

# CIVITAS

## Mission Statement and Work Plan 2025-2029



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## Table of Content

X. Introduction.....	2
1. Mission Statement.....	3
1.1 Scope.....	3
1.2 Methodology.....	4
1.3 Focus.....	4
2. Activities.....	5
2.1 Conferences.....	5
2.2 Publications and Award.....	6
2.3 Academies.....	6
2.4 Tutorship and Teaching.....	6
2.5 Cycle of Webinars.....	7
2.6 Increasing Visibility and Accessibility of the sources on Christian Democracy (Index of Sources).....	7
3. Infrastructure.....	8
3.1 Organization and Structure of CIVITAS.....	8
3.2 Membership.....	8
3.3 Scientific Committee.....	8
3.4 Archivist and Technical Committee.....	9

## X. Introduction

“CIVITAS – Forum of Archives and Research on Christian Democracy”, founded by Istituto Luigi Sturzo (Rome), KADOC-KU Leuven, Documentation and Research Center on Religion, Culture and Society (Leuven) and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V. (Sankt Augustin) is a platform of research institutions and archives. It connects archivists and researchers who focus on research and sources on Christian Democracy. It began its activity in 2013 and expanded over the following years into an international network, developing and hosting a variety of activities, including conferences, seminars, and publications.

This publication sets out a plan for the future of our association (2025-2029). It aims at broadening and diversifying our membership and provides a structure in which new ideas, initiatives and more intense mutual participation can grow. It has been the result of an intense, collaborative process with different stakeholders during the course of 2023 and 2024, and provides the groundwork for CIVITAS until 2029.

The document's structure is based on CIVITAS' original statutes, agreed upon in Berlin, 3 July 2013, and is built on three pillars: an updated mission statement, a focused programme of activities and an adapted infrastructure.

Rome, 27 November 2024

# 1. Mission Statement

Christian Democracy has played and continues to play an essential role in the political, economic, cultural, and social history of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. One of the most remarkable examples of its impact was in Europe after 1945. At the end of the Second World War, Europe was not only physically and materially in ruins, but also morally and politically. The sheer necessity of reconstruction was combined with hope and the need to learn systematically from the mistakes that had led to the catastrophe of war, totalitarianism and radical nationalism. At this moment, a political idea became a formative force in the form of Christian Democracy, the conceptual and political origins of which had already begun well before the Second World War. In particular, the impetus provided by Christian social teaching at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century and the birth of the first Christianity-inspired parties and movements, had a significant influence on Christian Democracy, the impact of which later became particularly strong in Europe, but was also registered elsewhere. At the same time, this idea has always developed in sometimes very specific national, but also general areas of tension:

- The confessional opposition, which was very dominant in some countries, and which prevented a common political stance against totalitarianism;
- The influence of the churches on politics, which was controversially debated within Christian Democracy and by its opponents;
- The economic necessity - especially in the face of material hardship - to find a way between the free market on the one hand and socialist ideologies on the other;
- The need to counter totalitarian ideologies through a consistent orientation towards the Christian image of man, but also to implement this in binding constitutional and effective party-political structures.

## 1.1 Scope

CIVITAS focuses its research on the period from 1945 to the present. It can treat the period before 1945 in as much as its relevance to the period after 1945 is clear.

CIVITAS places particular importance on **transnational and comparative studies**. National case studies can be valuable for individual aspects, but where possible, transnational and comparative aspects should be emphasized to explore broader characteristics of the Christian Democratic movement. In doing so, CIVITAS activities in spatial terms minimally include all of Europe and the Americas.

The raison d'être of CIVITAS is the existence of Christian Democracy and its political manifestations. For this reason, CIVITAS focuses on the origins, evolution and practices of

Christian Democratic (CD) parties. We include in the scope of our work connected movements and organisations such as the Christian trade unions, social and cultural as well as religious movements. Other political parties can only be included in CIVITAS' research work when researching them can help to derive transnational and comparative insights in regard to the development of the CD parties.

## 1.2 Methodology

In its research work, CIVITAS builds in particular on the foundations of political science and history for analysing Christian Democracy. However, precisely because Christian Democracy has had such a comprehensive influence on the development of society, the economy and politics, a **multidisciplinary approach** is indispensable, which also seeks exchange with sociology, economics, theology, cultural studies and other subjects as required.

The broad approach of CIVITAS requires a balance between research into the significance of the individuals who shaped Christian Democracy and the structures in which this idea manifested themselves.

## 1.3 Focus

For the future of the research area, CIVITAS considers it essential to concentrate on two areas: Firstly, a focus on source- and therefore archive-oriented work. CIVITAS wants to and must serve as a service agency for the classification of source material and making it more easily accessible. Secondly, CIVITAS is committed to securing the future of research into Christian Democracy by identifying and supporting emerging scholars in the field.

## 2. Activities

The activities organized by CIVITAS are essential to its goal of building up and sharing knowledge about the history and sources on Christian Democracy. These activities create the spaces where our members meet, collaborate, develop new ideas and contacts, and form an academic community. To do so, engagement by members of the Scientific Committee is essential, as well as openness towards external researchers working in different fields relevant to the study of Christian Democracy.

Our strategy for the years to come is based on the following principles:

- 1) CIVITAS focuses on a limited selection of activities, following a clearly planned programme over the next five years, ensuring the sustainability of its results, finding a balance between physical and digital formats.
- 2) Participation of our members is key to the success of our activities. Hence, we strive for a collaborative approach towards the development and realization of our projects.
- 3) CIVITAS permanently strives to include new audiences [including early career researchers, students, an interested public] and involve them in its activities.
- 4) We inspire new research on Christian Democracy by making our historical sources more visible, accessible and usable.

Regular CIVITAS activities include conferences, publications and awards, academies, cycles of webinars, tutorship and teaching programmes and a planned index of sources.

### 2.1 Conferences

CIVITAS organises major conferences biannually, alternating with the academies.

In consultation with the Scientific Committee, CIVITAS has established the following conference schedule. The topics are suggestions and will be finalized in collaboration with the Scientific Committee and the conference organizers:

**2025:** Christian Democracy and the Churches

**2027:** Development and Cooperation

**2029:** Latin America

Each conference must include a session devoted to archives and sources related to the topic.

## 2.2 Publications and Award

CIVITAS publishes its own peer-reviewed series titled "[Studies in Christian Democracy](#)" with Leuven University Press. This series, started in 2019, provides an international, peer-reviewed outlet for the conferences and other scientific activities and requires the highest scientific standards. It is expected that a CIVITAS conference results in an edited volume with selected papers, with sufficient conceptual and methodological unity and fully peer-reviewed.

The series is also designed to include monographic studies, however. To stimulate the inclusion of monographs, CIVITAS will establish a biannual award for a monograph by an early-career researcher, normally based on a PhD dissertation. The award will select candidates from a call for application for new monographic studies by early-career researchers, with the aim of attracting their attention to CIVITAS.

## 2.3 Academies

To stimulate fresh interdisciplinary approaches and themes and to connect the history of Christian Democracy to wider and comparative fields of research, CIVITAS has started a biannual academy. The academy welcomes early-career researchers from various disciplines within the humanities. It consists of a combination of paper presentations and lectures by keynote speakers, as well as hands-on archival and methodological sessions, in which early career researchers are given access to relevant sources and archival material and will be able to discuss their work with senior researchers as well as archivists. Considering the high standards of the academy's past papers, CIVITAS may help facilitate the publication of individual papers in renowned historical journals.

## 2.4 Tutorship and Teaching

CIVITAS strives to establish a system ("Meet the Professor"/ "Meet the Archivist") through the website, where every member of the Scientific and the Archivist and Technical Committees is ready to dedicate a short time each month (one hour) to meet PhD or M.A. students by appointment to discuss their research ideas, needs and difficulties.

A second initiative ("Teaching Christian Democracy") will be established. CIVITAS will publish a list of teaching activities and expertise relating to the topic of Christian Democracy on its website. This information could create opportunities for the inclusion of visiting professors on courses and potentially, a CIVITAS digital course on the history of Christian Democracy to be published online.

## 2.5 Cycle of Webinars

The Cycle of Webinars launched in 2023 will remain a regular annual CIVITAS activity. Coordinated by the President, the series focuses on discussions of recent contributions to research on Christian Democracy and topics selected by the Scientific Committee and the Archivist and Technical Committee.

## 2.6 Increasing Visibility and Accessibility of the sources on Christian Democracy (Index of Sources)

CIVITAS is developing a project to enhance access to sources on Christian Democracy and research on it. The Archivist and Technical Committee is responsible for the development and implementation of this project. The main features include:

- Digital publication rather than physical
- A transnational and problem-oriented analysis, following new research perspectives, rather than a classic archival or source overview

Furthermore, CIVITAS aims to include panels on archival topics and exhibitions of documents at future conferences.

## 3. Infrastructure

### 3.1 Organization and Structure of CIVITAS

CIVITAS has three institutional founding members:

- Istituto Luigi Sturzo (Rome)
- KADOC-KU Leuven, Documentation and Research Centre on Religion, Culture and Society (Leuven)
- Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V. (Berlin)

In addition to those three “full” members, CIVITAS has the following associated members:

- Archivio per la storia del movimento sociale cattolico in Italia “Mario Romani” (Milan)
- Stiftung Bundeskanzler-Adenauer-Haus (Bad Honnef)
- Bundeskanzler-Helmut-Kohl-Stiftung (Berlin)

### 3.2 Membership

CIVITAS is committed to expanding institutional participation to full and associated memberships minimally across all of Europe and the Americas.

Additionally, CIVITAS aims to connect experienced scholars and talented early-career researchers focused on Christian Democracy. To this end, the category of individual membership has been established for both researchers and archivists. CIVITAS offers a specialized network of scholars and international visibility through a dedicated mailing list that facilitates discussion and information exchange. Individual members are featured on the CIVITAS website and enjoy benefits such as special pricing on all books in the CIVITAS Series published by Leuven University Press and the opportunity for early-career researchers to apply for CIVITAS fellowships.

### 3.3 Scientific Committee

The Scientific Committee, composed of scholars and researchers, collaborates with the Steering Board, advising it and proposing initiatives. Its members discuss CIVITAS' research, scientific conferences, workshops, webinars and academies, as well as the editorial initiatives.

### 3.4 Archivist and Technical Committee

The Archivist and Technical Committee, composed of archivists and those who bear responsibility for the development and implementation of the web portals and databases of the members, collaborates with the Board, providing advisory functions and discussing questions of archival science, archival problems and all issues concerning the digital presence of CIVITAS.