

International Federation of Social Workers
Report to the General Assembly 2016 in Seoul

Biannual Report 2014 – 2016 of the IFSW Representation in Geneva¹

Organisation of the IFSW Representation in Geneva

Two years ago in 2014 I wrote that the phase of rebuilding and reconstruction was behind us. Now I can say that in the last two years we have successfully consolidated and enlarged the representation. We find now an active, informed, competent and effective IFSW representation at the UN in Geneva. All representatives are highly qualified and extremely committed to the task, so that it is difficult to give a report on all activities the representatives developed in their field of action. Here are the names and the priority activity of the five representatives.

Name and e-mail	Status and year of appointment	Position, functions, membership	Priority areas of activity
Klaus Kühne klaus.kuehne@sunrise.ch	Main Representative since 2011	Member of the core group of the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors	Human Rights esp. economic, social and cultural rights, social protection, poverty reduction
Tobias Roosen geray.roosen@bluewin.ch	Representative 2006		UNHCR, refugees and migration
Pascal Rudin ifsw@rudinweb.com	Representative 2013	Steering group for the international Training Tool (Children without parental care) IFSW Global Coordinator of UN Representations	Children's rights
Priska Fleischlin priska.fleischlin@ifsw.org	Representative 2014	co secretary of the NGO Committee on Ageing	Old age, transnational corporations and Human Rights
Doris Angst dorisangst.brightsexpert@gmail.com	Representative 2016	Retired acting manager of Swiss commission against racism	Racism, minorities

With the two new nominations IFSW uses fully all available places for permanent representatives.

One of our aims is to make known UN policy among social workers. We try to do so by lecturing about our activities in schools of social work, presenting at conferences, and publishing. In addition we are also to receive social workers who are interested in specific events. This was the case in 2015 when a social worker from Berlin participated at the NGO meeting of UNHCR as temporal IFSW representative and when we could organize a visit for a participant of CIF (The Council of International Fellowship: an exchange program for social workers) at UNHCR.

We try to strengthen the position of social work representation at the UN in Geneva:

- Regrettably up to now there is no representation of IASSW in Geneva although we organized the WSWD together with IASSW for the last years. As we also regularly cooperated with the school of social work we suggested to them to apply for the IASSW representation at the UN. They did so and have appointed a team of representatives. This will enforce the position and enlarge the representation of social work at the UN in Geneva.
- Furthermore we try to establish the possibility of an internship in Geneva. We explore the situation with the school of social work in Geneva. They would guarantee some infrastructure and possibly supervision. The greatest obstacle is the financial situation. We cannot offer any payment and the expenses in Geneva are high.

In the beginning of 2014 some organisational decisions concerning the IFSW representation at the UN have been taken:

- Establishment of an IFSW Global Coordinator of UN Representations. (Pascal Rudin was appointed to this post.)
- Better cooperation and coordination between the different IFSW UN teams at different sites.
- Installation of a UN page on IFSW website to ensure the visibility of representatives' work; and to feed information relevant for social work from UN activities and publications to IFSW bodies and members.

These measures had a positive effect and contributed to a greater exchange and cooperation between the UN delegations at different sites and to better information about our activities, although further development seems necessary and feasible.

Achievements

Since 2012 the celebration of World Social Work Day End of March is a highlight of the IFSW activity in Geneva at the UN. WSWD is an occasion to present the global organisations of social work and social development IASSW, ICSW and IFSW to a broad audience of UN-officers, national missions, NGO representatives, academics, student and social workers. In 2015 the executive committee of IFSW met in Geneva as well as the board of ENSACT (European Network of Social Action) were present at WSWD. In 2015 we could welcome the board of AIFRIS (Associations Internationales pour la Formation, la Recherche et l'Intervention Sociale)

The concept notes for WSWD 2015 respectively 2016 gave special attention to:

- highlight the role of social work, its values, ethical principles and methods in promoting human dignity and rights, social justice and social development and to some examples of good practice
- the importance of social security as indispensable for everyone's dignity and development of personality and to the realisation of social protection systems guaranteeing basic income and access for essential education and health care (ILO Rec. 202 on Social Protection Floors)
- explore the possibilities of cooperation between UN agencies and international social work organisations and reactivate, reinforce and widen existing cooperation and initiate coordinated activities,
- advocate for the more effective use of social work potential in the realisation of human rights and social development, including the support and promotion of social work training programmes and professional associations.

World Social Work Day 2015

The theme was “Ending AIDS, Promoting Dignity and Respect for All” and was hosted by UNAIDS. Key note speaker was Walter Lorenz, Rector of the Free University of Bolzano / Bozen /Italy. Romy Mathis, Swiss social worker, diagnosed as HIV positive herself, gave a lively and touching report of her fears, of experienced discriminations, of support by professional social workers giving her the courage to disclose her situation. She became social worker to be more effective in her advocacy for people with HIV. (Romy Mathis was invited as key note speaker to SWSD2016). Moderator for the morning panel was Mariangela Simao, director of the social protection department at UNAIDS on the topic: “Zero Aids related stigma and discrimination: Promoting dignity and worth of people”. Michael Cichon, President ICSW, moderated the afternoon panel on social work promoting dignity, ending poverty, inequality and AIDS. On the Panel there were representatives from UNAIDS, UNDP, ILO, World Bank, IASSW, IFSW, academics and researchers.

World Social Work Day 2016

WSWD’s topic in 2016 was: “Refugee and displaced persons: The Role of Social Work”. Speakers, panellists and moderators represented UNHCR, OHCHR, ILO, IFRC, UNICEF, ISS, IFSW, ICSW, EASSW and IASSW, social work trainers and researchers.

Both events were a good opportunity to establish, renew, and intensify contacts with UN officials and with allied NGO. Documentation for both events can be found on the homepage of IFSW.

Fields of activities of the representatives

Klaus Kühne

My IFSW activity during the last years concentrated on social protection and the role of social work especially in relation to the implementation of Social Protection Floors. Highlights were:

- Participating in several meetings of the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors resulting in the publication: *Civil Society Guide for National Social Protection Floors* (SPFs). Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) (2015) <http://www.fes.de/GPol/pdf/CivilSocietyGuide.pdf> (This Guide is warmly recommended to all social workers engaging in the social dialogue to conceive, implement, provide, monitor and evaluate social protection systems.)
- Writing the first draft of IFSW policy “The Role of Social Work in Social Protection Systems. After intensive and partly controversial discussions a final draft was produced by Rory Truell. It will be presented at the general assembly in Seoul.
- Contributing a foreword describing the ILO Recommendation 202 on Social Protection Floors and IFSW policy on social protection to the publication of Julie Drolet’s Book “Social Work Perspectives on Social Protection and Social Development“. The book will be launched at SWSD2016 Conference next week..
- Presenting a paper at the 2nd FES Asian Forum on Social Protection in Bangkok focusing on Social Protection in the Informal Economy – Incentive or Hindrance to Formalization? My main thesis was that the complexity of universal social protections systems calls for social services and social workers. **Social protection systems are incomplete without social work.** The knowledge and skills of social workers are crucial for high quality social services.

- Organizing a Symposium on the role of social work in social protection systems at SWSD2016, where we will present the IFSW Policy and discuss it with representatives of IASSW, ICSW, Global Service Workforce Alliance, and Julie Drolet.

Priska Fleischlin

After her Master graduation in Social Policy and Social Welfare in autumn 2014 Priska started as volunteer IFSW Representative at the UN in Geneva. She participated on the regular meetings of the NGO Committee on Ageing. Additionally, she went on the UNECE meeting of Ageing, the Human Rights Council and tried to decide in which topics she would like to focus as an IFSW representative. January 2015 she became co-secretary of the NGO Committee on Ageing. As part of the executive board works to strengthen the network of relevant actors, to advocate for the convention for elderly people but also to keep this specific age group recognized within the UN bodies.

In April and May 2015 Priska went to New York where she participated on the annually two-week-forum of the indigenous peoples. Climate change, various forms of human rights violation by governments and transnational business, missing remedy systems, land grabbing and suicide among youth have been the most discussed concerns.

Beside these events she also participated on NGO Ageing subgroup meetings in New York. This very active committee did essential work in order to have elderly people mentioned in several goals of the SDGs. Thanks to Michael Cronin she got in touch with the whole group of IFSW Representatives in New York and his University. She especially appreciated the support of Elaine Congress who provided her with a lot of information and events.

Pascal Rudin

Beside his position as IFSW administrator Pascal is very active IFSW representative at the UN in Geneva. Some of his activities shall shortly be presented here:

- HRC30 side event on 22 September 2015 with IFSW as cosponsor. Title: Social protection measures that invest in children and their families to prevent unnecessary separations.
- He represents IFSW as member of the steering group for the international training tool (Child without parental care CWPC) a Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) developed in cooperation with CELCIS. The International training tool seeks to provide in depth teaching for the implementation of the UN Guidelines for the alternative Care of Children.
- Pascal participated in the organization of the International Alternative Care Conference that will take place 3-5 October 2016 in Geneva. <http://alternativecaregeneva2016.com/index.php/en/>
- Participation in the Annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child during the 31st session of the HRC March 7, 2016. The topic was: Information and communication technology and child sexual exploitation.
- The UN Children's Right Committee answering to the Swiss report on children's right was deeply concerned about the excessive diagnoses of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and the ensuing increase in the prescription of psycho-stimulants to children despite growing evidence of harmful effects. Pascal engaged forcefully against the medicalization of children especially in the case of diagnosed ADHD and he became expert on this topic and was invited to several scientific and political committees dealing with the topic. He will present on the subject at the SWSD2016 conference.

Tobias Roosen

Tobias Roosen is IFSW representative at UNHCR since 2006. He regularly participated in the Annual Consultations with NGO in June 2014, 2015 and 2016 and in the EXCOM Sessions in October 2014 + 2015. His expertise and network was very helpful for the organisation of WSWD 2016.

Doris Angst

Doris Angst was newly appointed as IFSW representative at the UN in Geneva. She was managing director of the Swiss commission against racism and she published on rights of national minorities in Europe. She will engage in the fields of antiracism and minority rights and bring in her great expertise and many years of experiences in the national and international political process defending minorities. Due to travels after her retirement she will only really start her activity in the second half of 2016.

Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights

ATD Fourth World and Franciscan international took the lead to produce a manual “to help those working directly with people living in poverty understand the situation of those in poverty from a human rights perspective and help them and local authorities, undertake activities that help them enjoy their human rights and escape their situation.” Since summer 2013 Pilar Filomeno Vigezzi, social worker in Geneva (pfilomeno@hotmail.com) was IFSW representative in the working Group. The Manual “Making Human Rights work for People living in Extreme Poverty; A Handbook for implementing the UN guiding principles on extreme poverty and human rights” was launched in September 2015 and we recommend warmly this publication to social workers worldwide. www.franciscansinternational.org/handbook/

WHO Revision of ICD11

For many years Sabine Bährer has been IFSW representative in the advisory group for mental and behavioural diseases contributing to the WHO revision of the International Classification of Diseases(ICD). The advisory group was not active during the report period. The revision is an ongoing process to be finalized in 2018.

Bern, Switzerland, 21st June 2016

Klaus Kühne