

IFSW Europe's Report 2024-2026

2024-2026 in numbers



Our Members 2024-26

Armenia	Austria - younion -OBDS	Azerbaijan	Croatia	Czechia
Denmark	Finland	France	Georgia	Germany
Greece	Hungary	Iceland	Ireland	Israel
Italy	Luxembourg	Malta	Netherlands	Norway
Poland	Portugal	Romania -ASproAS -CNASR	Spain	Sweden
Switzerland	Türkiye	United Kingdom	Bulgaria	Moldova

Throughout 2024-2026, IFSW Europe has been active in support of our members, made strategic impact on social work in our regions and increased our membership. Thanks to all member associations, to our Executive Committee and Honorary Secretary, our Representatives within European institutions and IFSW Commissions, the New Social Workers Network, project leaders and contributors, and to all participants in our many activities.

Our priorities throughout the past two years have been to:

- ❖ Increase the value and relevance of membership for associations across Europe
- ❖ Build our influence and help shape the profession across the region.
- ❖ Act as a supportive and inclusive learning community, helping associations and social workers be resilient and thrive in good times and tough.
- ❖ Develop and deliver impactful projects and workstreams that also bring external resources and build our strength and standing in Europe

The Context of European Social Work 2024-26

This has been a turbulent few years for Europe – politically, socially, economically, environmentally and militarily. The invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the growth of nationalistic, repressive and authoritarian governments in many parts of Europe have driven uncertainty, fear and division in many of communities where social workers practice. The impact of climate changes is being felt increasingly in our communities and the cost-of-living crisis has hit many citizens hard.

The impact of the rise of right-wing political populism is exemplified in the weaponisation of migration, LGBTQi, gender, religion and ethnicity in xenophobic discourse, with reported rises in hate crime and increased repression on civil society organisations (see e.g. report from Council of Europe on shrinking civic space <https://shorturl.at/Z8CCU>), aided by rising disinformation and online hostility at national and international levels.

These trends have presented new challenges for social work practice, values and ethics in many parts of the region. Social work is adaptable and prepared for tough challenges, but some of the threats what we are dealing with today are novel and severe.

In this context, the resilience, connections and solidarity of IFSW Europe is ever more vital. Social workers across the world stand up for inclusive, participative democracy and social rights. In IFSW Europe we do this within key intergovernmental and independent European institutions and bodies, and on specific professional issues at national level.

In 2025-26 we have liaised, represented the profession and ensured the visibility of social workers with employers, governments and local officials in countries including Malta, Czechia, UK, Moldova, Turkey, Denmark and Belgium, and have represented social work in presentations in the European Union parliament (for the Responsive project – see below), Council of Europe and the UN in Geneva. In coming years, a primary focus will be increasing our strategic influence at regional and national levels.

Vitaly, IFSW Europe is a supportive community that lives our values through how we work together - with compassion, transparency, appreciation and equality. These principles will continue to shape our actions and ethos.



Delegates Meeting attendees – Oslo, October 2025

The Elected Leadership

The IFSW Europe elected Executive 2025-2026

- **Dr Ruth Allen**, UK: President 2024-2028
- **Andreas Kikvik**, Norway: Vice President 2024 – General Meeting in Nairobi
- **Enric Torras**, Austria, Executive Committee member – 2025-2027
- **Susanne Both**, Denmark: Executive Committee member – 2024-2026
- **Nikos Zervas**, Greece: Executive Committee member and representative of Hellenic Association planning the 2027 regional conference in Athens, Greece – Dec. 2025-2026
- **Kristine Evertz**, Netherlands, stood down as full committee member for personal reasons and continues as First Deputy Executive – Dec. 2025-2026
- **Paola Pontarollo**, Italy, Second Deputy Executive – 2025-2026
- **Brian Auslander**, Israel, Treasurer
- **Jill Childs**, UK, Honorary Secretary: Appointed 2024

Other executive members 2024-2025

Josien Hofs (Netherlands): Deputy Executive member 2022-2024

Birthe Povlsen (Denmark) Deputy Executive member 2022-2024

Lucia Gonzalez (Deputy member), Spain – 2024-2025

IFSW Europe Executive October 2024 – Oct 2025



Left to right: Front row: **Kristine Evertz**, Netherlands; **Enric Torras**, Austria; **Ruth Allen** (President), UK and France; **Andreas Kikvik** (Vice President), Norway. Back row and screen: **Brian Auslander**, Honorary Treasurer, Israel; **Paola Pontarello** (Deputy member), Italy; **Lucia Gonzalez** (Deputy member), Spain; **Jill Childs**, Honorary Secretary UK; **Susanne Both**, Denmark.



Executive Member 2025-2027 Nikos Zervas (left) and **Olga Verikaki** – leads from the Hellenic Association for the 2027 Regional Conference in Athens, Greece.

The Executive meets online about every six weeks, more frequently if necessary, and meets in person once per year outside the Delegates' Meeting. We work as a team, share tasks and provide support to each other and our members.

Information about each Executive member is on the IFSW Europe Team webpage.

Governance

IFSW Europe is a legal entity in its own right with its own constitution, under German law, as well as being a regional part of IFSW Global. We gain funding from regional membership fees, income from regional conferences, donations (as with the funded support for Ukraine in 2022-2024) and non-membership sources such as EU funded projects.

Our member Delegates' Meeting convenes once a year in different host countries (and hybrid) to take decisions, elect members to our Executive and Representative roles, debate motions and statements, set the budget, strategy priorities and workplan, and ensure compliance with both European and global governance requirements. Very importantly, this brings us together as a community.

In 2024 and 2025 we met in Lisbon and Oslo. Our financial report showed that we had reached our European membership income target and benefitted from income as partners in a large-scale EU funded research project (Responsive) as well as carrying over some surplus from underspends in previous years. However, non-membership fund raising and increasing membership are priorities to achieve more financial stability for coming years.

Supporting global governance improvements

Throughout 2024/25 the Europe President, Ruth Allen, Vice President Andreas Kikvik, and our member from Denmark, Birthe Povlsen, worked with IFSW Global colleagues to progress the IFSW 'Good Governance' review. This is delivering on Europe's motion at the 2024 General Meeting in Panama where Europe called for improved transparency and clearer processes in IFSW Global operations. A report will come to the General Meeting in Nairobi and we anticipate more work to do in the lead up to the 2028 General Meeting on Paris, France. We will be celebrating the 100th anniversary of IFSW at that event and we are committed to supporting IFSW globally to become fit for the next 100 years.

Representing Social Work in European and Global Institutions

IFSW Europe elect/selects and supports individual Representatives to work within international organisations to advocate for social work, IFSW Europe and our values.

The Representatives group has grown over the past two years with the inclusion of the Regional Commissioners (regional representatives of global commissions) and the New Social Workers Network. The Representatives meet online four times a year to share progress. In 2026, we appointed a new Representative for Romani and Traveller issues within the Council of Europe. Thanks to John Brennan (past European Vice-President – Ireland) who continues to Chair the Representative meetings.

Representatives to European Institutions

- **Fundamental Rights Agency** <https://fra.europa.eu/en> – Enric Torras, Austria
- **Social Platform** <https://www.socialplatform.org/> – John Brennan, Ireland
Support team: Irem Cosanu Yalazan, Türkiye
- **European Anti-Poverty Network** <https://www.eapn.eu/> – Birthe Povlsen, Denmark
- **Conference of International NGOs, Council of Europe**
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/ingo> – Ruth Allen

- o Support team: **Theresa Hoffman**, Germany and other members of the New Social Worker Network
- **Eurochild** <https://eurochild.org/> – **Anna Deneher**, Ireland
- **Romani and Traveller rights committee of Council of Europe (ADI-ROM)** <https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers> – **Alison Hulmes**, UK

Representatives in Global IFSW Commissions

IFSW Europe has been working with the IFSW Global Commissioners and Global Secretariat to implement the new Commissions policy. We have ensured the regional commissioners and support teams are linked it with regional as well as global networking opportunities including through the Representatives meeting. As of June 2026 the commission representatives are :

- **UN (Geneva office** <https://www.ungeneva.org/en/about/who-we-are>) **Regional Commission Team-**
 - o **IFSW Europe Main Representative in UN Geneva - Sybille Mani**, Switzerland
 - o **Co-Regional Commission Representative and Geneva Committee on Ageing (and related) - Gerry Nosowska**, UK
 - o **Co-Regional Commission Representative and WHO link - Akudo Amadiogwu**, UK
 - o **World Social Workday lead – Swetha Raodhananka**, Switzerland
 - o **UN Human Rights Office – Annalisa Baruffi**, Switzerland, now UK
- **Education Regional Commissioner – Marcin Boryczko**, Poland
 - o **Support Team – Janet Walker**, UK
- **Ethics Regional Commissioner – Gabriele Stark-Angermeier**, Germany
 - o **Support team: Graca Andre Queiros**, Portugal
- **Indigenous Regional Commissioner – Margaretha Uttjek**, Sweden

Supporting the global commissions at regional level:

- IFSW Europe funded the new regional UN team to meet in Geneva in May 2026 to build their relationships and plan their work.
- IFSW Europe also funded the Regional Indigenous commissioner, Margaret Uttjek, to attend the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) in April 2026, supporting the global commissioner, the only social work representatives in this vital global forum.

Europe representatives and regional commissioners can be contacted via europe@ifsw.org

Projects

Projects are funded or non-funded specific workstreams on topics agreed by the Delegates Meetings.

Project: Eco-Social Work

Launched in 2021, the eco-social project, led by Josien Hofs (Netherlands) presented its final report in the Delegates Meeting in Lisbon October 2025. Activities of the project since 2021 included:

- Webinars in 2021 and 2022.

- Presentations and workshops on conferences in Zagreb (2021 online), IFSW-E Prague (2023), BASW conference (2024), Belgian-Dutch SW conference Rotterdam (2024), EASSW Salzburg (2025)
- Participation at Brussels EU conference European Employment & Social Rights Forum (Brussels, November 2023)
- Presentations and discussion on the IFSW-E Delegates Meeting in Berlin, Prague and Lisbon.
- Two-day eco-social conference in Rotterdam (2024) with Inholland University
- Preparation in cooperation with Dr Richard de Brabander, with representatives from Belgium, Poland and Sweden, of a symposium in the Oslo regional conference 2025
- Preparation for a workshop in Oslo 2025

The Delegates Meeting 2025 thanked Josien for her leadership, which has significantly raised the profile of eco-social work including providing the theme of the 2025 Regional conference. Delegates agreed that the focus on eco-social work should continue and endorsed an ongoing steering/interest group, actions to promote mainstreaming of eco-social practices within holistic social work, and pursuit of further funded projects in this vital field.

Project: *Strengthening Social Work Across Europe through IFSW (SSWAE)*

Funded by IFSW global, this project aims to develop IFSW Europe's responsiveness and consistency in supporting members in ways that recognise their diversity of strengths, needs and priorities; their differential access to power and resources to be involved in IFSW; the need for timely response to associations when social workers are under duress (e.g. through conflict, disasters or oppression); taking account of historic differences and imbalances between different parts of Europe. The project recognises the need for conscious attention to difference and inequality in membership whilst ensuring IFSW Europe develops further as a unifying professional community with common purpose. The long-term aim is to better describe and have an explicit, meaningful 'model' of outreach, support and advocacy for all our members that encourages more associations to join.

In the conference in Nairobi, IFSW Europe will lead a symposium concerning the SSWAE themes, co-designed and delivered with colleagues from all regions in IFSW, to share experiences and ideas in how we engage all our members and reduce barriers to participation.

Project: Responsive Social Services:

From 2023 - 2026, IFSW Europe has been an active partner in developing and delivering the multi-country, three-year **EU Horizon Responsive Project**. *You can read more on the dedicated website here <https://responsive-europe.eu/>*

While it is EU funded, the learning and innovation examples from the project are widely relevant and cover universal challenges and opportunities for social workers. The Responsive project aims to enhance the responsiveness of Europe's social services to input and feedback from diverse citizens and to promote social services as a field for promotion of democracy and agency for citizens rather than as a place only of 'receiving' help and care.

IFSW Europe's specific roles - in addition to providing ongoing perspectives from a social work grassroots/fieldwork and policy perspective – included designing and leading a large social work survey, dissemination activities, contributing to writing final reports and resources, coordinating and contributing to a dissemination event in the European

parliament in Brussels and organising webinars. Some members of IFSW were funded to attend the dissemination conference in Lisbon in January 2026 and the European Parliament dissemination event in February 2026.

A social worker practice guide based on the Responsive project is in development.

Project: COCOSO – Co-construction in the field of social welfare: and industrial doctoral programme.

COCOSO is a doctoral programme for fifteen fully funded students, dedicated to promoting participation and co-construction as a core dimension of democracy and innovation in social welfare. COCOSO is designed to address the pressing demand for meaningful and efficient participation of citizens involved in social services and policies: people with experience of using social services, practitioners, decision and policymakers.

IFSW has a role in supporting aspects of the training, support and advice to the project.

Project: Social workers in war, conflict zones and disasters

Throughout 2024-25, the war in Ukraine has continued to rage and the risk of wider military conflict in Europe has felt closer than for decades. We finished and reported on our IFSW member funded projects in Ukraine which is described here <https://socialwork-ukraine.eu> We will continue to learn a huge amount from those innovations and the ongoing work they have catalysed in Ukraine. Social workers continue to work with other forms of disasters such as the ongoing work to support victims of the 2023 earthquakes in south westers Türkiye and the role of social workers in prevention and response to wildfires in Spain.

The importance of social workers and other professionals having skills in responding to disasters and conflict – in the emergency phases and in the aftermath - is having increasing focus in the European Union at policy level as well as in national policies. We have been represented within EU work on a publication on the role of social workers in disasters and emergencies by Ana Radulescu.

It is in our workplan that we will work in 2026 on supporting more learning and sharing of knowledge in this field, along with partners and allies.

The New Social Workers Network

The New Social Workers Project was conceived in 2019, as part of the ‘*A Social Europe is Possible!*’ project. This led to a group of new and young social workers forming and undertaking research to understand and learn from the experiences of students and newly qualified social workers across diverse nations. A growing group of new and young social workers have now created momentum and are reaching to more associations and inviting new social workers from across Europe to get involved.

Report from the New Social Worker Network steering group

Since becoming a formal Network within IFSW Europe, the NSWN has continued to strengthen its role as a developing platform for participation, collaboration, and leadership development amongst early-career social workers. The Network now includes approximately 70 members from 15 countries across Europe, demonstrating

the potential to increase collaboration and engagement from students and practitioners within their first five years of practice across Europe.

Over the past year, the NSWN has focused on implementing its 2025–2026 Action Plan across six priority areas: membership, funding, events, communications, policy paper development, and engagement with the Federation. Membership recruitment remains a key success, supported by active outreach through member organisations, social media channels, and promotional materials. A webinar hosted in Portugal in March 2026 attracted over 100 participants and resulted in 21 new members joining the Network, with more webinars being planned.

The Network has also increased its visibility through participation in conferences, webinars, and international forums. A proposal for a presentation/workshop has been submitted to the Council of Europe's World Forum for Democracy and European Social Network Conference, while members continue to promote the work of IFSW Europe and the Network through national and regional events. Communications have expanded through utilising IFSW Europe social media platforms and the development of regular content, including blogs and online engagement activities.

A major area of progress has been the development of a co-produced policy paper on intergenerational working within social work. The paper has been drafted and is currently being refined through consultation with members and representatives across the Federation for discussion and adoption in the European Delegates' Meeting in the Netherlands in October.

This work reflects the Network's commitment to strengthening collaboration between generations of social workers and supporting sustainable professional development. Importantly, the formal integration of the NSWN into the IFSW Europe work programme, supported by an agreed action plan and budget, ensures that the perspectives of new social workers are embedded within the Federation's structures and future development.

Network members are also increasingly engaging in representative and support roles across the Federation, including involvement in representing IFSW Europe in the Council of Europe's Conference of International NGOs (CINGO) activities, demonstrating a sustained commitment to leadership and professional participation. The Network continues to contribute to building the next generation of social work leaders, human rights advocates, and democratic innovators across Europe through its links with many projects in Europe and its openness to dialogue with colleagues globally.

The NSWN and the Executive are now working on developing an infrastructure for more experienced social workers and leaders in IFSW Europe to become mentors and coaches to new social workers, and to develop this as a mutually beneficial activity between parties, encouraging reciprocal intergenerational working, in line with the policy paper on that topic that NSWN will bring to the Delegates' Meeting in October 2026.

Contact the New Social Workers via newsocialworkers@ifsw.org

World Social Work Day – 2025/2026



WSWD 2025 Strengthening Intergenerational Solidarity:

IFSW Europe organised a webinar for WSWD on 18th March co-organised by the IFSW E New Social Workers group and representatives for social work and ageing. It explored bridges between the generations considering:

- Why an intergenerational perspective in social work is so important now
- How social workers can support each other across the generations
- Examples of intergenerational social work practice in Europe.
- How we celebrate the transformational power of intergenerational approaches

Thanks to Gerry Nosowska, Naro Ohanesian, Jo Fox, Alison Clyde, (Generations Working Together) Regina Vieira (Polytechnic Institute of Castelo Branco) and Judith Sixsmith, Dundee University for organising and contributing to this event.

During 2026, IFSW Europe has continued to support the intergenerational theme through two policy papers/statements:

- **Statement on Social Work and Ageing** for presentation and adoption in the Global General Assembly, 2026: from the Europe UN Regional Commission, authored by Gerry Nosowska (UK)
- **Policy paper on Intergenerational Social Work** for presentation and adoption in the Europe Delegates Meeting, 2026: co-produced and coordinated by the New Social Workers Network (NSWN) as described above.



WSWD 2026 Uniting a Divided Society

Webinar 11th March 2025: Making Social Work Responsive and Inclusive Across Europe: Transformative messages and reflections from the 'Responsive' Research and Innovation Project. This explored the key messages for social workers from the research, and introduced key ideas that are forming part of a practice resource for social workers.

On WSWD in 2026, IFSW President Ruth Allen presented in person on the importance of global perspectives on social work within national practice to social workers in children's services working in a very ethnically diverse municipality in Southern England, and later joined the Bulgarian Association's online national conference which was launching their campaign for better recognition and government support for social workers.

Improving communication

In 2025, we started a regular newsletter for members, distributed through emails and provided in non-confidential form) on the IFSW website. We received feedback on the need for better communications from a member survey and from an exercise at the Delegates Meeting. In 2026 we will implement a much more effective platform to reach our members and prospective member, and to enable members to communicate with each other.

We are also using three social media platforms now; Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram

Our Regional Conference – Oslo and Alta, Norway, October 2025

A highlight of 2025 was the hugely successful and inspiring **2025 European conferences** in Oslo and Alta, Norway, summarised below. You can also read a full write up on the website here <https://shorturl.at/OJdPj> .

From 6 to 8 October 2025, over 600 social workers, educators, and researchers from across Europe and far beyond gathered in Oslo, the capital of Norway, for the IFSW Europe Regional Conference - **Bridging Communities: Building Sustainable Futures**.



The conference focused on eco-social themes, building on the project that IFSW Europe has led since 2021, and in alignment with IFSW Global's ongoing commitment to the global eco-social charter and collaboration with international bodies such as the UN and WHO.

The conference was an incredible gathering of social workers (the largest ever in Norway!) activists, academics, commentators, authors, politicians and artists of different disciplines, centred on themes of Green Social Work, Climate and Environmental Change, the UN's Sustainability Goals, and Indigenous Perspectives. Over three days, through talks, cultural moments, political engagement, workshops, field visits and creative side events, we explored the deep interconnections between people, society, nature and our profession.

From discussions on eco-social democracy and de-colonising social work, to reflections on climate adaptation, disaster response, education and the future of work for a sustainable future, the sessions reaffirmed that the profession is and must be at the heart of the global transformation challenges we all face - working for social justice, the wellbeing of people and nature, and hopeful futures for all.

Around 70 people also attended the two day 'post-conference' focused on and led by social workers, activists and academics from the Indigenous Sami community in Alta, Sápmi in the far north of Norway.



The Northern Lights, Alta, Norway, IFSW Europe Regional Conference



We heard about the history of social work in Sapmi, about the activism for Sami rights and how social workers have been part of this, and about the environmental challenges for Sami communities across the whole of northern Scandinavia.

We were also joined for an inspiring talk by global Indigenous Commissioner for IFSW, Hilary Weaver.



Hilary Weaver, IFSW Global Indigenous Commissioner and view of the coast in Alta

This moving, illuminating event deepened our knowledge and appreciation of the challenges for indigenous people in Europe and beyond. It also brought home the vital value of indigenous knowledge, wisdom and traditional ways from which all can learn, and the key role of social workers in supporting and advocating for indigenous rights. Together, these events created a powerful space for reflection, learning, and solidarity, highlighting how social work is central to building a sustainable, caring, and inclusive future for all at national and international levels.

Both conferences were organized by Fellesorganisasjonen (FO), the Norwegian Union of Social Educators and Social Workers, with the particular leadership of IFSW Europe Vice President and senior policy officer in FO, Andreas Kikvik.

Since then, we are working with Hellenic Association to shape the **2027 European conference** in **Athens, Greece!**

National member conferences 2024/25

Congratulations to all members organising national conferences for WSWD and marking other significant moments. President Ruth Allen provided video messages or live contributions online from IFSW Europe for events in Malta, Latvia, Norway, Portugal Türkiye, Bulgaria, Moldova, Portugal. Here are three example reports from Türkiye and Czechia.

The Turkey Social Services Congress, Ankara. November 15-16, 2025

The national Association of Social Workers (SHUDER) organized the **9th Social Services Congress** with the theme of "**Social Services in the Spiral of Hope, Shame and Despair**" on, in Ankara and provided a full write up which is available here on the IFSW website <https://www.ifsw.org/social-services-in-the-spiral-of-hope-shame-and-despair-was-discussed-at-the-9th-national-social-services-congress-in-turkiye/>



Left: SHUDER President Irem Cosanu Yalazan address the Congress. Right: President Irem (right) joins colleagues celebrating 60 years since graduation

The Czechia 100th Anniversary Conference, Prague. December 2025

President Ruth Allen spoke in person at the Czech Association of Social Workers celebration of 100 years of social work, in December 2026. At a time of new political and professional challenges including the diversity of social work bodies in the country, the conference explored learning from the 100-year history of social work in Czechia under liberal and repressive regimes; the challenges of improving working conditions and unifying advocacy

for social workers across the country. The value of international cooperation and shared learning through IFSW was also discussed.



Left: IFSW Europe President Dr Ruth Allen addresses social workers in Prague, Czechia
Right: Pavel Pankava and Deputy Chair Petr Zavel meeting with Ruth before the conference to discuss the issues for Czechia and the role of IFSW in supporting associations to thrive.

The Moldovan Congress on social work and community wellbeing – Moldova April/May 2026



Eric Torras, Austria - IFSW Europe Executive ; Paola Pontarello, Italy – IFSW Europe Deputy Executive; Pascal Rudin, IFSW Global Interim Secretary General.

Representatives from IFSW Europe and IFSW Global participated in the Seventh International Congress on Community Wellbeing held in Chişinău, Moldova, from 30 April to 3 May 2026. The congress brought together more than 100 participants from 13 countries to explore community wellbeing, social solidarity, and innovative approaches to social work in times of growing uncertainty and fragmentation.

The IFSW delegation included Ruth Allen, President of IFSW Europe, who joined online, alongside Eric Torras, Paola Pontarollo, and Pascal Rudin. Their participation reflected IFSW's ongoing commitment to strengthening professional dialogue, regional cooperation, and community-led social development across Europe and beyond.