

Jesuit Universities for Democracy and Human Rights

JUNDEM

(IAJU Task Force for the Promotion of Democracy)

1.- Subject

(Proposal for the) Establishment of a new Task Force within IAJU to create a worldwide **Think Tank Democracy and Human Rights** of the Society of Jesus.

2.- Justification and context

Democracy is in decline in today's world. In numerous and growing contexts or sectors of the population there is a disenchantment or disaffection with Democracy that leads to the spread of populism, polarization, and post-truths.

Contrary to what used to be thought in the past, this crisis of Democracy is not only linked to social or economic development. Disenchantment or disaffection can be observed not only in less developed countries but also in States with a high level of development. The premise that the greater the socioeconomic development, the greater the democratic culture has proven to be false.

At the same time, Democracy cannot be considered as a mere form of adopting decisions through the numerical rule of the majority. On the contrary, democracy is the political and ideological space that makes possible the defence and protection of universal human rights. Human rights (and therefore, Justice) cannot be effective without a democratic framework that protects them. Democracy and Human Rights are, as the two sides of the same coin, deeply related concepts and affect people's daily lives, their basic living conditions, and their human dignity.

The deterioration of democracy and human rights culture generates serious affections for the whole of humanity, but especially for the most disadvantaged sectors. At the same time, because of its future repercussions, it affects in a unique way the young people who will be the protagonists of tomorrow's societies. Finally, the democratic crisis is having a tremendous impact on the Common House, with particularly important effects on the human rights of millions of people. It is therefore a theme that cuts across at least three of the four Universal Apostolic Preferences of the SJ.

Jesuit universities, gathered in the IAJU association, have a special responsibility to address the work for democracy and human rights. The academic work of Jesuit universities must be at the service of the transformation of the world through the social and political impact of knowledge generation. At the same time, IAJU universities are the most powerful set of universities in the world and enjoy a credibility and independence that places them with a responsibility to contribute to the transformation of the world in accordance with the mission of the SJ.

At the 2022 IAJU assembly in Boston Fr. Sosa called on the Jesuit higher education network to explore the global crisis of democracy and to address it in practice. He placed particular emphasis on three alarming worldwide trends: populism, polarization, and the transition to post-truth societies.

At the same Assembly, the AUSJAL Observatory on Democracy presented its findings on the situation in Latin America and the first cohort of IAJU Global Citizenship Fellows (students drawn from across our network) presented their experiences and insights. In the wake of the assembly, Fr. Sosa encouraged the formation of a Task Force on the Promotion of Democracy to build on and globalize the work of the Observatory.

3.- Goals

- To leverage the immense academic and social value of IAJU to transform the world through knowledge, analysis, and policy advocacy.
- To create and organize a Jesuit Think Tank with global presence, credibility, independence, and influential capacity.
- To strengthen the links between Jesuit universities and social centers, among other institutions and organized citizenship, so that academic work is nourished by popular experiences and, in turn, contributes to citizen education and sociopolitical action.
- To be the main contribution of the Society of Jesus to reverse the erosion of democracy and human rights in the world, through training, knowledge transfer, advocacy, and direct intervention.
- To respond to the mandate of Father General expressed at the last IAJU assembly held in Boston in August 2022.

4.- Areas of activity

JUNDEM structures its work on three types of actions or programs:

A) RESEARCH – ANALYSIS

- a. **Observatory on Democracy** > based on the work already conducted in the Latin American region, extending it to other regions of the world.

One promising path forward is to extend the Observatory model by expanding the analysis of ~~the~~ global citizen dissatisfaction with democracy and democratic backsliding through a survey of societal and community leaders (50 in each country). Interviews with a shared set of survey questions are envisioned. Among the academic outputs, the following are listed:

- a. Database with the survey results.
- b. Database with the qualitative information gathered from in-depth interviews (where applicable).
- c. Geographic Information System (GIS) of the database to build relevant and comparable digital maps. Additionally, the creation of a microsite to access the cartography.
- d. A book compiling the results for country-reports
- e. Policy papers with recommendations.
- f. Working papers.
- g. Research articles to be published in an indexed journal.
- h. Updating Theory of Democracy courses at the undergraduate and postgraduate level
- i. Creation of inter-university postgraduate program on Empirical Studies of Democracy

A global Observatory could establish indicators of alert/concern on the regression of Human Rights and Democracy in particular areas of the world
 > This could be framed through yearly global analysis or reports addressed to the public or to selected political actors

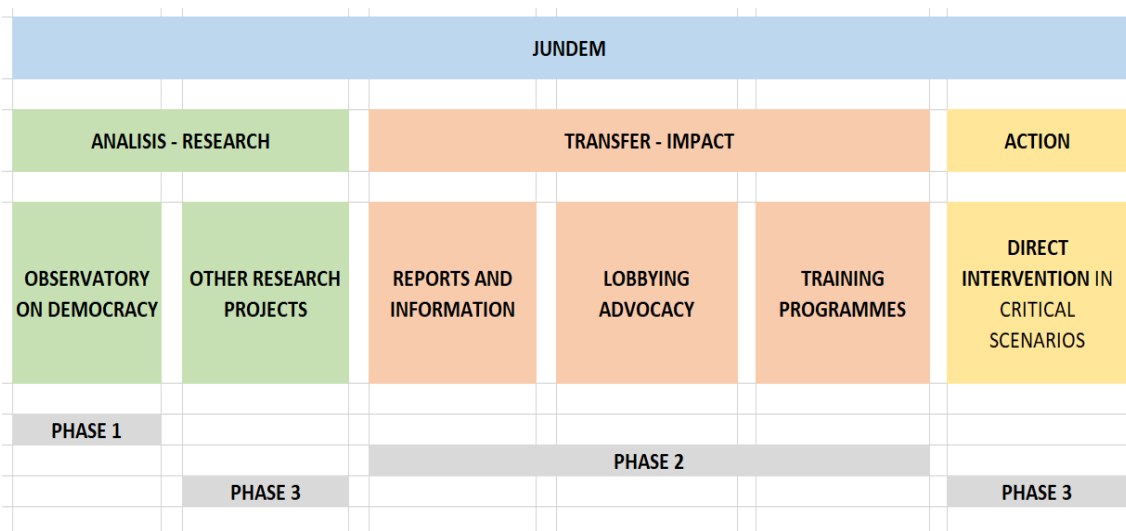
The Observatory could include not only country-based analysis, but other more comparable units, either at the supra-state level or at the infra-state level, depending on the specific contexts

- b. **Other research projects** on Promotion and Protection of Democracy and Human Rights that may be designed in the future

B) TRANSFER – IMPACT

- a. **Information-reporting** on relevant data and analysis that can be made available to the public or to specific political or social leaders. It can take the form of a situation barometer or short reports that can be widely and easily disseminated and defended. Alert reports/warnings on situations of democratic deterioration may emerge from the work of the Observatory or from other sources of information from the local representatives of the network. This information should be in an open access format on a webpage.
- b. **Lobbying/Advocacy campaigns:** design of concrete plans to influence the decisions of relevant political actors at national or international level. These activities can be conducted publicly or privately depending on the objectives to be achieved. Advocacy efforts could be strengthened through coordination with the social centers of the SJ specialized in human rights-
- c. **Training programs:** design of training programs for the promotion of democracy and human rights aimed at both politically relevant actors and social actors, also students from Jesuit universities, who attend our meetings all over the world.

The choice of actions and programs in the different IAJU regions would be dependent on the interest and capacities of the universities and institutions composing these regions



C) **ADVOCACY**

Direct intervention in critical scenarios. Intervention in defence of rights in situations where our own colleagues in the country are unable to do so.

5.- Road Map

The JUNDEM would be progressively developed according to a roadmap in which the basic criteria for action in each area of activity would be accordingly adopted. To make a realistic planning, the project could be built on three consecutive phases:

- 1) Phase 1: JUNDEM starts from the work already done in Latin America around the Observatory of Democracy. This Project and its expansion to other regions is the initial pillar of the Think Tank.
- 2) Phase 2: After clarification of basic criteria and launching the basic organization, in a second phase the Transfer-Impact pillar can be implemented. This could be foreseen from year 2 onwards
- 3) Phase 3: In a third phase, after the Transfer pillar has been defined and started, the Think Tank could put in practice the third pillar of direct action and additional future research projects from a more academic perspective once the Observatory project is already consolidated. This phase could evolve from year 4 onwards.

The specific timetable for work in the distinct phases would also depend on the capacities of the universities and institutions to undertake the different activities.

6.- Organization, Governance and Funding

It is crucial for JUNDEM to be understood as a strategic project of IAJU (and the SJ) and to enjoy its full institutional support, so the diverse needs are considered as strategic preferences for the universities and centres involved. JUNDEM would be organized based on regional groups, nominally involving all IAJU universities, although some are more active than others.

In each region, there would be a Steering Committee composed of three people taking into consideration gender balance and, as far as possible, the diversity of participating universities and countries:

- 1) A regional coordinator, nominated by IAJU and empowered to address the governments of all the universities/centres in his/her region.
- 2) A first sub-coordinator, who replaces the director regional coordinator in case of indisposition and who must belong to a State different from that of the director.
- 3) A second sub-coordinator who belongs to a university different from those of the director and the first sub-coordinator.

The Steering Committee of each region acts on behalf of all the universities of the region, transmits all the necessary information to all of them and represents them if necessary.

JUNDEM is governed by the **Global Coordination Body**, composed of the six regional coordinators. One of them will serve as an **Academic Coordinator** on a rotating basis every two years. Another regional director will serve as vice-chair for the same period and will assume the Academic Coordination in the following three-year term.

The Global Coordination body is accountable to the IAJU Global Leader, who will be a member of the IAJU Board. The current President of AUSJAL has been appointed as the first Global Leader of the Task Force by the IAJU Board, to build the foundation of the Task Force.

	Global Coordination Body	
N AMERICA steering committee >	Regional Coordinator	Deputy coordinator 1 Deputy coordinator 2
L AMERICA steering committee >	Regional Coordinator	Deputy coordinator 1 Deputy coordinator 2
EUROPE steering committee >	Regional Coordinator	Deputy coordinator 1 Deputy coordinator 2
AFRICA steering committee >	Regional Coordinator	Deputy coordinator 1 Deputy coordinator 2
INDIA steering committee >	Regional Coordinator	Deputy coordinator 1 Deputy coordinator 2
SE ASIA steering committee >	Regional Coordinator	Deputy coordinator 1 Deputy coordinator 2

The hours of dedication of the members of the steering committees are assumed by their universities. At an initial estimation, regional coordinators may dedicate 150-200 hours per year to management and communication activities, including meetings; regional sub-coordinators may dedicate 75-100 hours per year.

The members of the steering committees in each region are not necessarily researchers or participants in all JUNDEM activities.

The designation of professors and students to develop the research projects or the various activities of JUNDEM will be made by the steering committees of each region according to the availability and needs of each specific project or program. In doing so, the committees must consider the following criteria:

- a) Diversity of centres/universities of the researchers, trying to directly involve as many Jesuit universities/centres as possible
- b) Interdisciplinarity in the groups' composition.
- c) Geographic diversity, both at international and national levels
- d) Gender balance

The necessary funding for the maintenance of JUNDEM should come from three sources:

- a) Basic funding from the IAJU itself, through contributions from the universities – the main university contribution will be the time assigned to steering committee members and researchers–.
- b) Funding, as permanent as possible, from private agents that may not imply any loss of the JUNDEM independence.
- c) Public funding, which will be managed at the level of each regional group.

Task Force current conformation:

- Global Leader: Fr. Luis Arriaga SJ, president of AUSJAL and president at Universidad Iberoamericana Ciudad de México, Mexico.
- Research coordinators: Dr. Ángel Álvarez. Researcher at Católica Andrés Bello University, Venezuela, and Dr. Azul Aguiar, at ITESO University, Mexico.
- Executive Secretary: Dr. Francisco Urrutia, AUSJAL.

Members from regional Associations who also prepared this document:

- From Kircher Network: Dr. Eduardo Javier Ruiz Vieyetz, Universidad de Deusto, Spanish State.
- From AJCU-NA: Dr. Thomas Banchoff and Dr. Mathew Carnes SJ, Georgetown University. United States of America.
- From JEHASA: Dr. Paul Newman, Saint Joseph's College, India.
- From AJCU-AP: Dr. Phillip Tuano, Ateneo de Manila, Philippines.
- From AUSJAL: M.A. Roberto Ignacio Alonso Muñoz, Universidad Iberoamericana Puebla and M.A. Mauricio López Oropeza, Programa Universitario Amazónico.