

International Academy of Family Lawyers

Connecting colleagues | Cultivating knowledge | Creating solutions

IAFL is a worldwide association of practising lawyers who are recognised by their peers as the most experienced and skilled family law specialists in their respective countries.

IAFL was formed in 1986 to improve the practice of law and the administration of justice in the area of divorce and family law throughout the world. Our European Chapter will celebrate its 35th Anniversary in 2024. There are 337 Fellows in the Chapter from 34 different jurisdictions in Europe.

Observer status

We have been honoured to have Observer status for many years on a number of the Hague Conference on Private International Law Projects, including the Experts' (and now Working) Group on Parentage/Surrogacy; Special Commissions on the 1993, 2007, 1996 and 1980 Conventions and the Malta Process. We have recently been granted Observer status at the European Judicial Network.

A Worldwide Network

Since 1986, IAFL has steadily expanded its global reach, the number of countries represented is now 70 and IAFL has over 1,010 Fellows (i.e. members) including 28 judicial fellows and 18 associate (i.e. academic) fellows. IAFL currently has 4 regional Chapters. In addition to our European Chapter, which comprises around a third of the Fellowship, IAFL has a USA Chapter with 393 fellows from 40 states; an Asia Pacific Chapter with 147 fellows from 13 jurisdictions and a Canadian Chapter with 57 fellows from 6 provinces and territories. It is hoped that the not too distant future will see expansion with the creation of Chapters in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. Being part of the IAFL community enables Fellows practising international family law to obtain legal advice and assistance of the highest calibre in another country.

Amicus Curiae Interventions

The IAFL has received permission to intervene in matters before the Supreme Court of the United States and that of the United Kingdom; the Cour de cassation in France; the Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic and the Court of Appeal in England and Wales.

Judicial Training

The IAFL is regularly asked to provide training and support to members of the judiciary, most recently from the Judges of the Family Division of the High Court at Lusaka in Zambia and the Kenya Judiciary Academy.

Law Reform and Education

IAFL has supported legislators and law makers across the world in the area of law reform. IAFL has provided information and informed commentary in relation to the family law consequences of Brexit and in relation to the application by the UK to rejoin the Lugano Convention. IAFL provided responses to the Council of Europe work on the protection of the best interests of the child in situations of parental separation and that in relation to the feasibility of a legal instrument on the protection of the best interests of the child in domestic law proceedings by public authorities to limit parental responsibilities or place a child in care. IAFL have made presentations and provided education in multiple jurisdictions, for example at the European Parliament and providing evidence to Select Committees from both Houses of Parliament in the UK.

IAFL are a supporting organisation of the EU-FamPro project providing E-training on the EU Family Property Regimes which has involved contributions to the book, The EU Regulations on Matrimonial Property and Property of Registered Partnerships published by Intersentia, and the provision of training to the 336 people enrolled in the course.

IAFL sends representatives to relevant international conferences, promoting the effective operation of international treaties relating to children, service and the taking of evidence abroad, and in relation to the harmonisation of jurisdictional rules in family law. IAFL provides informed commentary to the media in its capacity as an organisation of family law specialists and highlights when the treatment of individuals and families does not meet minimum international standards respecting human rights.

Professional development of young lawyers

The European Chapter has run a Young Lawyers' Award competition for 13 years. Intrants of up to ten years qualification and/or experience who reside in a European jurisdiction are eligible to enter. The winner and two runners-up receive a cash sum and entitlement to attend the Introduction to European Family Law Conference, which is run regularly and designed to educate younger lawyers in European jurisdictions and give them an opportunity to network with their peers and more senior practitioners in the IAFL. In 2023 we held a meeting in Bucharest, designed for younger practitioners in Central and Eastern European states, which saw attendance of practitioners from 21 jurisdictions, following on from a larger, open meeting in Ibiza in 2022 which had participants from over 30 European states. The IAFL has recently launched a new initiative for young lawyers from lower and middle-lower income countries worldwide to sponsor them to attend the Annual General Meeting and this programme will be rolled out in 2024.

Meetings

IAFL holds an annual meeting at a different venue each year. The Chapters also meet annually in different locations. Each meeting includes a substantial educational program on family law, in which Fellows and guest speakers of the highest quality present papers and run workshops on international aspects of family law. These meetings provide a great opportunity for Fellows to update themselves on legal developments throughout the world and to establish or renew contact with fellow international family lawyers.

You can find out more about the IAFL on our website: www.iafl.com or by contacting our Executive Director, Annie Dunster annie.dunster@iafl.com

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