U.N. Decade on Disabled People.*

*People with Autism have an indisputable right to:*

- *Live independently*
- *Self-advocacy and involvement as far as possible in decisions affecting their future*
- *Accessible and appropriate education, housing, assistance, care and support services as well as sufficient income*
- *Freedom from fear, threat and from abusive treatment.*

*We, as persons with autism advocating for ourselves and parents advocating for our children with autism, with the contribution of professionals who share our views, pledge ourselves to press for these rights to be enhanced and enforced by appropriate legislation world-wide.*

# **Article I**

## **Name, Status, Location, Duration**

### **Section 1**

#### **Name and status**

The Association shall be known as the “Association Internationale Organisation Mondiale de l’Autisme” (The International Association “World Autism Organisation”).

The Association is governed by (i) the provisions of Title III of the Belgian Law of 27<sup>th</sup> June 1921 and any subsequent amendments, (ii) these statutes, and (iii) the internal rules of the association.

The International Association “World Autism Organisation”, which is non profit making, was created by founder members, individuals and associations acting as legal entities and created in accordance with the laws and customs of their respective countries of origin. These articles have been signed by their respective qualified representatives.

### **Section 2**

#### **Location**

The headquarters of the organisation shall be located in Belgium. Its present address is Rue Montoyer, 39, 1000 Bruxelles, Belgium. The headquarters may be transferred elsewhere in Belgium by ordinary resolution of the Council of Administration, notice of which shall be given within one month in the Moniteur Belge (Official Journal).

### **Section 3**

#### **Duration**

The duration of World Autism Organisation is unlimited. It may be dissolved anytime under the provision to Article VII, Amendments to the Statutes and Dissolution.

## **Article II**

### **Objectives, Functions, Definition**

#### **Section 1**

##### **Objectives**

**The objectives of World Autism Organisation are :**

1. to promote among all people and nations the highest possible quality of life for people with autism and their families. To this end World Autism Organisation will act as:
  - an advocate of measures to promote such quality of life;
  - a leader in developing, proposing and recommending such measures;
  - a communicator of plans for and progress of autistic projects and practices;
  - a co-ordinator of efforts of national member associations, government agencies, professional groups and international organisations to advance understanding and services for persons with autism;
  - where no such national organisation exists, provide information directly to autistic people their parents and families and if they so request provide support in the establishment of such an organisation.
2. to strengthen the self-awareness of persons with autism, to develop their personality, self-respect and sense of responsibility ;
3. to advance the rights of people with autism and their families without regard to nationality, race, gender or creed, by securing on their behalf from all possible sources, the provision of support, residential, educational, training, employment and welfare health services ;
4. to create a common bond of understanding among persons with autism, their parents and families throughout the world ;

5. to promote the interests of persons with autism and their families by bringing about co-operation among organisations representing national endeavour in their behalf ;
6. to promote the highest possible level of knowledge and competency among professionals of autism, encompassing the most current scientific information and validated techniques.

## **Section 2 Functions**

**To attain these objectives, the World Autism Organisation, in collaboration with the Regional and National Organisations, will work consistently and tirelessly :**

1. to improve and modernise throughout the world public policies and practices governing the education, health, welfare, social security, rehabilitation, employment, sports and recreation for people with autism ;
2. to encourage the exchange of information and experience between all organisations whose activities relate to the goals of World Autism Organisation ;
3. to disseminate accurate information and to promote enlightened attitudes on the part of the people of the world towards people with autism ; to encourage and co-ordinate the conduct of research and studies in all fields of autism ;
4. to promote and co-ordinate technical and material assistance in furtherance of the aims of World Autism Organisation in areas where such help is required ;
5. to solicit the support of national governments, national and international organisations everywhere to support programmes and policies of World Autism Organisation and of organisations of and for people with autism and their families, and to assist and to advise those bodies in their implementation ;
6. to take any other measures necessary or conducive to the achievement of the objectives of World Autism Organisation.

## **Section 3**

### **Definition**

Autism is understood in accordance with the definitions formulated in the DSM-IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder IV) and the ICD 10 (International Classification of Diseases).

It is recognised that autism is the consequence of a brain disorder rather than a psychogenic disease. It is also recognised that the lack of appropriate services for people with Autism, taking full account of their brain disorder, can aggravate their handicap.

## **Article III Membership**

### **Section 1 Classes**

**The membership of World Autism Organisation shall consist of :**

- a) Full Members:** Voluntary non-governmental organisations composed of majority of parents of people with Autism and or people with Autism, operating at national, regional, state or county level, as defined in section 2
- b) Individual Members:** Persons with Autism, parents and friends of people with Autism, or professionals with an interest in Autism. as defined in section 3
- c) Affiliated Member Organisations:** Organisations who do not meet the criteria for full membership, as defined in section 4
- d) Provisional Members Organisations,** as defined in section 5

### Section 2

#### **Full Members:**

**An Organisation may be admitted to World Autism Organisation as a Full Member if it satisfies the following requirements :**

- a) It must be a Voluntary non-governmental organisations composed of majority of parents of people with Autism and or people with Autism, operating at national, regional, state or county level.
- b) It must be concerned with all phases of the welfare of persons with autism.
- c) It must agree to meet all obligations of full membership including the payments of such subscriptions as are lawfully determined by the Assembly in conformity with all provisions of World Autism Organisation's constitution and duly established regulations, and participation in the affairs of World Autism Organisation. as a responsible voting member.

### **Section 3**

#### **Individual Members**

- a) Persons with Autism, parents and friends of people with Autism, or professionals with an interest in Autism, may join the association as individual member.
- b) Individual members pay such fees and subscriptions as may be determined by the General Assembly for this class of membership;
- c) They shall adhere to the provisions of World Autism Organisation's Constitution;
- d) They may participate in the deliberations of World Autism Organisation's General Assembly as responsible voting members.

### **Section 4**

#### **Affiliated Member Organisations**

- a) Organisations who do not meet the criteria of Full or Individual Members but who are interested in the welfare of people with autism may join as Associate Members with partial voting right.
- b) A consideration, but not a necessary condition for admission as Associate Member Organisation is the existence of a provision for reciprocal and equivalent status of World Autism Organisation in the affairs of the Associate Member.

### **Section 5**

#### **Provisional Member Organisations**

Provisional Members, comprising any organisation wishing to join World Autism Organisation as Full,

Ordinary, Affiliated, Individual or Associate member, while waiting for ratification by the General Assembly of its application

## Conditions for membership

All members shall comply with the ethos of World Autism Organisation as lay out in the preamble.

### Section 7

#### Procedure of Admission

Membership in all classes shall be by application to the Council of Administration according to procedures which the Council of Administration shall determine in the Bye Laws. All decisions on membership shall be ratified by the General Assembly of World Autism Organisation.

Applicants for all categories are required to confirm their adherence to the statutes of World Autism Organisation particularly to the definition of autism and the aim of the association.

### Section 8

#### Termination of Membership

**Membership in any class may be terminated under the following conditions :**

- a) **Non-payment of financial obligations or subscriptions.** Any member whose payments are in arrears beyond one calendar year of due date will be assumed to have terminated membership and will be dropped from the roll. However, a member organisation unable to meet its obligations within such time limit may appeal to the Council of Administration for a review of said obligations and a determination of the conditions under which the member organisation may remain in good standing.
- b) **Resignation.** A member may terminate membership at any time by a notice of resignation to the Council of Administration. However, the member shall be obligated to the payment of all due subscriptions for the year in which the resignation is submitted.
- c) **For cause detrimental to the interests and purposes of World Autism International.** The Council of Administration may at any time, by resolution passed by not less than four-fifths of its members present or represented at a meeting called to consider the case, determine that the membership of any member of any class be terminated on the grounds that continuance of such membership is prejudicial to the interest of World Autism Organisation ; provided, however, that no such judgement shall be rendered unless the offending member shall have been notified of the charges sixty days in advance of the meeting, shall hear a testimony presented, and shall have had opportunity to be heard in defence ; and provided further that the member shall have the right to appeal to the General Assembly in which case the verdict to expel the member must be upheld by a three fourths majority. Reinstatement following such expulsion will require a favourable vote of four-fifths of the Council of Administration present or represented at any meeting called for the purpose and ratified by three-fourths of those present or represented at a subsequent meeting of the General Assembly.

## **Article IV Organisation**

### **Section 1 Structure of Organisation**

**The organisation of World Autism Organisation shall consist of :  
the General Assembly, the Council of Administration, the Executive Committee, the Secretariat, the Committees.**

### **Section 2 Regions Sub-section 1 Definition**

***Regions: Areas of the world as agreed by the Executive Council***

1. World Autism Organisation shall be divided initially into six geographical regions and where no Regional Federation yet exists, national associations shall be encouraged to establish such structure in order to co-ordinate at regional level the activities undertaken by national associations and the World Autism Organisation and to serve as bridge between the national members and the World Autism Organisation. The Council of Administration will recommend to the Assembly any change in the number or in the geographical location of the regions. The General Assembly shall ratify its decision by a two third majority. Such change shall take effect as stated in alinea 2 of "**Article VII, Amendments to the Constitution and Dissolution**"
2. The geographical regions shall initially be Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, North America, Latin America and East Asia/Pacific.
3. These Regional Federations shall have the same objectives as World Autism Organisation, taking into account the interests of the organisations of and for the people with autism, but they shall have autonomy at the regional level on regional issues.
4. A Regional vice-president shall be elected by representatives of the region concerned. The regional vice-president may be either the president of the Regional Federation or another representative.

#### **Regional Representation:**

Regional umbrella organisations or federations whose member organisations are full members of the World Autism Organisation may appoint a representative to the Council of the World Autism Organisation. Such a representative may be appointed as Vice-President of that region on the approval of the Council.

### **Sub-section 2 Statutes of Regional Federations**

The statutes of the regional federations shall be in line with the statutes and ethos of World Autism Organisation.

## **Section 3 The General Assembly**

### **Sub-section 1 Composition**

**The General Assembly shall consist of all categories of members.**

1. Each Full Member Organisation may designate two representatives to the General Assembly, one of whom shall be deemed to exercise the full voting rights of the Full Member.
2. Each Affiliated Member Organisation may designate a representative to the General Assembly who shall be deemed to exercise voting rights allocated for this class of membership.
3. Individual members may participate in the General Assembly with full voting rights for this class of membership.
4. The General Assembly shall establish the general policies and procedures of World Autism Organisation, review all actions and decisions of the Council, and serve as final court of appeal on all matters respecting the rights of members.
5. The provisional members may attend the General Assembly in a consultative capacity.

6. The President of World Autism Organisation may invite observers to attend the General Assembly with prior approval of their national delegation.

#### **Sub section 2 Number of votes**

7. Full Member Organisation will have 100 votes Each
8. Affiliated will have 10 votes Each
9. Individual members will have 1 vote Each

#### **Sub section 3 Procedure**

An ordinary meeting of the General Assembly shall be held every year, at which time the General Assembly shall elect the President of World Autism Organisation for a 4-year term, the President-elect for a 2-year term at the General Assembly after the President has served for 2 years, and members of the Council of Administration for a 4-year term and transact such other business as may be necessary. The General Assembly may at other times meet in extraordinary session at the call of the President or on petition of a majority of members of the Council of Administration.

#### **Sub-section 4 Functions**

The General Assembly shall determine the general policies to be adopted by the World Autism Organisation towards achieving its purposes. Its functions shall include the following :

1. It shall consider and decide upon all recommendations submitted by the Council of Administration.
2. It shall receive and consider the report of the Council of Administration on the Council's work and on the work of the committees.
3. It shall approve the Treasurer's report and the budget of World Autism Organisation. It shall determine the rate of membership fees on the recommendation of the Council of Administration.
4. It shall consider and decide upon any proposal from members of World Autism Organisation. Such proposals should ordinarily be presented to the Honorary Secretary General three months prior to the General Assembly and copies thereof should be circulated by him/her to all members one month prior to the General Assembly.
5. It shall consider and decide upon proposals to amend the Constitution of World Autism Organisation
6. It shall consider and approve recommendations by the Council of Administration pertaining to membership of World Autism Organisation.
7. It shall take any other measures necessary or conducive to achieve the purposes of World Autism Organisation.

### **8. Section 4**

## **9. The Council of Administration**

1. The Council of Administration shall consist of the President of World Autism Organisation, the President-elect, the immediate past-President for a period of two years as of the election of the President, one vice-president from each region of the world as defined in article IV, section 2 acting as representative of the Full Member and Councillors acting as representatives of Affiliated and Individual members as defined under Article IV, who are appointed by the General Assembly to serve as representatives of the membership as a whole. The Council of Administration should be representative of various regions/continents. The membership of the Council of Administration shall be no less than seven or more than twenty five persons. The immediate past-President and the President-elect are "ex officio" members of the Council of Administration and, as such, are not counted in the total number of 25. The Council of Administration has the power to co-opt members according to certain circumstances.
2. The Council of Administration shall elect the first and second Vice-Presidents, the Honorary Secretary General and the Treasurer of World Autism Organisation.
3. The Council of Administration shall meet annually, if possible, upon the call of the President, or when a majority of the members of the Council of Administration may determine. The time, place and format of meeting shall be determined by the President and Honorary Secretary-General, with the advice of the Council. Councillors shall be elected for a period of 4 years and may be re-elected.
4. Not less than 70% of councillors shall be persons with autism, parents or other family members. The President, the first and second Vice-President shall be persons with autism or parents of a person with autism or other family members.
5. The Council of Administration is the responsible governing body of the General Assembly to manage the affairs of World Autism Organisation during the interim between meetings of the Assembly. The Council of Administration shall have and exercise all the authority and duties vested in it by the General Assembly except for the authority specific to the General Assembly.



## **Section 5**

### **The Executive Committee**

1. The Executive Committee of World Autism Organisation shall be composed of the President , the President-elect, first and second Vice-Presidents, the Treasurer and Honorary Secretary General. All members of the Executive Committee with the exception of the President may succeed themselves. No person shall serve more than one period as President in any 12 year period. and the President-elect may not serve more than a 2-year term as President-elect. The election of the President-elect to President is subjected to the confirmation of the General Assembly. Should the General Assembly refuse to confirm the election of the President-elect to President, the Council of Administration will be asked to present alternative proposals for the approval of the General Assembly.
2. The President shall be the chief officer of World Autism Organisation and shall preside over all meetings of the General Assembly and of the Council of Administration.
3. The President-elect shall assume the duties of the President whenever the President is unable to serve.
4. In the absence of a President-elect, the first Vice-President shall assume the duties of the President in case of the President's death or dismissal and the second vice-president shall assume the duties of the first Vice-President until the next General Assembly elects a new President.
5. The Treasurer shall perform, under the direction of the Council of Administration , the duties usually appertaining to this office, including preparation of the annual budget, the approval of all authorised expenditures, the keeping of proper financial records, and preparation of annual, and such other financial reports, as the Council of Administration may require.
6. The Honorary Secretary-General shall have executive responsibility for the affairs of World Autism Organisation under the direction of the President and the Council of Administration, and shall administer the headquarters office, have custody of World Autism Organisation' s records and documents, prepare annual and other reports as directed by the Council of Administration and the General Assembly, and be responsible for recording, maintaining and distributing the minutes of all meetings. Various of these duties may be delegated to an employed staff as hereinafter provided, but final responsibility resides with the elected officer.
7. In the event of vacancies occurring in the several offices, the Council of Administration may elect temporary officers to serve until the next meeting of the General Assembly.

## **Section 6**

### **The Secretariat**

1. The Executive Committee shall be empowered to employ such staff and to rent or acquire such premise and equipment as it deems necessary in order to carry out the work of World Autism Organisation. Such decisions shall be approved by the Council of Administration at its following meeting.
2. No employee of World Autism Organisation in any capacity is eligible to hold elective office or to serve as a member of the Council of Administration.
3. The salaried Secretary-General, should one be appointed, is directly responsible to the members of the Executive Committee and the Council for the conduct of World Autism Organisation 's affairs under policies promulgated by the Council. Any sub-decision must be approved by the Council at subsequent meeting.

## **Section 7**

### **The Committees**

The Council shall appoint Committee members and chairmen. Reports written by Committees shall be approved by the Council before any publication or distribution.

## **Section 8**

### **Powers binding the association**

Acts which bind the World Autism Organisation except in routine matters shall be signed, unless specifically authorised, by the President or in default by a Vice-President or a member of the Council appointed to this effect.

## Section 9

### Representation

The World Autism Organisation shall be represented by the President. Legal proceedings, whether as plaintiff or defendant, shall be in the name of the Council of Administration represented by its President or by any other member of the Executive Committee appointed by him to this effect or in default by a Vice-President.

## Article V Meetings

### Section 1 Quorum

The quorum for meetings of the General Assembly shall be one third and the quorum for Council meetings shall be one-half of the then current voting membership thereof. Representation by nominated deputies shall be counted in determining if a quorum is present.

### Section 2 Nominations

Nominations for President, President-elect and Councillor will be sought by the Executive Committee, not less than six months before the date of the next General Assembly, from members in good standing, i.e. those whose subscription is paid in for the last financial year of World Autism Organisation. Nomination forms will be dispatched as provided in this section and nominations will close four months before the date of the General Assembly.

### Section 3 Voting

Voting may be by cards, by show of colour coded cards, according to the membership category, or by ballot, which may be secret, upon request of 20 % of those present. In exceptional circumstances occurring during the interim between meetings of the Council of Administration or General Assembly, questions may be resolved by postal ballot, registered mail or any safe communications means, in which case the approval of the majority of the total voting membership of the Council of Administration or General Assembly shall be secured and confirmed at the next plenary meeting. In case of a postal ballot, all necessary information regarding the procedure to be followed and issues at stake shall be given in writing on due time to voting members .

1. Any voting Member in good standing, not able to be present at a General Assembly, may have its vote recorded by proxy provided a signed authorisation assigning the vote has been received by the Honorary Secretary General not less than two weeks in advance of the meetings.
2. The proxy vote may be assigned either to the representative designated in the signed authorisation or to the Honorary Secretary General of World Autism Organisation who, in addition, must be clearly directed, on the proxy form, on how to use and register the vote of the voting Member. One delegate may not hold more than one proxy vote.
3. All questions shall be decided by the vote of the simple majority of those present except as otherwise provided in the Constitution. In case of a vote approval by less than one-third of the membership of the Council of Administration, actions decided by the Council shall not be final until ratified by a postal vote of the full Council.
4. Each Full Member shall have 100 votes. Affiliated members shall have 10 votes each with a maximum of 50 votes per country. Individual members shall have one vote.
5. All decisions taken by the General Assembly and Council of Administration shall be registered in a register kept by the Honorary Secretary.

### Section 4 Notice of meeting

Notices of meetings, accompanied by the proposed agenda and records of preceding meetings shall be given as follows : for meetings of the General Assembly not less than three months notice, for meetings of the Council of Administration not less than two months notice.

### Section 5

## **Parliamentary Authority**

In all cases of dispute concerning the proper conduct of official business, the authority shall be the Belgian Law.

### **Article VI Finances**

#### **Section 1 Financial Year**

The financial year of World Autism Organisation shall run from the 1st January to the 31st December.

#### **Section 2 Membership fees**

Membership fees shall be payable within the first half of the year. A member whose annual fees have not been paid during the financial year may be declared by the Council of Administration to have forfeited membership. In the event of the Council making such an order, the member shall have right of appeal to the General Assembly.

#### **Section 3 Expenses**

It shall be the duty of the Council of Administration at all times to keep the expenses of World Autism Organisation within its income and reserves. Savings made on the annual budget shall constitute a reserve which shall be banked and/or invested.

#### **Section 4 Records**

The Council of Administration shall insure that proper financial records are kept and that accepted accounting practices are followed. Account books and all supporting documents shall be held at the office of the Treasurer and shall be available at anytime for inspection by the members of the Executive Committee and by members of the Council. Up to a certain amount determined by the Council of Administration, the Treasurer may delegate her/his signature to a third person with the approval of the Council of Administration.

All financial records must be audited each year by a qualified auditor, following which the audit certificate shall be tabled at the next Executive Committee meeting and then presented to the Council of Administration for submission to the following General Assembly.

A statement showing the financial position of World Autism Organisation shall be published every year and a copy shall be sent to all General Assembly delegates at least three months prior to the meeting.

#### **Section 5 Fiscal Policy**

World Autism Organisation may accept and use all gifts, subventions, subsidies and legacies whether given in support of the general purposes, or specific purpose of World Autism Organisation. World Autism Organisation may accept and conclude all contracts and acquire, alienate, rent or let any real property or personal property, and pay salaries of employees and other costs necessary to the conduct of its affairs. These decisions must be approved by the Council of Administration. All decisions taken under this Article must operate without prejudice to Article 4 of the Belgian Law of 25<sup>th</sup> October 1919.

### **Article VII**

## **Amendments to the Constitution and Dissolution**

Without prejudice to the provisions of article 5 of the Belgian Law of 25th October 1919 any resolution to amend the articles of Association or to dissolve the Association must be initiated by the Council of Administration or by a notice in writing signed by two thirds of the voting members.

The Council of Administration shall give 3 months notice of any such resolution and of the date of the General Assembly at which it shall be discussed.

No resolution shall be valid unless passed by a two thirds majority of the voting members present or represented.

Amendments of these articles shall not become effective until approved by Royal Decree and until the provision of article 3 of the Law of the 25th October 1919 regarding notice have been fulfilled.

Arrangements regarding dissolution and the liquidation of the Association shall be made by the General Assembly.

## **ARTICLE VIII**

### **Interpretation of the Constitution**

In case of a dispute over the interpretation of the Constitution, the Council of Administration shall decide.

## **ARTICLE IX**

### **General Provisions**

All matters not provided for in these articles, particularly with regard to publications in the annexes to the Moniteur Belge, shall be dealt with in accordance with the afferent law.

**The French language text is the only legal text.**