



**INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS
GENERAL MEETING – JUNE 2026
SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT OF NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE
FIVE ISSUES WHICH REQUIRE REFLECTION**

1 ELECTION SYSTEM WHEN THERE ARE MORE THAN TWO CANDIDATES

1.1 The Executive was invited in 2024 to consider the preferred election principle and whether a constitutional change is required. For a variety of reasons, there was some informal discussion, but no formal decision was taken. The constitution specifies that elections are decided by 'a simple majority' also known as 'first past the post' (i.e. there is one round of voting and the candidate who gets most votes, even if not a majority of votes, is elected). This can produce perverse outcomes when there are several candidates and a small number of electors. For example, in a ballot with three candidates and ten electors, votes could split 4, 3, 3 – no candidate has more than half the votes. A system which produces one candidate with more than half the votes seems preferable for a membership organisation like IFSW.

1.2 The risk identified in 2024 has arisen in 2026 in that there are three candidates for each of two positions. Under the current system, a candidate may win the election with between 35 - 49% of the votes (i.e. with active support from little more than a third of the organisations voting). A fairer system would be to have a single transferable vote method or two rounds of voting with only two candidates going into the second round. Many countries use variations of that system in their national elections.

1.3 The Executive is strongly recommended to give early attention to the voting system and to consider formally consulting member organisations about the preferred method for elections.

2 PROFESSIONAL STANDING OF NOMINEES

2.1 The Elections Officer was asked in 2026 whether the Nominations Committee undertook any scrutiny of the credentials of nominees and in particular whether it looked into the background of nominees to ensure that there was nothing in their personal history which could cause embarrassment or difficulty for IFSW if they were to be elected. It was pointed out that the Executive had referred this question to the Nominations Committee some years earlier.

2.2 The response was that the Committee only scrutinises the nominees on the basis of the constitutional requirements (i.e. that there is a personal profile (curriculum vitae), a supporting letter from the association with two signatures and a formal resolution of the nominating association governing board. It is not practical to undertake a due diligence search on each candidate on a world-wide basis (e.g. employment history especially disciplinary sanctions, convictions for violence or fraud, negative judgements by a formal regulator, a finding of inappropriate behaviour by the Federation or a member organisation).

3.3 The Committee is aware that there have been recent cases involving international humanitarian organisations, including the United Nations, where there have been concerns about recruitment practices because people had been appointed who had problematic employment histories or presented fraudulent supporting papers. There is active global



discussion about the need for appropriate checks by such agencies before making appointments. In a national context, learning from cases where people have submitted fraudulent employment histories and references, employers increasingly ask to see physical confirmation of qualifications (certificates), regularly consult criminal records and even scrutinise social media posts.

2.4 Whilst it is reasonable to expect that a nominating member organisation would not propose a nominee with a personal history which includes evidence of unethical behaviour, this cannot be guaranteed. There is nothing to prevent an unscrupulous (or politically motivated) individual or group from taking over some national organisation(s) and then being nominated to a global position. That person would be elected if no other candidate was standing for that position.

2.5 Many NGOs, like IFSW, are very vulnerable to the possibility of the election or appointment of incompetent or dishonest leaders. The current global environment has drawn attention to that risk. The opportunities for close personal supervision of officers and employees in a global context with few people involved are very limited. The President in practice has the opportunity to exercise considerable power which could be very destructive for the Federation. Organisations have failed through fraud or poor judgement because of unethical leadership.

2.6 Deciding what behaviour should exclude a person from an IFSW role is in practice challenging. For example, in some contexts, legitimate protest can result in a police record; depending on the context, some would not see that as a negative indicator.

2.7 Practical checks which could be implemented might include i) requiring all nominees to sign a declaration that there is nothing in their personal history which could be damaging to IFSW, ii) requiring a personal online interview with nominees, iii) requiring more than one letter of reference.

2.8 The Committee recommends that the Executive creates a working group to give urgent attention to the creation of appropriate mechanisms to mitigate the risk of the election of a President or other Executive member who could be a risk to the standing and sustainability of the Federation, including formal consultation with member organisations

3 INTERPRETATION OF 'AT LEAST TWO YEAR'S EXPERIENCE OF IFSW'

3.1 The 2024 report suggested that more thought is needed about the interpretation of the requirement that 'Only social workers with a minimum experience of two years within the Federation are eligible for nomination or election to the Executive' (Article 14d). Member organisations need to consider how to take this into account when deciding how to vote.

3.2 The Committee recommends that the Executive initiates a consultation on the interpretation of 'at least two years' experience of IFSW'.

4. SIGNATURES ON NOMINATION DOCUMENTS

4.1 IFSW By-Law 10 states: 'nominations shall be submitted to the IFSW Nomination Committee on the association's letterhead, signed by two executive members, the President (unless she/he is the nominee) and one other member of the association's executive (unless



she/he is a nominee)'. In the case of large member organisations with paid staff, the letter is often signed by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or equivalent on behalf of the Board or Executive. There are good reasons for requiring two signatures to avoid manipulation. However, it makes sense to recognise a CEO or equivalent as a legitimate signatory. In practice the Nominations Committee has tended to interpret the By-Law to allow this. It would be helpful to make this explicit in the By-Law.

4.2 The Committee recommends that the Executive amend By-Law 10 to include the Chief Executive Officer or equivalent as an accepted signatory on nomination papers.

5 INDUCTION OF NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

5.1 A recommendation was made in 2024 that more attention should be given to briefing and preparing the committee members, in particular regarding the interpretation of the constitutional requirements and preparation for issues which might arise. It was recommended that the committee must therefore be appointed by regions immediately after the General Meeting to allow time for these processes and also to be available if there is a need for an election following a resignation between General Meetings. This has not presented a problem in 2026 because the members appointed in 2024 have been appointed to continue in post.

5.2 The Committee recommends that new members of the Nominations Committee should be appointed soon after the General Meeting so that an appropriate induction of new Committee members can be undertaken in good time. It is also important for the Committee to be established in readiness for any election that may be required by casual vacancies between General Meetings (e.g. if an Executive member resigns before the end of their term).

6 CONCLUSION

6.1 This report has identified five issues which require attention. Some fall within the responsibility of the Executive Committee. Others may require more work and consultation. The Nominations Committee has so far performed a basic role of checking documents and approving nominations. The Committee could be asked to meet and make recommendations on some of the policy issues or to lead a consultation. The Executive might also wish to involve individuals from member organisations who are experienced in legal, constitutional and leadership issues.

6.2 Having identified the issues and the implied risks to the integrity, perception and sustainability of the Federation, it is important that the Executive considers a way forward.

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11 June 2026