

**A Reflection Paper on the:
Two Options for the future
International Coordination of IMCS
and IYCS**



IMCS and IYCS Regional and International Team Members at the 2006 International Coordination Meeting (Geneva)

1. Introduction

For many years there have been numerous reflections on the evolution of both IMCS and IYCS, the state of the movements in the world and in the Church, as well as our functioning and impact at the local, national, regional and international levels. During the 2003 IMCS and IYCS International Committees (IC) in Barcelona a reflection paper was presented with proposals for ways forward to redynamise the movements. Because many of those present at the IC, felt that they needed more time to reflect and consult national movements/organizations, the paper was not adopted. Instead, the joint commission on International Structures mandated the two International Teams to deepen the reflections presented in the 2003 redynamising paper by documenting the structural challenges they see facing the movement and to engage the regional coordinators of both movements in a reflection to develop new proposals of structures for the 2007 IMCS International Committee and IYCS World Council.

With this mandate the present International Teams (ITs) early in their mandate decided to operate as distinctly as possible without assuming any automatic collaboration. They then began to develop a totally new reflection on the challenges experienced at the international level, in order to involve all levels of the movements in a process of renewal of the international dimension of our movements. This issue has been a main point of the agenda of annual meetings of the IMCS and IYCS International and Regional Coordinators in 2004, 2005 and 2006.

In this process, the regional and international leaders of the movements have reflected on the

internal structures, the functioning and identity of their respective movements. In this reflection, a fundamental question that has affected almost every other issue has been: ***what should be the relationship between IMCS and IYCS at the international levels (regional and global)?*** Indeed, this has been a question of debate for well over 20 years that has only intensified with the evolution of the two movements and the increase in challenges being faced at the global levels.

In order to help national movements better understand this issue and the other challenges facing both movements at the global level, the International and Regional Teams of the two movements have developed this reflection paper based on the experiences of the International Teams over the past two years, and on the debates at the 2006 International Coordination Meeting in Geneva. At the meeting the participants could not find agreement, and arrived at two possible options for the future of this relationship and in order to address the challenges faced:

- 1) the creation of a joint international coordination of the two movements or
- 2) the deepening of the present way of collaborating with a clearer agreement on certain points.

This paper is intended to help national movements reflect on this question to prepare for the debates that will happen in the upcoming regional gatherings of the movements and in the 2007 International Committee and World Council where final decisions have to be made.

For those who are not familiar with the other movement, short descriptions are attached in the appendix.

2. History of the Collaboration between IMCS and IYCS

1940s and 1950s

Since the very foundation of IYCS in 1946 in the context of the 25th anniversary of (IMCS) Pax Romana, both movements have had a close and dynamic relationship. In the early years of the relationship in the 1950s, the two movements at the international levels at times came into conflict with one another in terms of target group and relationship to the Church. In 1956 the Holy See (Vatican) worked with the two International Teams to develop a compromise solution; IYCS would have the “mandate” from the Church to work in secondary and technical schools and IMCS would have the mandate for the university. With the natural growth of YCS into the university, this agreement never worked and today YCS groups exist in universities in Africa, Europe, Latin America, Middle East and North America.

Latin America

In the 1960s, the two movements began to develop many common perspectives on their missions in the student milieu and in the Church. In 1966, when both movements were very strong in Latin America, the national movements decided to create a Joint Latin American Secretariat of the IMCS and IYCS regions. In 1970, the movements in the region decided to deepen the relationship by electing one regional secretary for both movements.

Europe

Following the 1968 student upheavals in Europe, many of the national movements/organizations of IMCS and IYCS were suppressed, disappeared or were in crisis. In response to this situation, the European movements of IMCS and IYCS decided to create a joint European Coordination of IMCS and IYCS in 1977. This decision strengthened the region and helped the movements extend into Eastern Europe following the collapse of the Iron Curtain.

Middle East

In the Middle East both movements had different histories and experiences with YCS having a greater presence in the region. In 1993 a meeting for the IMCS and IYCS movements in the region was organized. As only one IMCS movement existed, it was decided to create a joint regional coordination for the Middle East. In a region where Christians are a small minority, the joint coordination has allowed for the movements to participate in a stronger regional dynamic.

Africa

In Africa, the two movements have worked together in various programs and activities in recent years and the two regional teams have a close working and social relationship in Nairobi. In some countries, the presence of the two movements in the university has created some difficulties and confusions.

Asia

As with Africa, the two movements in Asia collaborate in certain programs and have a close working and social relationship in Manila, where the two teams share a common house. As IYCS is only present at the secondary level and IMCS at the university, there has not been as much confusion as has existed in other regions.

Double Affiliated National Movements

With the natural growth of YCS groups into the universities and with some IMCS groups adopting Review of Life methodologies, several national movements in Europe, Latin America and North America have chosen to double affiliate to both movements at the international level. At present there are 13 full member movements and 7 collaborator movements that are double affiliated to IMCS and IYCS with 12 in Europe, 7 in Latin America, and 1 in North America.

Global Collaboration

The 1971 and 1975 Interfederal Assemblies (IFA) of IMCS and the 1970 and 1974 World Councils (WC) of IYCS gave mandates for the two movements to work more closely together. As a result, in 1977, IMCS moved from its long time home in Fribourg (with ICMICA) to share an office with IYCS in Paris and in 1978 both movements decided to hold their international gatherings (IFA and WC) in the same place at the same time in Valladolid. At the 1978 meeting, the two movements developed a “**Common Pastoral Project**” for their common mission in the university student milieu. Since then, the two movements have continued to hold their international gatherings together, organize joint programs at major global events (WYD, WSF, etc) and at times they have shared a common international chaplain – continuously since 1991. In 1999 the two movements developed a “**Protocol of Collaboration**” to govern the relationship between IMCS and IYCS. At the 2003 IC, IMCS decided to renew the Protocol however the IYCS participants could not come to a final agreement on some elements, which prevented it from being approved.

3. Major Challenges Presently Facing the Movements at the Global Level

Soon after arriving in Paris to begin their mandate in January, 2004, the International Teams began to appreciate the enormous external and internal challenges facing the movements at the global level, which affect the separate operation of each, as well as the relationship between them. These, in turn, affect their efficiency in serving each movement at the international level. Over the following 18 months, a consensus developed about the nature of these challenges which were agreed upon by regional teams in 2004, 2005 and 2006 at the various International Coordination Meetings.

3.1 External Challenges affecting both IMCS and IYCS

As our analyses in all our global meetings over the past decade have consistently revealed, the huge changes in the global and ecclesiastical context have dramatically affected the lives and culture of students, and their interest in movements with a style and structure such as ours, which we are challenged to re-assess. These changes include:

- **Rise in Information and Communication Technologies** which have an enormously increasing influence on many individual students and on their capacities for personally engaging globally. This calls us to develop creative ways of enabling such engagement without so many hierarchical mediating structures that characterize both IYCS and IMCS.
- **Emergence of thousands of new networks and associations for young people in the Church.** Thus our movements, which 40 years ago, were virtually the only avenues open to Catholic students, now have to compete with countless others, many of which have even assumed similar focuses to us. This calls us as IMCS and IYCS to clarify our specific identity in relation to these new associations, and especially in relation to each other, in order to avoid energy-sapping competition.
- **Diminishing financial resources at all levels**, which limits our resources in relation to programs and prevents us from having an effective impact in relation to the many new movements, many of which have substantial financial backing. The rapidly reducing financial resources of our main funding supporters also adds pressure to this challenge.
- **A decrease in membership of Specialized Catholic Action Movements and movements in general, and of many of our own national movements in particular.** The reasons for this include:
 - **The emergence of new networks of young people that are internet based and that focus more on information than formation**, which prevents the development of a critical consciousness.
 - **The growth of excessive individualism**, which leads fewer students to be interested in collective movements and action.
 - **Decreased student identity.** With an increasingly depersonalized functioning of schools and universities, the rise of a global youth culture, and a growing number of students who also have to be workers, fewer and fewer students identify themselves primarily as students, but rather as youth. This has led the Church to pay greater attention to youth pastorals with lesser interest in our movements.

This calls us as IYCS and IMCS to work closer together to improve our impact on students today.

These are just some of the many external challenges that we have been able to identify. We are sure that you can add many others. What is clear, though, is that they are challenging us to radically re-assess and deepen the collaboration of our two movements.

3.2 Internal Challenges in the relationship between IMCS and IYCS

In addition to these *external* challenges, our movements face a number of *internal* challenges in the relationship between the two movements at the international level that significantly affect the efficiency, impact and happiness of the International Teams and of the International Coordinations in general. These include:

- **Both International Teams are working in exactly the same milieu** (Catholic students) and being physically so close (in the same or adjacent office) inevitably leads to confusions and competition in fundraising and in representation work that creates many tensions and results in duplication of work. This necessitates perpetual consultation and discussions about the collaboration which wastes a lot of time, reduces our capacity to help national movements/ organizations, and leaves all team members feeling exhausted and stressed. This has also contributed to many resignations of international team members in the past.
- **There is a continual confusion in our representation work** caused by two similar movements (in target group, aims, vision, name and structure) working closely together at the global level (in the Church and the UN). No amount of explanation can remove the confusion people experience in terms of the names of the movement at the international level: JECI-MIEC (Europe), MIEC-JECI (Latin America), MIEC, IMCS, Pax Romana, IYCS, JECI, etc. This too significantly reduces our effectiveness and impact.

- **For decades, our movements have attempted to address this situation of competition, duplication and confusion by some regions agreeing to focus IYCS on secondary students and IMCS on university.** However, through history, we have seen the members of IYCS in secondary school wanting to continue the experience at the university level (Africa, Europe, Latin America, and Middle East). Therefore we believe that this is not a viable solution to the challenges that we face because it does not take into account the reality.
- **The realities of joint regions** (Europe, Latin America and Middle East) where their international unity is for them an obvious, happy, and irreversible experience, despite the existence of separate IYCS and IMCS movements at national level. The efforts of the present IT's to have a clearer distinction between the two movements at regional level was rejected as divisive and a backward step by the national movements/organizations in these regions.
- **The realities of double affiliated national movements** who at times feel overwhelmed and confused by the information coming from the different international teams, especially in relation to campaigns and separate international gatherings.
- A growing concern for us is the **financial sustainability of our structures** at the regional and international level. We can no longer be sure of continued financial support from our traditional funding partners, who are continuing to withdraw funding and challenge the existence of multiple international structures (two international movements and several regional coordinations). Without this funding, some of our international structures could easily collapse at short notice. Although we do not believe that we should change simply in response to the financial situation, we cannot ignore the worsening reality and the merit of some of their questioning.

These internal challenges, just as the external ones, are challenging us to radically re-assess and deepen the collaboration of our two movements at the international level.

4. The Need to Develop a Response to These Challenges

In the 2005 and 2006 global meetings of the two movements, the regional and international teams of the two movements all agreed on the need to make changes to address the above challenges and to address the question of the relationship between the two movements.

In response to these challenges and in keeping with the mandate given them at the 2003 International Committees, the two International Teams, after many meetings and attempts to address these challenges, developed a proposal to unite the international and regional structures of the two movements. This would not imply any changes of the movements at the local or national levels. For the two international teams, whose members all come from separate regions and movement experiences, united international and regional structures would best address the challenges at the global level.

The two teams presented the proposal at the 2005 IMCS International Consultation in New York and the IYCS World Council Organizing Team meeting in Beirut. Following these two meetings where the proposal was discussed, and especially after hearing the concern about uniting presently separate regional coordinations, the IT's

developed a new proposal which incorporated the comments and concerns expressed by the regional teams. This proposal sought a compromise by sacrificing the IT's conviction of unifying the two movements, and so dropped the idea. It proposed the creation of a joint international coordination while leaving the existing regional structures in place. This was presented at the joint 2006 IMCS and IYCS ICM in Geneva.

During the Geneva meeting and through consultations with those who were not present, the option of a joint international coordination was given preference by some regional teams/coordinations while others proposed a second option to keep two separate international coordinations and to clarify certain elements of the collaboration.

It is important to note that virtually all the participants in the Geneva ICM did not see complete separation as a possibility as the two movements are too deeply interconnected.

The strengths and weaknesses of each option were then debated.



IMCS and IYCS Regional and International Team Members at the 2004 International Coordination Meeting (Paris)

5. The Two Options

5.1 Option 1: A joint international coordination of IMCS and IYCS

This proposal emerges from the realization of the fact that the role of our international coordinating structures is vastly different from the role of our national or local coordinating structures. While the local or national levels of our movements are dealing with the actual recruitment, formation, and daily life and action of members, the international structures are there mainly to support their growth, put them in touch with one another, and link them to broader global realities. The movements/organizations at the local and national levels (both between IYCS and IMCS and even within each movement) often reflect quite different identities and methodologies which may even be impossible to combine. However, at the international level we have discovered that each movement's priorities, focuses, understandings of the world, the Church, our faith, and our mission are virtually the same, and that our ITs are doing virtually the same things and with the same perspectives, regardless of the local differences. Thus each team is trying to encourage, support and maybe advise our diverse national movements/organizations through communications, publications, and visits, representing them in international forums, and organizing and promoting international meetings and exchanges. A joint coordination could fulfill this same role just as (if not more) efficiently than the present separate coordinations. Even the sensitive issue of extension to new countries will be done in close collaboration with regional coordinators, with the concerns of both movements in mind, and according to local needs and realities.

Therefore, this proposal proposes that:

- The IYCS and IMCS international operations should form a joint coordination to prevent duplication of work and to maximize the limited human and financial resources available to Catholic student movements.
- There should be common global orientations and campaigns.
- The use of Information Technology should be strengthened, without neglecting those who do not yet have access to it.
- This proposed joint coordination at international level should not be imposed on movements at regional or national levels.
- There should be specific separate focuses on secondary and university students at all levels of the movement, to take account of the specific needs, ages and preoccupations of each.
- There should be more professional staff in the international secretariat to help lay full timers.

One argument against this proposal was that, in some regions, each movement responded to different constituencies which had different formation needs. A joint international coordination therefore could affect the regional activities as well as the growth of the national movements. Also some separate regional coordinations felt that a joint coordination would provoke a feeling of alienation from the International Team,

especially in contexts where relationships with people and groups from the other movement were not very positive.

In response, those favouring this proposal felt that, although this model may not solve all the problems, especially the increasing financial difficulties, it would respond to most of the challenges experienced by the movements at the international level, and make the international coordination more efficient and effective by maximizing limited resources, reducing confusions and competitions and avoiding unnecessary duplication of work.

5.2 Option 2: Two International Coordinations with a Clear Agreement of Certain Points of Collaboration

This option would keep the present system of having two international coordinations. By retaining the separate structures, it is felt that this will:

- give more than one voice to Catholic students in the Church and in the United Nations.
- better respond to the specific realities of the two movements,
- allow for the two organizations to continue to apply for funds separately to the same funding agency, thereby giving greater financial possibilities and
- better represent the reality of the national movements in most of the world who are separate at the national levels.

In order to address the challenges experienced at the international level, the two movements would need to come to clear agreement on the following nine points:

- **Distinct &/or Separate International Office spaces:** To minimize tensions between the two International Teams, it is felt that the two international coordinations would need to have greater space and privacy in their day to day operations. By having two separate offices preferably within the same office complex (with some shared resources) the two movements may be able to improve the situation.
- **Separate International Chaplains:** Although, the two movements have shared a common chaplain for several years, it is believed by some that with each having its own international chaplain the two movements would be better served, since each movement at times has different expectations of the chaplain. Also, feelings of divided loyalties would not arise, especially when there is a clash or conflict of interests or needs between the two teams. This will have financial and spiritual implications for both movements which need serious reflection.
- **Identity:** Both movements would need to clearly clarify what are the distinctive and separate realities of each movement, which at present remains unclear.
- **Membership and extension:** Closely related to the need to clarify the identity of each movement is the question about membership, especially in relation to extension into new countries. An agreement would have to be made about the priorities and criteria of each movement for new members.
- **Double affiliation:** Concerning double affiliated national movements/organizations, both IMCS and IYCS would have to come to an agreement on how to communicate with and involve them or they should be asked to choose to which movement they prefer to affiliate.
- **Joint Regions:** A big effort of regular consultation would need to be made to ensure that the joint regions are not confused or pulled apart, especially in relation to campaigns and international gatherings.
- **International Gatherings:** Due to financial/practical reasons and the presence of joint regions and double affiliated national movements, IMCS and IYCS have chosen to have their joint international gatherings (IC, ICM, etc) in the same place at the same time with common sessions. A clear agreement on the continuation or not of this practice needs to be made, including funding strategies, focuses, and the participation of joint regions or double-affiliated movements.
- **Fundraising:** In order to reduce the conflict which arises in approaching the small pool of possible funders for similar programs, the two movements would need to come to clear agreements on which funders to approach commonly and which to approach separately. This might mean dividing funders between the two movements.
- **Representations:** In this proposal it is felt that it is advantageous for the two movements to retain their separate voices in the international sphere. In order to reduce costs and duplication, there may be some needs or possibilities where one movement could also represent the other. If in certain spaces, there is only room for one Catholic student movement, the movements as best as possible should rotate the participations between the two. This will require regular consultation and agreed procedures.

In arguing against this proposal, the International Teams pointed out that they had indeed already identified virtually all these issues in their reflections over the previous 18 months, and had arrived at almost the same conclusions (above) about what needed to happen to ensure a more efficient and less stressful collaboration. Despite their attempts to implement these conclusions, unresolved tensions still remain, especially in relation to fundraising and representations, that they feel can not be conclusively resolved in a close collaboration while still having separate operations.

Nevertheless, those favouring this proposal felt that through a more indepth attempt to address the many questions relating to the above nine points, the two movements would be able to clarify the confusions, competitions and conflicts that have occurred in the past..

6. Conclusion and Ways Forward

The process undergone in Geneva had a very positive consequence, in that it enabled all the participants to understand more deeply the experience of the International Teams and many of their predecessors.

Nevertheless, it was clear that, in a number of contexts, relationships with people and groups from the other movement are still not very positive. Feelings in relation to the other movement have often depended often on the personalities of the individuals involved, so that personal relationships end up determining the relationship between the movements. This is the situation that has existed ever since the structured collaboration between the two movements began in 1978, and so, unless there is soon a change of feeling or perspective, it would appear doubtful that there is sufficient consensus within both movements to enable a Joint Coordination or any form of collaboration to succeed smoothly. There is similarly no consensus about the desirability of the two movements separating more definitively. In fact, there is almost universal agreement that such separation at the global level is practically impossible since so many existing structures of the movements are inextricably enmeshed, and such a step would be seen as unacceptable by some Church authorities and many funding partners.

In the absence of such a consensus, it would therefore seem unlikely that any solution can be found that will fully address the challenges facing the International structures of our movements. This means that things will largely continue as they have been for the past 30 years, and real change will only become possible if or when financial or personal pressures leave little alternative. This is not very encouraging for potential candidates to the International Teams.

As we, International and Regional Teams, have not been able to find solutions to fully address the challenges, we urge all national movements of IMCS and IYCS to reflect deeply on these questions with an open spirit and the mind of Christ, to attempt to appreciate all the challenges that have provoked this reflection, and to share all your reflections with the International and Regional Teams. This hopefully will enable us all to arrive at a common position during next year's global meetings without polarizing and dividing our movements even more! We are therefore relying on all national movements to respond soon by indicating your reflection on the way forward, so that much time will not need to be spent on the question during the global meetings.

IMCS-MIEC International Team
IMCS African Coordination

IYCS-JECI International Team
IYCS African Coordination

JECI-MIEC European Coordination

IMCS Asia Pacific Coordination

IYCS Asian Coordination

MIEC-JECI Latin American Coordination

IMCS North American Coordination

JECI-MIEC Middle East Coordination

Appendix

Brief Descriptions of IMCS and IYCS

International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS – Pax Romana)

The International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS-Pax Romana) brings together over 75 diverse national federations of Catholic university students from six continental regions (Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, Middle East and North America). Since 1921, when it was founded under the name of Pax Romana in order to promote peace at the global level, IMCS has been helping in the holistic formation of students around the globe. In 1947 graduates and friends of IMCS founded the International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs (ICMICA).



As a Catholic student movement, IMCS's main mission is the evangelization of the student milieu by helping students get involved as social actors in the university, the Church and in the world, here and now. Although, IMCS brings together a rich diversity of national student organizations in structure and focus, IMCS globally promotes among students a spirituality of action.

IMCS represents Catholic students within the Church as an International Catholic Organization with a special relationship to the Pontifical Council for the Laity and the Secretariat of State of the Holy See. Since 1949, IMCS has been advocating on behalf of its members as an NGO with consultative status in the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the UN Department of Public Information and UNESCO. IMCS is also active with regional inter-governmental bodies, the International Labor Organization and the World Bank, and presently takes a leadership role in many global networks and civil society forums, including the Conference of International Catholic Originations, the Group of Eight International Catholic Action Movements, the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Status with the United Nations, the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organizations, Vatican Sponsored World Youth Days and International Youth Forums and the World Social Forum. As a key member in these many global networks, as well as in broader networks at the campus, national and regional levels, IMCS has a strong multiplier effect, allowing it to have an impact well beyond its members.

The International Young Catholic Students (IYCS)

The International Young Catholic Students (IYCS) grew in the spirit of the Specialised Catholic Action movements that were inspired by Joseph Cardijn (the founder of the Young Christian Workers) in the late 1920's. In the wake of the Second World War, the International Coordination was established in 1946 in the context of the World Congress of Pax Romana.



An International Movement present in 7 continental regions (Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, North America and the Pacific). The movement is coordinated at the local, diocesan, national, regional and international levels with a membership of millions of secondary and university students in 85 National movements around the world.

A Formative Student Movement aimed at transforming themselves and the society they live in. Rooted in a spirituality of reflection and action, IYCS believes that it is especially through a "Review of Life" process using the "see-judge-act" method that God is discovered more deeply, even though a variety of methodologies is used within the movement.

A Lay Movement that promotes active participation of students in the life of the Church. IYCS is an International Catholic Organisation (ICO), recognised by the Holy See. Through this engagement with various departments of the Vatican and with Bishops at all levels, the voice of students is enabled to be heard within the Church and to contribute to its growth. IYCS is also open to students of other faiths, and actively promotes ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue.

A Movement engaged in Global Issues playing an active role within the United Nations (UN) system. IYCS received special consultative status with the UN Economic & Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1998 and operational relations with UNESCO, and makes interventions and lobbies particularly on issues concerning youth, education, human rights, development and gender. IYCS is also present in other gatherings and debates in civil society e.g. World Social Forum.