

## **ANDANTE STRATEGIC PLAN 2016 – 2020**

**version January 2016**

### **1. BACKGROUND**

Andante, the European Alliance of Catholic Women's Organisations, was founded in 2006 out of an increasing desire identified by Catholic women from countries of Western, Central and Eastern Europe to meet together and to work together within European institutions. After the accession of many new countries to the European Union in 2004, a meeting of Catholic women was held in Trnava, Slovakia, to discuss the implication of being a Catholic woman in Europe. This led to the creation of a formal organisation (Andante) which held its inaugural assembly in Budapest in 2006. Andante has grown in number of organisations, now 23, and number of countries represented, now 17 (April 2016).

Andante is an alliance of Catholic women's organisations, which aims to be a voice for Catholic women in Europe; to offer the competence and the vision of women for building a living, just and people-friendly Europe; to act as a forum where Catholic women can develop and acknowledge common values across cultural and linguistic barriers; and to work for the just participation of women in society and church, and for the common good of all people.

Andante represents the interests of Catholic women at European institutions such as the Council of Europe and the European Union.

Andante is led by a Coordinating Committee of up to 9 representatives of member organisations elected at each general assembly. The Andante Chair is elected by the Committee and serves for the time between general assemblies.

Andante organises meetings, summer schools and training events, on topical issues in order to promote intercultural dialogue and to enhance mutual understanding and common responsibility.

Andante facilitates networking and sharing of information – both between the member organisations and with other Catholic organisations, and with ecumenical and secular (women's) organisations, with similar aims. It also produces newsletters and electronic information in the three official languages of Andante ( English, French and German.)

Since its foundation in 2006, Andante has been successful in its application for participatory status as an international NGO at the Council of Europe. Representatives of Andante regularly attend the meetings of the Conference of INGOs in Strasbourg, of which it is a full rights member.

Andante receives revenue from its member organisations through the membership fees. It has also been successful in receiving grants to subsidise the costs incurred in summer schools, conferences and training sessions. These grants have enabled places on such courses to be made available, at a



reduced rate, to Catholic women from Central and Eastern Europe and to pay for simultaneous interpretation into the languages of Andante.

Andante is a member of several networks in Europe, including IXE (Initiative of Christians in Europe) and CINGO (Catholic/Christian INGOs at the Council of Europe).

Andante is approaching its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary and over the last two years has been reviewing its work and consulting its member organisations in the preparation of this strategic review.

## **2. MAIN PRINCIPLES**

### **VISION**

Andante is recognised as an effective and influential voice for Catholic women and their organisations in Europe both in civil society and in the Church.

It is a forum where Catholic women can discuss and promote issues of importance to women on the basis of common values across historical, cultural and linguistic barriers.

Andante offers various ways of affiliation and involvement and hence is an attractive place for women of different ages and circumstances.

### **MISSION**

Andante works, through its networks in Europe and through local initiatives, for the just participation of women in society and in the church, and for the common good of all people.

Andante encourages and empowers Catholic women in Europe to reach their full potential, both in society and in spiritual life. It brings strength and inspiration to Catholic women in their daily lives and encourages them to be active in their communities and in the church.

Andante contributes to a Catholic Church in Europe which is welcoming and liberating for all.

### **VALUES**

Andante places high value on the rights of women; on human rights for all; on the right to freedom of speech; and on the respect for individual freedom of conscience.

Andante believes in respect for life and the value of every human being as created and loved by God. It promotes the values of the Gospel and a respect for the holiness of creation.

Andante believes in social justice and freedom from oppression and poverty.

In its working together, Andante gives high value to listening to each other and sharing experiences. It practises sharing, celebration, hospitality, and hope.

### 3. TRENDS

The population of Europe is becoming more and more diverse in origin, economical position, beliefs and individual circumstances. Practices that help to understand each other are more than ever needed in order to maintain social peace.

The Catholic Church is losing credibility especially with younger people. The number of people departing from formal practice is growing, whereas many new inhabitants bring with them their beliefs and practices in their religious communities as they seek shelter in European countries.

Education at all levels is available likewise for women and for men. Women can attain meaningful professional positions. The amount of care work is however not shared equally among men and women, which results in massive workloads particularly for mothers and for daughters.

Lives of (younger) women are more and more demanding, with professional and family tasks and the necessity to perform on all levels and in all fields of life. Little or no time is left for voluntary work. If at all, engagements that are limited in duration attract younger women more than structural positions with the need to commit oneself for a long duration.

The longing for a meaningful life is obvious. A broad choice of spiritual concepts and communities outside the Christian (and other) religions is available to all seekers.

Human Rights as well as other civil rights and institutions, get endangered as public budgets decline and politics move to practices which undermine Human Rights.

Digital communication enables all members of society to be up to date at all times and establish contacts all over the globe. Educated digital users challenge providers to offer high quality information and communication.



#### 4. SWOT ANALYSIS

The member organizations of Andante come from many different countries and cultures. They have varied experiences of society and of Church. This diversity could be considered a threat or a weakness but the members of Andante feel that it is as well a strength, a challenge and an opportunity for Andante.

##### STRENGTHS

The wide range of countries represented in Andante give it a breadth of experience of the lives of women in Europe which is a significant benefit for the work it seeks to do.

The long history of social and political engagement by many of the member organisations from the countries of western Europe gives strength to Andante in the experience brought to its work by representatives of these organisations.

Andante member organisations represent the many different realities of women in Europe today.

##### WEAKNESSES

Some member organisations of Andante come from countries where incomes are very low and the funds available to these Catholic women's organisations are limited. Most of the member organisations do not receive any financial support from the church in their countries. This limits the contribution they can make to Andante, and their attendance at conferences and summer schools, unless outside funding can be gained.

Catholic women's organisations have falling memberships and are not attracting younger women.

Most of the work of Andante is done through predominantly voluntary work of the members of the Coordinating Committee. This can slow down the process of decision-making and organising events.

##### OPPORTUNITIES

The opportunity for dialogue and sharing of experiences across the wide range of cultures and histories in Europe can lead to the enrichment of all and open the eyes of women to new insights.

New media can enable women to be more effective communicators both to each other and to the whole of Europe.

In coming from such diverse backgrounds yet sharing the same values and beliefs, the contribution Catholic women in Europe can bring to making Europe a more human and a more caring society is potentially valuable.



## THREATS

After a beginning based on values of solidarity and mutual support, the current political climate in Europe is one of increasing nationalism. There is disaffection and apathy towards the idea of Europe as a common home. Enthusiasm for working together to improve Europe as a whole community may not engage the interest of many.

Churches and other faith communities have lower credibility in Europe than once was the situation. To speak on behalf of “Catholic women” can make it hard to have that voice heard in secular forums.

Increasing pressures on women’s lives (e.g. working longer years, looking after elderly parents or grandchildren) means that fewer active women are available to run any women’s organisation, and that is also the case within Catholic women’s organisations.

## 5. MAJOR GOALS

### Goal 1

**To enable Catholic women in Europe to engage in active debate on current issues in Europe and to empower them to participate in civil society and in political processes.**

1. Andante will organise training events and conferences for Catholic women in Europe to have a deeper look into in the issues currently significant within Europe.
2. Andante will regularly supply information on current issues in Europe to its member organisations and to interested Catholic women in Europe.
3. Andante will continue to have a representative at the Council of Europe and keep its member organisations informed on what is at stake there and in the European Union.
4. Andante will work collaboratively with other Catholic NGOs as well as with ecumenical and secular NGOs in Europe to promote common goals. In particular by using the Andante networks to disseminate information from IXE (Initiative of Christians in Europe) and by supplying comment and responses to this network.
5. Andante will present recommendations, and comment on policy proposals which relate to the life conditions of women, their human rights and the protection of their dignity.

### Goal 2

**To work for a Catholic Church in Europe in which women have the opportunity to contribute their gifts and skills and which is welcoming and liberating for all.**

1. Andante will provide opportunities for women from churches all over Europe to come together for exchange of experiences, raising common projects and for training in various themes. Thus enabling them to become self-confident within their churches.
2. Andante will enable women to develop their knowledge and understanding of theology and of spirituality by providing educational opportunities and retreats, in cooperation with women theologians in Europe.
3. Andante will organise events with formats appealing for women of all ages (with a special focus on younger women) to meet, share, celebrate and demonstrate solidarity as Catholic women of today.
4. Andante will actively work to create opportunities for Catholic women to engage in dialogue with individual Bishops and Bishop's conferences within member countries as well as across Europe through CCEE and COMECE and globally through the Holy See / Vatican.



### Goal 3

**Andante will work collaboratively with its member organisations as well as with women from other Catholic, ecumenical and secular organisations that share common values and goals.**

1. Andante will continue to support its member organisations by spreading information about their activities and actions and by pursuing opportunities for common events.
2. Andante will strengthen its relationship with WUCWO (World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations).
3. Andante will work with other organisations such as the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women (EFECW) (the European Lay Forum, Ecumenical Women's Synod) and others to develop a shared understanding of how collaboration can be beneficial for Christians in Europe and to European Catholic and other Christian women.
4. Andante will seek active cooperation with the European Women's Lobby (EWL) in order to have an effective voice for Catholic women in the European Union.

### Goal 4

**To develop its organisational arrangements and thereby offer communication, consultation and common action with member organisations as well as with other stakeholders (partners) on a high and professional level.**

1. Andante will explore new options for membership, recognising that many women are interested in the work of Andante, but do not themselves belong to a formal catholic women's organisation.
2. Andante will seek to augment its financial means by submitting project proposals that include a substantial percentage for overhead tasks.
3. Andante will seek sustainable funding for the central support for Andante, recognising that none of its activities can be delivered without efficient central organisation.
4. The members of the Coordinating Committee of Andante will be responsible for the pursuance of the strategic goals in their portfolio and for the design and content of various activities.
5. The workload for voluntary work in the Coordinating Committee will be limited in line with the widely acknowledged recommended limits of time for voluntary work, in order to offer women from member organisations a realistic chance to be elected and to fulfil the task.
6. Andante will seek to establish a professional and effective office that is responsible for communication and for administrative tasks.

17th of April 2016

General Assembly of Andante