

Constitution of the European Forum of Teachers of Religious Education*

For the purposes of this document Europe shall be defined as those countries which are members of the Council of Europe: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/about-us/our-member-states>

A. Principles

EFTRE upholds the Toledo Principles on Religious Education as set out in the publication: "Toledo Guiding Principles of Teaching about Religion and Beliefs in Public Schools" OSCE / ODIHR (2008) a copy of which can be found on the link on the website and the key points can also be seen in the [appendix](#) to this constitution.

B. Aims

The AIMS of the EUROPEAN FORUM FOR TEACHERS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (EFTRE) are

- to contribute to the international cooperation of teachers of Religious Education in the theoretical and practical aspects of their work
- to provide networks between teachers of Religious Education in member countries
- to strengthen and promote the position of Religious Education in schools in the member countries and in Europe in general.
- to lobby organisations and structures at the national and European level to improve the provision and quality of Religious Education across its member countries and across Europe

C. Methods of Working

The aims of EFTRE are to be achieved through

- conferences, seminars and other activities
- cooperation with appropriate organisations, institutes and departments of Religious Education
- exchange of information about Religious Education in schools in Europe to members of EFTRE, to national and international governmental bodies and to the public in general
- strengthening contacts with the Council of Europe and other bodies in cooperation with relevant organisations
- dissemination of good practice and working methods in Religious Education.

D. Membership

Full members of EFTRE are:

- associations of groups of teachers of Religious Education
- institutions or departments concerned with the education and preparation of teachers of Religious Education
- organisations concerned with supporting the teaching of Religious Education
- individuals engaged in Religious Education

E. Structure

General Assembly

The General Assembly meets every third year. Its main purpose is to establish EFTRE's priorities for the following three years. The General Assembly consists of one voting representative from

each of the members of EFTRE (see C above). The agenda of the General Assembly must include written papers for the following:

- Chair's Report
- Secretary's Report
- Treasurers' Reports (for both the euro and the sterling accounts)
- Communications Report (to cover the newsletter, website, Facebook and Twitter accounts etc)
- Confirmation of the Board
- Common Activities and Projects.

There should be a formal vote on each report.

At the General Assembly a Chair, Secretary and Chief Treasurer should be elected from among the members of the Board. These officers along with a Website Manager and up to five other nominated members shall form the Executive Committee. They will serve for three years unless there is cause for them to be removed or if they step down in which case replacements shall be voted in at the next meeting of the Board. An officer of the Board may be re-elected for a maximum of three terms (nine years) after which s/he is required to step down from office but may still remain on the Executive and/or on the Board if so elected.

If necessary, in order to ensure the efficient management of EFTRE, the General Assembly has the authority to co-opt an individual to continue to serve as an Officer or Executive Member beyond the time frames set out above.

Board

The Board meets once a year and includes one representative from each of the member countries, although all members of EFTRE are welcome to attend. If a vote is taken, each member country represented at the Board Meeting has one vote. Each member of the Board is responsible for:

- furthering the aims of EFTRE
- reviewing the agenda set by the General Assembly and the work of the Executive
- supporting current EFTRE activities and initiatives
- providing a brief professional profile and an accompanying picture for the EFTRE website
- providing (and regularly updating) a report on provision for RE in her/his country for the EFTRE website
- contributing to EFTRE's various communications
- distributing those communications to relevant individuals and organisations in their own countries and beyond.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is led by the Chair, Secretary and Chief Treasurer. These officers along with a Website Manager and up to five other nominated members shall form the Executive. The Executive Committee acts on behalf of the Board and represents EFTRE during its term of office. The Executive Committee is responsible for:

- preparing the Board Meetings and the General Assembly and other EFTRE activities
- for the day to day operations of the organisation
- for liaison with other organisations and with the press
- managing the website and other forms of communication with members and others.

F. Roles of the Officers of EFTRE

Chair

The Chair is the first point of contact for outside organisations to EFTRE. (S)he will chair the meetings of the Executive Committee, Board Meeting and General Assembly, unless this is delegated to another member of the Executive Committee.

The Chair will represent EFTRE when required unless this is delegated to another member of the Executive Committee; this includes representation on the Board of CoGREE (The Coordinating Group for RE in Education in Europe).

(S)he will present a brief report at each General Assembly.

Secretary

The Secretary will prepare the agendas and the papers for meetings and will take minutes at meetings, unless this is delegated to another member of the Executive Committee. (S)he will be responsible for communications and the papers of EFTRE.

(S)he will present a brief report at each Executive Committee, Board Meeting and General Assembly.

(S)he will maintain a database of all members of EFTRE, supported by the Chief Treasurer and the Treasurer of the EFTRE (UK) account, showing when membership fees have been paid. Details of current membership fees can be found on the EFTRE website at: <http://www.eftre.net>

Chief Treasurer

The Chief Treasurer will prepare and administer the finances of EFTRE and of the tri-annual conference. (S)he will maintain transparent and open accounts and be responsible for the administration and payment of bills as these become necessary. The funds of EFTRE will be kept in an account in Euros and the Treasurer will hold the papers of these accounts.

(S)he will be responsible for checking the accounts of EFTRE (UK) account as held by the UK representative or nominated member.

(S)he will present a written report at each Executive Committee, Board Meeting and General Assembly.

Website Manager

The Website Manager will carry out the maintenance and developmental work of the EFTRE Website.

(S)he will present a report at each Executive Committee, Board Meeting and General Assembly.

NB At the end of her/his term of office, each member of the Executive Committee should ensure a smooth transition by liaising with her/his successor.

G. Demise

In the event of the organisation ceasing to exist any funds that still remain after all outstanding bills have been settled will go to support the work of a charitable group involved in Education and whom a meeting of the General Assembly has approved.

Appendix: The Key Toledo Principles

1.

Teaching about religions and beliefs must be provided in ways that are fair, accurate and based on sound scholarship. Students should learn about religions and beliefs in an environment respectful of human rights, fundamental freedoms and civic values.

2.

Those who teach about religions and beliefs should have a commitment to religious freedom that contributes to a school environment and practices that foster protection of the rights of others in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding among members of the school community.

3.

Teaching about religions and beliefs is a major responsibility of schools, but the manner in which this teaching takes place should not undermine or ignore the role of families and religious or belief organisations in transmitting values to successive generations.

4.

Efforts should be made to establish advisory bodies at different levels that take an inclusive approach to involving different stakeholders in the preparation and implementation of curricula and in the training of teachers.

5.

Where a compulsory programme involving teaching about religions and beliefs is not sufficiently objective, efforts should be made to revise it to make it more balanced and impartial, but where this is not possible, or cannot be accomplished immediately, recognising opt-out rights may be a satisfactory solution for parents and pupils, provided that the opt-out arrangements are structured in a sensitive and non-discriminatory way.

6.

Those who teach about religions and beliefs should be adequately educated to do so. Such teachers need to have the knowledge, attitude and skills to teach about religions and beliefs in a fair and balanced way. Teachers need not only subject-matter competence but pedagogical skills so that they can interact with students and help students interact with each other in sensitive and respectful ways.

7.

Preparation of curricula, textbooks and educational materials for teaching about religions and beliefs should take into account religious and non-religious views in a way that is inclusive, fair, and respectful. Care should be taken to avoid inaccurate or prejudicial material, particularly when this reinforces negative stereotypes.

8.

Curricula should be developed in accordance with recognised professional standards in order to ensure a balanced approach to study about religions and beliefs. Development and implementation of curricula should also include open and fair procedures that give all interested parties appropriate opportunities to offer comments and advice.

9.

Quality curricula in the area of teaching about religions and beliefs can only contribute effectively to the educational aims of the Toledo Guiding Principles if teachers are professionally trained to use the curricula and receive ongoing training to further develop their knowledge and competences regarding this subject matter. Any basic teacher preparation should be framed and developed according to democratic and human rights principles and include insight into cultural and religious diversity in society.

10.

Curricula focusing on teaching about religions and beliefs should give attention to key historical and contemporary developments pertaining to religion and belief, and reflect global and local issues. They should be sensitive to different local manifestations of religious and secular plurality found in schools and the communities they serve. Such sensitivities will help address the concerns of students, parents and other stakeholders in education.

[\[1\]](#) Although the term 'Religious Education' is used throughout this document, EFTRE recognises that this subject has different names in different member countries.