



IFSW European Report

2018-2020

Ana Rădulescu – President IFSW Europe
John Brennan – Vice-president IFSW Europe

This report related to the IFSW Europe's activities include the years 2018-2020 and includes the time before the global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The visibility and the voice of social workers in Europe, as well as contribution to the policy actions have evolved substantially since that point.

2018-2019 in Europe marked the 100th anniversary of one of our oldest members of IFSW. The association of social workers in Austria (OBDS) celebrated 100 years. Social workers and our partners celebrated this important milestone in Vienna during the IFSW European Conference 2019.

This year, BASW is celebrating 50th years anniversary and we planned a conference in Birmingham which has to be cancel. Nevertheless, we organised an online event and gather social workers in Europe in the virtual space to thanks BASW for their involvement in the development of the social work profession and the investment in IFSW Europe. Unfortunately, in January 31, 2020 the UK formally leaves the EU political structures. This reality has significant implications for social work and for people in UK, some of which are still unknown.

As part of our policy assessment process, IFSW Europe contributed and fully endorses the EAPN recommendations to urgently revise the 2020 CSRs to prioritise urgent direct support to people (not just economic support to companies and markets) and to reinforce quality public health and social care services.

COVID-19 has had a swift and devastating impact as an immediate health crisis and unexpected disruptions to the way we live and work. In order to help people to be resilient and answer the needs, social workers in Europe changed the professional practice as we know it and rises to the challenges of COVID-19.

IFSW Europe accompanied and provided the necessary space for knowledge sharing for social workers in Europe to build up resilience and to come out stronger of this challenging and uncertain time. We are now striving to adjust and to create our new reality of living as we move forward.

IFSW Europe continue its efforts to make the voice of social workers heard. IFSW Europe increased the visibility and endorsed the requests of our member organisation to their national Parliament and Government.

IFSW Europe continues to study carefully the impact of COVID-19 on the social services and social work profession.

IFSW Europe underlines that the COVID19 pandemic must bring about a rethink on the place of public health, social services and social protection systems in all countries of Europe based on the principle that people really do matter more than anything else – the social must balance the economic.

Since the last IFSW General Assembly, Ana Lima stepped down from her role as the European regional President on her appointment in the Spanish government. We congratulate her on this achievement. Ana Radulescu, then the European Regional Vice-President stepped into the role of President and in the subsequent election for a new Vice-President, John Brennan was elected. A big thank you to those who served on the Regional Executive in these past two years.

IFSW Europe had five main priorities for actions:

1. Strengthening the national associations of social workers and to uphold the of social worker contribution to the decision-making process at their national level.

IFSW Europe became active in supporting and endorsing our members in their activity at the national level and make their activity visible at the European level.

Examples of activities of our members in relation to national governments, activities that were supported by IFSW Europe:

1. Open Letter to Prime Minister to Support Social Workers during Covid19 in Hungary¹ (June 2020);
2. Danish Association of Social Worker Message to the Government² (June 2020);
3. Romanian social workers ask the government for financial compensation for social workers and the staff of social services forced to isolate themselves at work³ (April 2020);
4. Open letter to Prime Minister to support social workers in UK⁴ (April 2020);
5. Letter sent to the Prime Minister Boris Johnson and to the Taoiseach Leo Varadkar by IFSW Europe To Support The colleagues from UK and Ireland in their fight against Brexit⁵ (November 2019);

Examples of activities of our members that were supported by IFSW Europe Social Workers

¹ <https://www.ifsw.org/hungary-open-letter-to-prime-minister-to-support-social-workers-during-covid19/>

² <https://www.ifsw.org/danish-association-of-social-worker-message-to-the-government/>

³ <https://www.ifsw.org/romania-asproas-asks-the-government-of-romania-for-financial-compensation-for-social-assistance-staff-forced-to-isolate-themselves-at-work/>

⁴ <https://www.ifsw.org/united-kingdom-open-letter-to-prime-minister-to-support-social-workers/>

⁵ <https://www.ifsw.org/letter-sent-to-the-prime-minister-boris-johnson-and-to-the-taoiseach-leo-varadkar-by-ifsw-europe-to-support-the-colleagues-from-uk-and-ireland-in-their-fight-against-brexit/>

1. In Austria social workers went on strike demanding a reduction of working hours to 35-hour/week to prevent burnout⁶ (February 2020)
2. Social Workers from Bulgaria on Strike For "Education-Salary-Respect"⁷ (November 2019)
3. Eurasia Forum as a Mechanism of International Cooperation⁸ (November 2019)
4. Social Workers from Armenia are celebrating a milestone in the development of the social work profession and services⁹ (November 2019)
5. 1st International Conference of Social Work in Greece: "Social Deprivation, Child Protection and Human Rights"¹⁰ (November 2019)
6. Call to Action – Proper Public Funds for Social Services In Poland¹¹ (July 2019)
7. Social workers behind the front lines providing solutions for internally displaced persons¹² (April 2019)
8. First international social work congress in Siberia¹³ (January, 2019)
9. International conference on child development accounts held in Baku, Azerbaijan¹⁴ (November 2018)
10. Social workers in Poland fighting for better conditions for professional social work¹⁵ (November 2018)
11. Social workers in Iceland are part of the protest regarding the wage gap and other issues that specifically affect women in Iceland¹⁶ (October 2018)
12. Social workers from BASW became our common voice on making visible the impact of austerity¹⁷ (June 2018)

2. Boosting the exchange of knowledge in Europe

Effective knowledge and expertise sharing between social workers are the IFSW Europe's greatest asset. Only through sharing knowledge we were able to work effectively with people in needs and grow at both an individual and professional level in the context of COVID-19.

Therefore, IFSW Europe joined our members online seminars and webinars organised by our national organisations in Russia, Malta, Bulgaria, Romania, UK.

IFSW Europe also organised a number of webinars:

⁶ <https://www.ifsw.org/social-workers-in-austria-went-on-strike-demanding-a-reduction-of-working-hours-to-35-hour-week-to-prevent-burnout/>

⁷ <https://www.ifsw.org/social-workers-from-bulgaria-on-strike-for-%d0%b5education-salary-respect/>

⁸ <https://www.ifsw.org/eurasia-forum-as-a-mechanism-of-international-cooperation/>

⁹ <https://www.ifsw.org/social-workers-from-armenia-are-celebrating-a-milestone-in-the-development-of-the-social-work-profession-and-services/>

¹⁰ <https://www.ifsw.org/1st-international-conference-of-social-work-in-greece-social-deprivation-child-protection-and-human-rights/>

¹¹ <https://www.ifsw.org/call-to-action-proper-public-funds-for-social-services-in-poland/>

¹² <https://www.ifsw.org/social-workers-behind-the-front-lines-providing-solutions-for-internally-displaced-persons/>

¹³ <https://www.ifsw.org/i-international-social-work-congress-of-social-work-in-siberia/>

¹⁴ <https://www.ifsw.org/international-conference-on-child-development-accounts-held-in-baku-azerbaijan/>

¹⁵ <https://www.ifsw.org/social-workers-in-poland-fighting-for-better-conditions-for-professional-social-work/>

¹⁶ <https://www.ifsw.org/social-workers-in-iceland-are-part-of-the-protest-regarding-the-wage-gap-and-other-issues-that-specifically-affect-women-in-iceland/>

¹⁷ <https://www.ifsw.org/today-social-workers-from-basw-became-our-common-voice-on-making-visible-the-impact-of-austerity/>

1. The social work responses to the needs of homeless people in context of COVID-19 (In partnership with our member organisation and social workers in Denmark);
2. Mental health social work and the psychosocial impact of covid-19 on adults (in partnership with our member organisation and social workers in Ireland);
3. Community social services' responses to Covid-19 (In partnership with our member organisation and social workers in Netherland);

In the context of COVID-19, IFSW Europe has permanent support offered to our member organisations and social workers, sharing practices and solutions between social workers around Europe.

In the last 2 years cover by this report, and before the pandemic COVID-19 started, IFSW Europe organised a number of seminars and group discussion on topics that are relevant for social workers and social services. Some examples:

1. Social workers for transformational and sustainable social protection in Europe - IFSW Europe's key messages about the implementation of the Pillar of Social Rights and how these relate to IFSW Policy on Social Protection (Denmark, May 2019);
2. Group discussions on the involvement of social workers on European Social Pillar (Austria, September 2019);
3. Group discussions on IFSW statements of ethical principle and the way IFSW member organisations incorporate or refer to them (Austria, September 2019);
4. A social Europe is possible! The young generation of social workers are the spearhead of change (Austria, September 2019);
5. Make Europe Poverty Free (Austria, September 2019);
6. Social workers role in age determination of unaccompanied minors (Austria, September 2019);
7. Symposium: "A SOCIAL EUROPE IS POSSIBLE!"¹⁸ (Austria, September 2019)
8. IFSW Europe's Delegates' meeting, Vienna 2019

3. Improving the visibility and the voice of social workers in topics that affect the provision of social services and the life of people.

To be able to do that, we significantly increased our cooperation with the relevant partners in Europe. IFSW Europe has Representatives to the following institutions and networks:

- Council of Europe
- United Nations
- European Social Platform
- European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)
- Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA)
- International Psychogeriatric Association (IPA)

¹⁸ <https://www.ifsw.org/a-social-europe-is-possible-symposium-vienna-austria-8th-september-2019/>

IFSW Europe also had representatives in the following Committees of IFSW Global:

- IFSW Global Education Commission
- IFSW Global Ethic Commission
- IFSW Global Indigenous Committee

During the last 2 years, IFSW joined our partners in the following activities:

1. IFSW Europe is a contributor to the EAPN report: Putting Social Rights and Poverty reduction at the heart of EU's COVID-19 response¹⁹
2. IFSW Europe Joined the EAPN call to members of The European Parliament to make a Social Europe free of poverty²⁰ (July 2019)
3. IFSW Europe is strongly engaged in securing and shaping the social protection and inclusion in today's and future Europe in partnership with European Social Platform²¹ (July 2019)
4. Joint IFSW Europe, EAPN, ATD Fourth World and Emmaus presentation in Brussels to MEPs on fighting poverty in Europe (October 2019)

4. Developing policy statement that reflects the priority of social workers.

To be able to do that we encouraged our members to express their priorities and we provided support in preparing and promote policy statements.

Over the last 2 years, IFSW Europe published the following statements:

1. IFSW Europe Statement on Covid 19²²
2. Call to authorities and service providers – social workers are on the front line in the assistance of people affected by COVID 19 – call to ensure them the necessary equipment²³
3. IFSW Europe calls on Social Work Schools to incorporate women's rights and domestic violence in their curriculum and all Social Workers to respond the needs of women in risk or disadvantaged situations – Orange the World²⁴ (November 2019)
4. International Day for the Eradication of Poverty²⁵ (October 2019)
5. Social Workers Respond to the Growing Social Crisis in Europe²⁶ (September 2019)
6. IFSW Europe Steps-Up Action Following Social Worker Deaths²⁷ (September 2019)
7. Europe Day Is About Creating A Truly Inclusive and Sustainable Social Europe For All²⁸ (May 2019)
8. Make Social Workers Voices Heard in The Eu Parliamentary Elections²⁹ (March 2019)

¹⁹ <https://www.ifsw.org/putting-social-rights-and-poverty-reduction-at-the-heart-of-eus-covid-19-response/>

²⁰ <https://www.ifsw.org/ifsw-europe-joins-the-eapn-call-to-members-of-the-european-parliament-to-make-a-social-europe-free-of-poverty/>

²¹ <https://www.ifsw.org/ifsw-europe-is-strongly-engaged-in-securing-and-shaping-the-social-protection-and-inclusion-in-todays-and-future-europe/>

²² <https://www.ifsw.org/ifsw-europe-statement-on-covid-19/>

²³ <https://www.ifsw.org/call-to-authorities-and-service-providers-social-workers-are-on-the-front-line-in-the-assistance-of-people-affected-by-covid-19-you-have-to-ensure-them-the-necessary-equipment/>

²⁴ <https://www.ifsw.org/ifsw-europe-calls-on-social-work-schools-to-incorporate-womens-rights-and-domestic-violence-in-their-curriculum-and-social-workers-to-respond-the-needs-of-women-in-risk-or-disadvantaged-situa/>

²⁵ <https://www.ifsw.org/international-day-for-the-eradication-of-poverty-3/>

²⁶ <https://www.ifsw.org/social-workers-respond-to-the-growing-social-crisis-in-europe/>

²⁷ <https://www.ifsw.org/ifsw-europe-steps-up-action-following-social-worker-deaths/>

²⁸ <https://www.ifsw.org/europe-day-is-about-creating-a-truly-inclusive-and-sustainable-social-europe-for-all/>

²⁹ <https://www.ifsw.org/make-social-workers-voices-heard-in-the-eu-parliamentary-elections/>

9. Human Relationships Are A Fundamental Approach in Social Work for Creating Change and Improve People's Lives - World Social Work Day 2019³⁰ (March 2019)

IFSW Europe endorsed and published a number of statements of our member organisations:

- Irish Association of Social Workers Statement on Racism (June 2020)³¹
- Statements on Brexit – British Association and Irish Association of Social Workers³² (September 2019)

5. Projects and cooperation between our member organisations

1. In 2019, The Netherlands BPSW started a twinning, a partnership with the Moroccan Association of Social Workers (AMAS)³³
2. Network "Social Work in German-Speaking Regions and Amongst German-Speaking Minorities"³⁴

Over the last 2 years, IFSW Europe accessed funds for two projects:

1. Social Workers for Transformational and Sustainable Social Protection
2. A social Europe is possible! The young generation of social workers are the spearhead of change

Our standing!

IFSW Europe recognises that across Europe governments and people are struggling these days.

The health systems in all countries are under enormous pressures and social workers and other health and social care professionals are doing heroic work in responding to people's medical and social needs.

Indeed, solidarity is also being shown across Europe, for example, the large numbers of social workers are volunteering to support those individuals and families who are in need.

Social protection systems, where social workers play an essential role, have also come under enormous strain as unemployment increases hugely and high numbers of people become ill. These systems too must be adequately resourced to meet this catastrophe now and into the future.

³⁰ <https://www.ifsw.org/human-relationships-are-a-fundamental-approach-in-social-work-for-creating-change-and-improve-the-lives-of-people/>

³¹ <https://www.ifsw.org/irish-association-of-social-workers-statement-on-racism/>

³² <https://www.ifsw.org/statements-on-brexit-british-association-and-irish-association-of-social-workers/>

³³ <https://www.ifsw.org/twinning-as-a-concept-to-cooperate-the-moroccan-dutch-case/>

³⁴ <https://www.ifsw.org/network-social-work-in-german-speaking-regions-and-amongst-german-speaking-minorities/>

IFSW EUROPE SALUTES SOCIAL WORKERS AND ALL OTHER FRONTLINE WORKERS WHO PUT THEMSELVES AT RISK IN THIS CRISIS TO SUPPORT PEOPLE IN NEED.

When this crisis is overcome, as it no doubt it will be, then there must be a rethink on the place of public health and social protection systems in all countries of Europe. This review must focus on the principle that people really do matter more than anything else – the social must balance the economic.

There must also be a re-focus in a manner that gives real meaning to 'leaving no one behind'. The principles in the *European Pillar of Social Right*, above all, must be at the heart of the future of Europe.