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New Team to Lead Opus Dei in North West Europe

On 10 April 2022, the Prelate of Opus Dei established the new region of North West Europe

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The Prelate of Opus Dei, Mgr Fernando Ocariz, has appointed a new team to lead the development of Opus Dei in Britain, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Scandinavia. This announcement is in line with the Prelate's objective, stated in his letter

of 30 January 2021, to take forward and coordinate more effectively the work of the Personal Prelature. The new structure, now known as the region of North West Europe, creates a more efficient administrative organisation which will free up resources for the Prelature's apostolic mission.

The team will be headed by Fr Christian van der Ploeg as Regional Vicar. He will be assisted by Sarah Cassidy, Jack Valero, and representatives from the countries comprising the new region. Fr van der Ploeg will coordinate the work from Amsterdam with the governing councils for the women's and the men's apostolates (read more about the general organisation of the Prelature [here](#)) who will be based in all four capital cities: Amsterdam, Dublin, London, and Stockholm.

On 29 November 2021, the Prelate met Pope Francis and explained the restructuring plans for Opus Dei. The Pope welcomed this news and remarked that, “It is important that everyone is out on the street, doing apostolate.”

Fr van der Ploeg was Opus Dei's Regional Vicar for the Netherlands from 2008 until 2022. After studying law in Amsterdam, he studied theology in Rome, where he also obtained a doctorate in philosophy. He was ordained priest in 1988. In 1999, the Bishop of Haarlem–Amsterdam appointed him student chaplain in Amsterdam, and a year later rector of the Amsterdam Church of Our Lady. He held both positions until 2008.

Sarah Cassidy has a BSc degree in Physics from the University of Manchester and completed her doctorate on High Temperature

Superconductors at Imperial College, London. She moved to Rome in 1993 to study Theology and in 1995 started working for the board of the Central Advisory of the Prelature. She worked there until 2010 when she moved back to London and was appointed to the UK Advisory board for the Prelature, where she has worked until now.

Jack Valero studied civil engineering at University College London. After completing a masters at Imperial College, he spent a decade working in the software industry. He has been on the UK regional council of Opus Dei since 1992. From 2001 he has also been press officer for Opus Dei in Britain. In 2010 he co-founded the communications project 'Catholic Voices', and in 2019 was press officer for the canonisation of St John Henry Newman.

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