

CATHOLIC ACTION

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES RETENTION & SUPPORT OF VOLUNTEERS

executive summary

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CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

RETENTION & SUPPORT OF VOLUNTEERS

Quantitative & Qualitative Research – Mr. Anthony Mifsud

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Executive Summary

AIMS

This research project had multiple aims which we can summarise as follows:

- LISTEN to young people in the spirit of the Synod
- MAP the different Associations' characteristics
- IDENTIFY points of convergence & specificities between the Associations
- EXPLORE the challenges & opportunities that are being presented through this listening
- PROPOSE ways forward for the Associations to reflect upon

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

At the initial stages of the study, it was decided that a mixed method approach would be used to map in the best way possible the situation of the different Associations while identifying points of convergence between them.

Census – Carried out between July & September 2021 using the internal structures of each association to identify the main demographic data of the members.

Ex-members Questionnaire – Identified as a necessary step after the initial project proposal, this questionnaire was distributed with the intention of mapping a better picture of one of the aims of the projects. 'Why do members leave?' Associations chose a variety of people in age and time from leaving Catholic Action in recent years to explore this situation. The questionnaire was more of a qualitative nature

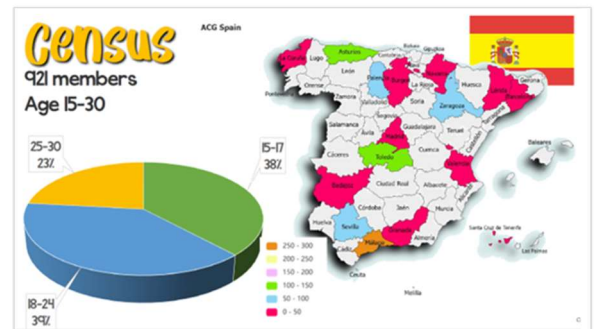
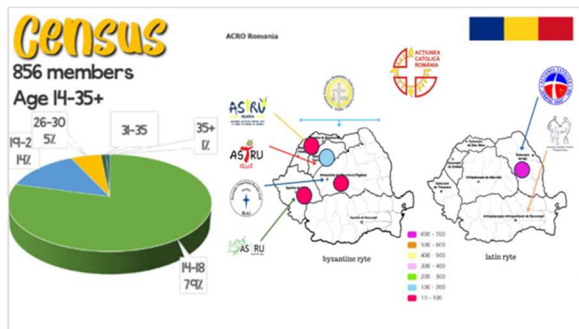
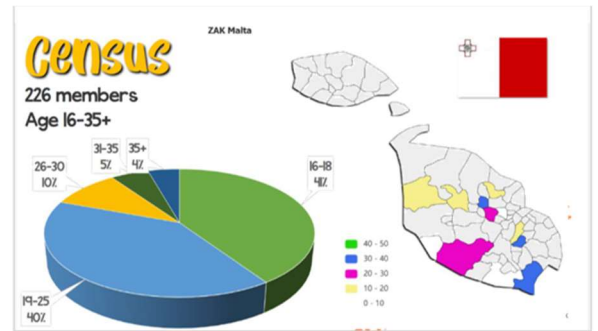
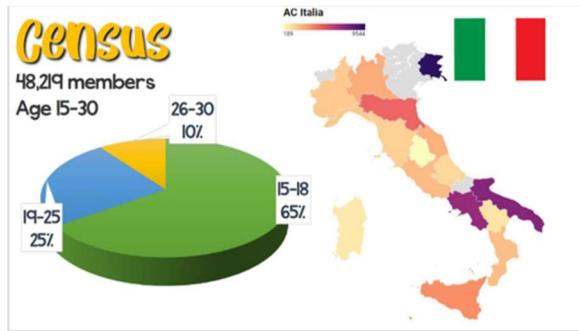
Questionnaire – This was the main quantitative instrument to get an overall picture of the demographics, faith and spiritual belief of members, personal and social integration of young people (PYD Framework), and creating a quantitative instrument to analyse the Association.

Focus Groups – Focus groups were devised to go in depth of certain issues identified beforehand as well as during the mixed methods. The number of focus groups were decided on the population of the countries as well as the ages geographical areas and different rites.

RESULTS

Census

AIMS
METHODOLOGY



The Association in the different countries have different gender distributions. For instance, while Spain has a dominance of male members Romania has a majority of female members.

Ex-members Questionnaire

Many issues were tackled with ex-members coming from different countries. Amongst the responses it was clear that in the various associations they identify belonging to a group, the various activities carried out and time for prayer and reflection were the major things they left behind, and some of them still long for.

Delving deeper into the why of leaving, amongst the reasons the most identified were: personal commitments; group dynamics; overworked within the association; and a plateau or a need for change in their spiritual itinerary.

Quantitative Questionnaire

The questionnaire was answered by a total of 2,044 individuals. The results have a 95% Confidence Level at 3% margin of error.

With regards to Religious practice Romania and to a lesser extent, Spain emerged with the highest participation. More than 50% of members in Romania participate in confession monthly, while most of the participants across countries participate weekly for mass. Most of them are regular in personal prayer.

A member on average spends 6-7 years in the Association with participants in Italy staying longer in the Association. Tendentially females also stay longer in the Association than males who tend to leave the association earlier.

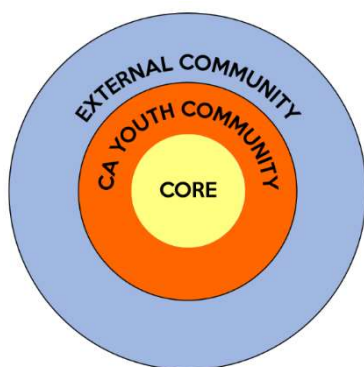
CONCLUSIONS RESULTS

When delving into the Aims of the Associations and the perceived experience of the same Association it was found that while the young people in general perceive the aims of the Association as engaging in the Church & Parish, as well as spreading the Gospel, their own experience is quite different as their experience is that of a place of leisure and most especially a place where to grow in friendships.

Some hint findings about the Associations from the Focus group and more can be found below:

Italy	Malta	Romania	Spain
Very strong on friendship & community even in their 20s	Average stay 6.6yrs	A strong association with adolescents	Strong retention rate in early 20s
Commitment is seen as a positive experience	Belief in God high but practice not as high	Joy identified as a characteristic of the group	Strong connection with Church/Parish.
Perceptions regarding the Association tend to be a bit negative	Strong personal formation	Intergenerational & clerical aspects appreciated	A very good contribution to society as 'Activists'
Leadership is much appreciated but often looked at as 'weight'	Strong international links	Faith not directly linked to daily life in adolescence.	Needs not easily identified but some mention deeper spirituality.
They desire spiritual accompaniment	Weak links to the outside community	Needs include support and spirituality	Ex-members cite religious rigidity

Conclusions and Way Forward



This figure on the left can be considered as an interpretative framework to understand the general situation of the Associations. The central CA Youth Community is bright red representing a very vibrant community in companionship, commitment, and sharing of faith stories.

Within and without that strong centre one can find interesting opportunities to keep that Youth Community Strong. Young people seem to desire a closer attention to the core of the associations' objectives; deeper spirituality, accompaniment, and 1-to-1 support whether as leaders or as members. The link to the external community is also another opportunity which young people themselves identify and desire in tune with the "Action" of Catholic Action.

Catholic Action is a vibrant community in these 4 countries with particular strengths in communities for young people that grow together intergenerationally; a huge commitment and service as leaders and members, also friendship is maybe a hidden objective that is expressed by young people but which is leaving a lot of fruit.

There are many opportunities identified and to be applied by the country amongst which, a growth in the formation of young people about their needs; a deeper spirituality; a clearer identity, and an Action that goes beyond the single group.