

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. There are 347 Fellows in the European Chapter from 36 different jurisdictions in Europe.

Observer status

We have participatory status at The Council of Europe and have had 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 were granted Observer status at the European Judicial Network in 2024 and have participated at all of the meetings since then to share practitioner input to the work done by the EJN.

A Worldwide Network

Since 1986, IAFL has steadily expanded its global reach, the number of jurisdictions represented is now 127 and IAFL has over 1,089 Fellows (i.e. members) including 42 judicial fellows and 27 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 415 fellows from 40 states; an Asia Pacific Chapter with 173 fellows from 14 jurisdictions and a Canadian Chapter with 62 fellows from 6 provinces and territories and hopes to expand to create further Chapters in the not too distant future. 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; the Court of Appeal in England and Wales and Tribunal da Relação de Lisboa in Portugal.

Judicial Training

In addition, the IAFL has been asked to provide training and support to members of the judiciary, notably 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 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 has 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

In November and December 2024 Fellows from the European Chapter delivered a four-week training programme on International Family Law for the INPPA (the National Institute for the Training and Improvement of Lawyers) in Romania. The training was an online training course on Introductory aspects of European Cross Border Family Law for junior lawyers and combined lectures and interactive sessions with IAFL Fellows across Europe.

It is hoped that similar training programmes will be delivered by grouping neighbouring European jurisdictions into clusters of countries during 2026.

The European Chapter has run a Young Lawyers' Award competition for 14 years. Entrants of up to ten years qualification and/or experience who reside in a European jurisdiction are eligible to enter. The Essay competition saw 29 submissions from 11 different jurisdictions in 2025.

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.

The European Chapter co-hosted a meeting in Paris in December 2024 with the International Association of Young Lawyers (AIJA) on international family law. In 2025 the Chapter held a meeting in Hamburg with 87 attendees from 22 jurisdictions and in 2024 a meeting was held in Thessaloniki with 87 attendees from 22 jurisdictions.

The IAFL launched two new important initiatives in 2024/2025. The Early Career Award launched in 2024, a new initiative for young family lawyers from lower and middle-lower income countries worldwide to apply for a bursary to attend the IAFL's Annual General Meeting. The Award was designed to help the winners develop important professional networks with the best international family lawyers, as well as to have the opportunity to participate in the IAFL's high quality education programme.

In July 2025 the IAFL Institute for Further Learning was launched. The bespoke course features 10 monthly sessions delivered online by IAFL Fellows and external individuals who are experts in their fields. The course is aimed at family lawyers who have been practicing for around 6 – 7 years (so are not yet eligible to join the IAFL).

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.

We also host regional meetings for non-IAFL Fellows to provide education, training and networking opportunities, and to raise the profile of international family law as an independent discipline within the civil justice sphere. In 2026 we will have meetings in, inter alia, Kuwait and the Philippines.

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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