

The International Federation of Catholic Universities
Universities at the core of our commitment since 1924

General

ORIGINS

It was at the initiative of the Università Cattolica Del Sacro Cuore (Milan, Italy) and of the Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen (Nijmegen, Netherlands) that preliminary steps were taken in 1924 to bring together the Catholic universities in a Federation to discuss specific issues of common concern. These endeavours were concretised the following year during a meeting at the Institut Catholique de Paris where 14 universities from the various parts of the world were represented at a first General Assembly.

It was only after the Second World War that the Fœderatio Universitatum Catholicarum took off. It was recognised by a Decree of the Holy See in 1948 and by Pope Pius XII in 1949. It became the International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU) in 1965. IFCU collaborates actively with the Congregation for Catholic Education.

IFCU and Globalization

The end of the cold war, the Bologna agreements and the revolution in information and communication technologies have contributed to a lasting transformation of the landscape of higher education and research. It is now possible to speak of a globalization of higher education and research, or even of a market, which has numerous regulating bodies, of different nature, such as:

- Scientific bodies of course, which structure the development of the disciplines,
- National and regional political authorities,
- Forums for dialogue and concertation, such as the OECD or the World Economic Forum,
- International rankings...

The international panorama of education and research reveals the contrasting situations of universities around the world, at the same time in logic of both competition and cooperation.

It is this reality that today constitutes the environment of the International Federation of Catholic Universities. This environment, IFCU must at the same time take it into account, analyze its advantages and also perceive its limitations, and offer its reflections in order to improve the societal role of universities and to place particular emphasis on the role of the Catholic universities in this new configuration.

MISSION

In this new configuration, the role of the Federation is

- To promote collective reflection on their mission amongst Catholic higher education institutions;
- To foster academic cooperation in the field of research, as well as the valuation and dissemination of research results towards decision-making communities;
- To promote experience and skill exchange among Catholic higher education institutions;
- To represent Catholic universities at the international organizations and associations and to collaborate with them in line with its institutional priorities;
- To contribute to the development of Catholic higher education and to the assertion of its specific identity.

SERVICES - ACTIONS

INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATION

Open to international cooperation, our Federation has a consultative status with the following organizations:

- The United Nations (UN), in New York
- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in Paris
- The Council of Europe, in Strasbourg

In addition, IFCU ensures an international presence within the following commissions:

- The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), in Vienna
- The Commission of Human Rights, in Geneva
- The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in Vienna

Our presence in these organizations aims at promoting the expertise of our universities and of their research centers; our representatives' mission, in relation with our existing academic networks, is therefore to disseminate relevant knowledge to international decision-makers.

IFCU is also a member of the Conference of International Catholic Organizations (CICO) and works closely together with International Catholic Centre for Cooperation with UNESCO (CCIC).

Furthermore, IFCU collaborates actively with various academic networks at the national, regional and global scales.

RESEARCH GROUPS

What is more natural among specialists of a same discipline or a same field than to pool a common experience and sensibility in order to share various experiences beyond different cultural contexts without erasing these? This is the

purpose of the Sectorial Groups of IFCU. They are made up of the faculties, departments, institutes or schools of affiliated universities that have in common the same fields of study, teaching and research.

Discussions around a common theme, the organization of specific research colloquia, projects and activities, exchange of professors, publications, consultancies, whereby the partners consolidate, develop and share their knowledge and fulfill the academic, ethical and spiritual aims of the Federation by making these concrete and dynamic within the member institutions.

This is how different groups were constituted around professors, researchers and experts who pooled their know-how in a friendly framework which they defined according to forms and an organization that are their own.

Philosophers, theologians, educationists, political scientists, psychologists, medical doctors, specialists in social sciences, in family studies, etc. have contributed to extend the IFCU family and promote the international scientific impact of the Catholic academics.

RESEARCH AND DECISION-MAKING CENTER

On the occasion of its 1975 General Assembly, that took place in New Delhi, IFCU decided to engage in collaborative research, creating its own Center for Coordination of Research (CCR), today called Research and Decision Making Center. It is located in Paris, at the same address of the General Secretariat. The Center acts as an interface between IFCU affiliated universities and initiatives in the field of research. It creates spaces of encounter and debate, production and dissemination of knowledge, which can play their full role thanks to the national, regional and global networks of the Federation.

The mission of the Center consists of promoting and coordinating, at the scientific, strategic and administrative levels, research activities put together with the affiliated universities and Sectorial Groups, as well as with any other partner interested in the issues tackled; particular attention is paid to the dissemination of scientific results towards a diverse audience with the aim to contribute to decision-making processes. The cooperative nature of all these initiatives reflects the ethos of solidarity that characterizes the Center.

Based on the mission and strategic priorities of the Federation, the Center wishes to offer its contribution for a better understanding of the important challenges faced by the contemporary world, societies and Church. Thus respect for all human and diversity in all its forms, as well as the desire to understand and serve, are at the heart of its activities. Publications presenting the results of the projects are available.

TRAINING DEPARTMENT

Higher education institutions' management, developments in the profession of teacher-researcher, reflection on the Catholic identity of our universities... These are all issues that call for common reflection and training. In 2017, IFCU created its Training Department, offering a wide range of training programs. In addition to the proposed agenda, IFCU is also willing to respond to specific demands of universities and to organize specific programs on all continents.

FUTURE STUDIES DEPARTMENT

Our modern societies are characterized by profound changes and disruptive innovations in the field of science and new technologies. International relations are also undergoing deep changes. These transformations raise many ethical questions. In 2017, IFCU created a Future Studies Department to investigate these changes, and anticipate their consequences. The Future Studies Department has two main orientations: the overall monitoring of transformations in the field of science and their societal consequences; a reflection on the consequences of these developments in the field of higher education and research and therefore on the mission of universities. It is in this perspective that is launched a reflection on the societal responsibility and solidarity of our universities (2018 General Assembly), on the elaboration of a societal ranking of catholic universities, and on the accompaniment of young people on our campuses (2018 Synod).

IFCU DIPLOMATIC TASK FORCE

Many affiliated universities have highly effective international relations research centers: a large number of subjects are covered and, by their presence on every continent, our universities are able to integrate a truly intercultural approach. This international expertise is likely to be mobilized from the perspective of Multi-Track Diplomacy, as IFCU could, at its level and through its NGO status, offer its skills and mediation. This capacity is reinforced by the creation of the Chair for Peace, in partnership with Rotary International, on each continent.

Main themes: conflict prevention, refugee crisis, protection of Christian minorities, aid to Catholic universities in difficult geopolitical contexts, promotion of human rights

MEDIATION COMMISSION

Like all institutions, Catholic universities can be subjected to internal tensions or even conflicts. Disagreements may concern the chosen strategy, the evolution of the Catholic identity, opposing visions of institutional authorities... IFCU, by its international dimension and the importance of its network, is a privileged observatory of these realities. In order to better support affiliated universities, IFCU has decided to create a Mediation Commission that would help institutions dealing with these kinds of problems.

Like any Mediation Commission, IFCU Mediation Commission's mission is to listen to the parties involved, to propose a space for dialogue and to encourage the emergence of a resolution of tensions and conflicts. This work is carried out in the discretion and respect of individuals and institutions, in a spirit of neutrality and impartiality.

IDENTITY AND FUNCTIONING OF THE FEDERATION

DIVERSITY

At present, the Federation is made up of more than 225 Catholic universities and higher education institutions. This

diversity is most positive. It is fundamental and remains indispensable. At IFCU, we seek to defend it in the very spirit of what we are: a federation. Each member must feel at home with others. A common house, composed of all the materials of the world, this is what IFCU is.

Of all the materials of the world: with us, there are also non-Christians, and even non-believers who are involved in common research projects, partnerships and exchanges. In the concert of voices that cry out for knowledge and justice, for a universal science and conscience, the International Federation of Catholic Universities holds its own with a tone that is specific to it. It is this concert of voices we would like to make you discover or re-discover.

GOVERNANCE

According to its Statutes, the Federation is governed by its General Assembly that is made up of the delegates of its affiliated universities or institutions of Catholic higher education who meet every three years. It is its supreme authority. The Federation also has administrative bodies that ensure the orientations and decisions of its organization and activities: an executive board made up of the President, the three Vice-presidents and the Secretary-General and an administrative board composed of the representatives of every continent and Sectorial and Research groups.

When taking their decisions, these bodies also seek to stimulate and develop inter-regional and interdisciplinary cooperation in the Federation. Last, they ensure its presence in the regional, cultural or disciplinary contexts in which the members work.

FUNCTIONING

The Federation has a permanent secretariat that is responsible for implementing the orientations and policies defined by the General Assembly and the governing bodies. In addition to the administrative and management tasks of IFCU, the Secretariat also carries out events, coordination and information tasks for all its adherents and partner organizations and institutions. The Secretariat has a permanent staff of various nationalities for its different activities: administrative secretariat, promotion and coordination of inter-university research, information and communication, and financial management.

REGIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The members of IFCU can also form associations according to their continental distribution. Obvious cultural and geographical sympathies are the basis of the regional groups which also aim to carry out more efficiently the missions of the Catholic University in the world.

The founding of FUCE (Federation of European Catholic Universities), which is exclusively made up of IFCU member institutions is an example; other initiatives exist in Africa with ACUHIAM (Association of Catholic Universities and Higher Institutions of Africa and Madagascar), in Asia with ASEACCU (Association of Southeast and East Asian Catholic Colleges and Universities), in Latin America with ODUCAL (Organización de las Universidades Católicas de América Latina) but also ACCU (Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities) in North America and the Xavier Board of Higher Education in India. These Regional or continental associations are entirely or partly made up of IFCU member institutions and aim at meeting the specific and more immediate interests of these regions in the spirit of the objectives of the Federation.

EMBLEM AND MOTTO



The emblem of the Federation was created specially: a Romanic architectural motif to illustrate its cultural and spiritual anchoring; a ternary motif to recall its main concept: unity in diversity. How can one not think of the Trinity? A graphic motif that also illustrates the three inseparable missions of the University: to teach, to carry out research and to serve. The emblem of IFCU evokes entities that make up both a distinct identity in a converging dynamic that federate them and make them stronger.

SCIAT...

Its motto, To Know in order to Serve, reflects its raison d'être. It clearly expresses the close link that must be established between the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge on the one hand and the immediate (and even simultaneous) implementation of this acquisition in the active service of mankind on the other.

By doing this, IFCU interprets literally the Parable of the Talents in the Gospel in which each person receives a gift, however modest, and must make it blossom for the welfare of others. By placing itself firmly in the light of the Gospel, IFCU adopts a specific attitude which does not deny others, be they religious or not, the capacity to aim at a same social humanism.

...VT SERVIAT

Service, this is indeed the keyword of IFCU. A federation both summarises and expresses the substance of its members. It is not only there to put them in contact with each other, but also to help them to open up to the outside world. It must listen all the more closely to the voices that express themselves in its fold, since it will be brought to express and represent them in other organisations such as UNESCO (the United Nations System), the Council of Europe, the Economic and Social Council (Vienna) and the Commission of Human Rights (Geneva). IFCU closely collaborates with the International Catholic Centre for Cooperation with UNESCO (CCIC). The African universities have other assets and are faced with different challenges from those of their sisters in Latin America or Asia. The culture of a university in North America is very different from that of a European university. Yet they have in common the ideal of an exercise of knowledge that they consider as having no value if it is an end in itself, but is a great asset if it is put at the service of mankind.

All Catholic universities are different, coming from different countries, regions and cultures of the world. And, if we can sometimes compare these institutions, we have to keep in mind that each has its own history, strengths, difficulties, objectives and its specific way to ground itself in the field of education, research and service. They even have their own specific way of living their academic, cultural, social and spiritual commitment.

How to Contact Us?

If you would like to contact us or know more about the activities of the Federation, please contact the Secretariat in Paris, by telephone: (33 1) 44 39 52 26 or 27, by fax: (33 1) 44 39 52 28, or by e-mail at the following address: sgfiuc@bureau.fiuc.org