



Federazione Italiana tra le Associazioni Ex Alunni/e della Compagnia di Gesù

Il Presidente

Rome, October 30th, 2004

Fiftieth Anniversary of the European Confederation of Alumni/ae of the Society of Jesus
Contribution of the Italian Federation

First of all we would like to express our thanks and deep gratitude to those who have preceded us, in memory of their great and passionate contribution to the foundation.

Now we want to accept the challenge of continuing this work by regaining its original spirit.

Premise

This proposal document is based on the historical recognition of the alumni/ae movement in Europe, which was done with the help of documents at my disposal (1), by examining the method used in the constitution and in the development of the alumni/ae organisations (such as congresses, meetings, etc.) to reach their aims. The document is also the result of my personal experience in local, national and international organisations.

Inventory of petitions of principle, topics, comments and related questions

Each of the following points is worth being examined and discussed in depth. However, a schematic layout has been chosen to help to understand the conclusions.

- 1) In a process of “ongoing education” the students of colleges and universities are the alumni/ae of the Society of Jesus in post-scholastic time. The alumni/ae of post-scholastic time are a resource for the Society (S.J.) and for civil society.
Is there a strategy concerning them? (2)
The Society’s (S.J.) educational institutions crisis reflects itself in the crisis of the alumni/ae movement.
- 2) We should recognise that the co-operation between Fathers and Alumni/ae (Magna Charta of Loyola) is central and indispensable.
We need to promote, define and build up the co-operation to reach specific aims.
Do we have consulting methods for the Society (S.J.) / the alumni/ae to define the co-operation guidelines? (3)
Credible contributors are necessary for co-operation on both sides.
Can the Fathers’ work towards the alumni/ae and their close co-operation with the alumni/ae organisations be still considered as “an actual ministry of the Society (S.J.)”?
- 3) Do the alumni/ae accept the founding documents, the Superiors’ interventions, their recommendations, and the previous experiences to be propaedeutical to formulate a new strategy referred to the crucial inter-relations of the movement ?

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- Alumni/ae and their colleges (local Associations) (4)

- Alumni/ae and their social context (national Federations)

- Alumni/ae and supranational dimension (Confederations – World Union)

As a consequence, do the alumni/ae accept obligations resulting from a new strategy?

- To the colleges: by supporting and, if necessary, by relaunching their correct running; by promoting intelligence, competence and economic- financial resources.

- To the society: by putting the preferential option to the poor into practice as a consequence of a choice for truth, freedom and justice.

- To international co-operation that represents the supranational link of this option.

4) The autonomy of the Alumni/ae in administering their organisations has always been a fixed point from the very beginning. In any case, directives coming mainly from the Rev. General Father and the competent Superiors must be intended as the normative basis of the covenant between the Society of Jesus and the Alumni/ae Organisations.

Does a method of accepting these directives exist ?

Is there any binding relation between the organisations and the territorially superior bodies that makes directives effective towards local Associations? (Keeping in mind the decisional and organisational autonomy of the Associations, we need to set up a “reserve” to implement the strategies of the whole international movement so that the guidelines proposed by the Confederation to the Federations can be put into force in the Associations. It is therefore necessary to find a way to make directives become operative.)

Conclusion

Even though our Organisations were deeply involved and strongly active in very stimulating events (for example the Congress of the Confederation in Valencia in 1973), despite the positive results achieved and the managers’ dedication, we must admit that our response was inadequate to the suggestions, recommendations and guidelines received, based on the faith, the doctrine, the wisdom, the friendship and the comprehension towards us, particularly to the continuous and passionate recommendations from the Rev. General Fathers Arrupe and Kolvenbach.

This has often led to anxiety and frustration among the managers and the most sensitive Alumni/ae and has jeopardised the credibility of our organisations.

Since the lack of results is mainly due to a lack of method, since questions need a concrete answer, I propose that the imminent European Congress scheduled in Lisbon in 2005 shall be dedicated to the topic of organisational behaviour. (5)

We know our history, but the gratitude and the thanks to those who have contributed to it are useless if we do not feel now the necessity to take our Organisations in hand again with the same spirit as our founders, thus giving a hope for their development.

One of our priorities should be to set up a plan allowing new generations to fully take over the responsibility of leading the Associations, the Federations and the Confederation.

In a letter written in 1960 (A.R. XIII, 1960, p.881) by the Rev. General Father J.B. Janssens to F. Mc Gregor, assistant to the International Conference of the Alumni/ae, in the context of the objectives to be assigned to the Associations and the Federations, reference is made to a decree of the General Congregation XXVIII “As far as possible we must also take spiritual care of the students who have left our schools after finishing their studies, especially of those who are studying in universities, in order to maintain and enlarge upon the results of such hard work.”

What has changed so far to this regard?

For all of us, Fathers and Alumni/ae, abandoning such an official and explicit commitment would mean not achieving our mission.

Is there anybody who is willing to assume such a great responsibility for the future?

(1) Bibliography:

- Gli Ex-alumni della Compagnia di Gesù, a cura della Federazione Italiana, Roma 1966;
- Speeches of Rev. General Father Peter Hans Kolvenbach S.J.
 - 1986 – Versailles, World Union Congress
 - 1989 - Palermo, European Confederation Congress
 - 1991 - Loyola-Bilbao, World Union Congress
 - 1997 - Sydney, World Union Congress
 - 2001 - Malta, European Confederation Congress
 - 2003 - Calcutta, World Union Congress
- Padre Arrupe S.J. – Uomini per gli altri – P. José Maria Torellò S.J., a cura della Federazione Italiana Ex-Alumni della Compagnia di Gesù –Edizione Italiana 1984.
- Considerazioni sul compito del Padre Assistente degli Ex-Alumni, a cura della Federazione Italiana, Roma 1969.
- Incontro tra responsabili delle Associazioni Italiane degli Ex-Alumni Compagnia di Gesù, a cura della Federazione Italiana, Roma 1969.
- Atti del Congresso Unione Mondiale, Roma 1967 : “Engagement et responsabilité des anciens dans un monde en transformation”.

2) If we assume that the global educational project of the Society of Jesus should be constant and aimed at students’ formation in a process of ongoing education, it is appropriate that this process is not interrupted after terminating studies at colleges and universities. This consideration results in the necessity of setting up an overall project for students during and after their “school period”. Here lies the problem of the so-called Alumni/ae. From the distinction of the “school period” (when somebody - the student himself or his family on his behalf - contacts the Society (S.J.) applying for education through its schools) and the “post school period” (a further opportunity offered by the Society (S.J.) within the scope of ongoing education), the need arises not only to use the Latin word “Alumni/ae” abolishing the prefix “former” (ex-old-anciens-antiguos) by all those who take part in the “project”, but especially to define a strategy in line with current times, circumstances and location.

The application for education results in a meeting that may help, on a personal basis, to think about the meaning of life and to respond consistently to questions that may arise from this self-reflection, whereas within the association this may result in a stable and profitable alliance. Students educated in the Society’s school are more self-confident and represent an extraordinary resource for the Society of Jesus itself and for civil society.

(3) We look forward to the founding of a close-knit committee (Fathers/Alumni/ae) aimed at defining the choices and guidelines for the Alumni/ae Organisations. This committee may have a consulting function for the Major Superiors of the Society of Jesus.

(4) The correct running of local Associations is the basis for the structure of territorially superior organisations (national Federations, Confederation of Federations, World Union) and their consequent efficiency.

(5) Proposal of a theme for the Congress:

Strategy for the Alumni/ae movement of the Society of Jesus, aimed at setting up a network. From principles to practice: methodology for development.

It will be very important to choose spokesmen experienced in organisational management, from the academic, professional and business fields.

We recommend a constant contact with the P. Arrupe World Foundation and the recent youth movements belonging to the Society (S.J.) (InYgo, CVX-MEG, etc.) and their social organisations (JRS, JSN-Jesuit volunteers, etc.).