

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

GLOBAL EDUCATION COMMISSION

Report to the General Meeting 2026
Nairobi, Kenya
June 2026

1. Introduction

The period 2025–2026 has been one of renewal and consolidation for the IFSW Global Education Commission. Amidst a rapidly changing global environment characterised by armed conflicts, climate emergencies, democratic backsliding, widening inequalities and rapid technological change, the Commission has sought to strengthen international collaboration and reaffirm the central role of social work education in promoting human rights, social justice and collective wellbeing.

The Commission remains committed to ensuring that social work education is not merely responsive to crises but contributes actively to building more just, democratic and sustainable societies.

2. Composition of the Commission

One of the major achievements of the past year has been the successful completion of the process for appointing new members to the Global Education Commission.

This was a thorough, transparent and relatively lengthy process, reflecting the importance of the Commission's role within IFSW. It involved an open call for expressions of interest, formal applications and interviews. The process sought to ensure regional representation, diversity of perspectives and a shared commitment to advancing social work education globally.

The newly appointed members of the Commission are:

Global Commissioner: Vasilios Ioakimidis

Africa: Pierre Celestin Bimenyimana

Asia-Pacific: Mariko Kimura

Europe: Marcin Boryczko

Latin America and the Caribbean: Mariangel Sánchez Alvarado

3. Strategic Direction

A major milestone during this reporting period was the reaffirmation of the Commission's Vision 2028 Concept Note, which articulates a shared ambition for the future of social work education as the profession approaches the centenary of the 1928 Paris Conference. The Vision is built around three interconnected priorities:

1. Monitoring and strengthening the Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training, ensuring that they remain a living framework that evolves alongside the profession and supports universities, educators and professional bodies across diverse contexts.
2. Expanding post-qualifying education and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) by developing structured, accessible and internationally relevant learning opportunities that support social workers throughout their careers.
3. Establishing a global research and scholarship centre to strengthen research-informed practice, facilitate international collaboration and support the development of new knowledge capable of addressing emerging social challenges.

The priority now is to move from vision to implementation. Discussions have already begun regarding governance arrangements, operational structures and the development of concrete activities under each pillar. The Commission recognises that achieving these ambitions will require sustained collaboration with member organisations, universities, educators, practitioners and regional bodies. Particular attention will be paid to ensuring that implementation is inclusive and responsive to regional realities. Social work education is characterised by immense diversity in traditions, institutional arrangements and resources. The Commission therefore sees its role not as prescribing a single model, but as facilitating dialogue, sharing knowledge and supporting locally grounded innovations that are aligned with shared global values.

As we move towards 2028, the Commission views this period as an opportunity not only to celebrate the history of international social work cooperation but also to imagine its future. We are committed to strengthening education as a global public good: critical, democratic, decolonial and firmly rooted in the pursuit of social justice, human rights and collective wellbeing.

4. Activities and Achievements

The past year has been one of renewal, dialogue and growing visibility for the Global Education Commission. While the Commission has devoted considerable energy to developing its long-term strategic direction and selecting new regional commissioners, it has also engaged actively in a range of educational, advocacy and solidarity initiatives that reflect the values of social work education as a force for social justice.

A key area of activity has been the defence of social work education and academic freedom. The Commission published a statement expressing solidarity with social work educators and academic staff in the United Kingdom during a period of unprecedented challenges facing higher education. The statement recognised the pressures created by austerity, restructuring and marketisation, while reaffirming the importance of protecting social work education as a public good.

The Commission also took a public stance in defence of academic freedom and the right to speak for justice. In a statement expressing solidarity with Professor Michael Lavalette, the Commission reaffirmed that social work educators must be able to engage critically with pressing social and political issues without fear of intimidation or censorship. The statement emphasised that academic freedom, democratic dialogue and human rights are foundational principles of social work education.

The Commission further supported the dissemination of a newly published report on Social Work Education in the Asia-Pacific Region and the implementation of the Global Standards. The report offers valuable insights into the diverse educational landscapes across the region and highlights both the opportunities and challenges involved in translating global standards into locally meaningful educational practices. The Commission sees this work as an important example of how global frameworks can foster dialogue while respecting regional diversity.

The Commission has also continued to promote international collaboration and student engagement. The International Social Work Learning Lab in Arnhem brought together students and educators from several countries to explore issues of solidarity, social justice, climate change and global citizenship. The initiative demonstrated the transformative potential of international exchange and embodied the Commission's commitment to nurturing the next generation of critically engaged and socially conscious social workers.

Taken together, these activities demonstrate the Commission's commitment to combining strategic vision with practical action. They also reflect a broader understanding of social work education: one that extends beyond curriculum and accreditation to encompass solidarity, academic freedom, international cooperation and the collective pursuit of social justice.

As the Commission moves towards the implementation phase of Vision 2028, it intends to build on these experiences and further strengthen its role as a global platform for dialogue, advocacy and innovation in social work education.

4. Challenges and Emerging Issues

Persistent inequalities, the marketisation of higher education, threats to academic freedom, armed conflicts, the rapid expansion of AI and digital technologies, and climate-related disruptions continue to impact on social work education globally.

At the same time, after a period of transition both for the organisation and for the Commission itself, there is a clear need to consolidate our work, strengthen our structures and translate our shared vision into concrete actions. The appointment of new commissioners and the reaffirmation of Vision 2028 provide a strong foundation for this next phase, which will focus on implementation, collaboration and building sustainable initiatives that can support social work education across all regions.

6. Closing Remarks

The Global Education Commission believes that social work education remains one of the profession's most important sites of hope, resistance and transformation. At a time of growing inequalities, conflict, climate crises and rapid technological change, our responsibility is not only to prepare competent practitioners, but also to nurture critical thinkers and ethical leaders committed to social justice and human rights. As we move towards the centenary of the 1928 Paris Conference, we see an opportunity to strengthen social work education as a global public good: critical, democratic, research-informed and responsive to the challenges of our time.

The Commission thanks all member organisations and colleagues for their trust, commitment and solidarity. We look forward to continuing this work together.

Professor Vasilios Ioakimidis
Global Education Commissioner
International Federation of Social Workers