

The IAFL Continental Brief ... Summer 2026



From Forum (and retail) Shopping to Batu Caves: Dispatches from Kuala Lumpur

For those European Fellows who could not make the journey east this month, the IAFL Asia Pacific Chapter meeting in Kuala Lumpur (20–24 May 2026) offered a vivid reminder that international family law has never been more global, complex, or engaging. Set against the dazzling skyline of Kuala Lumpur, the meeting brought together over 180 Fellows and guests from nearly 30 jurisdictions, again reflecting the truly international reach of our Academy.

Proceedings were prefaced by a joint symposium with the Malaysian Bar Council on “*Burning Issues and Trends in International Family Law*”- an energetic curtain raiser tackling cross-border divorce, parenting disputes and property division. It set the tone for what followed: an education programme that managed to be both intellectually rigorous and refreshingly grounded in the realities of modern practice, spanning jurisdictions from Canada to Cambodia.



Sessions ranged widely across the increasingly intricate terrain we all navigate daily - forum shopping and “divorce nomads”, expatriate families, and the thorny intersection between wealth, enforcement and jurisdiction. There was thoughtful consideration of legislative responses to child and forced marriage, alongside more technical deep-dives into extraterritorial property jurisdiction and the variation of overseas maintenance orders.

A particular highlight was my colleague Sam Longworth’s participation in the debate on whether a 50/50 division of assets is inherently fair - a question which, unsurprisingly, generated more heat than light, but demonstrated once again the diversity of approaches across jurisdictions.

The regional perspective was especially valuable. A session on family law across Southeast Asia showcased the richness of legal frameworks across the region, reminding us that globalisation has certainly not standardised the journey.



Equally striking was the consistent focus on the human dimension: children, vulnerability, and the realities of cross-border family life. Whether discussing third parties in parenting disputes or conduct in financial proceedings, the programme retained a clear-eyed focus on the lived experience behind the law.

If the educational programme stretched the mind, the social programme did its best to restore balance. True to IAFL form, it provided ample opportunity for conversation and connection. A cultural excursion took delegates to the Batu Caves (with its unforgiving 272 steps in extreme humidity) and to the historic Masjid Jamek, offering a fascinating glimpse into Malaysia's rich heritage.



As ever, it was the combination of intellectual exchange and genuine collegiality that defined the meeting. In a world where families and their assets are increasingly transnational, the value of these connections cannot be overstated. We missed many but look forward to reconnecting at Dublin for those able to make that next meeting.

The European Chapter: Beyond Barcelona

No sooner had we concluded the Barcelona conference than planning began on the next four!

The Introduction to European Family Law series continues to thrive, following a highly successful Hamburg event last year which generated overwhelmingly positive feedback. Next stop is in Tirana, Albania on 15-16 October which will be opened for registration shortly. Please bear in mind these events are intended for prospective fellows to enable them to engage with the Academy and to expand the reach of the Chapter in new and developing jurisdictions. We love

Fellows enthusiasm but are unable to accommodate participation from existing Fellows at these events, other than those invited to speak.

There will then be another Introduction event hosted in Málaga on 17-18 June 2027 before we resume our next Chapter Meeting, to enjoy some festive cheer, in Vienna 1-5 December 2027. After an 18-month hiatus Vienna is likely to be very popular so mark your diaries now! We will then turn our attention to Krakow (May 2028) and site visits are in hand.

We hope it is fair to say that if you like your legal education accompanied by cultural diversity and good company, the European Chapter remains a reliable source.



Beyond the conference circuit, there is plenty to report.

Knowledge Sharing: From Chapter Chats to Cross-Border Training

The Chapter's commitment to education continues in multiple forms.

Our Chapter Chats remain a quietly effective success story. January's session featured new Fellows from across Europe and drew enthusiastic engagement - proof that even with busy diaries colleagues will still find time to learn from one another. April's session on succession and private client issues in the HNW divorce context attracted strong interest, and the calendar ahead is full: from our 16 June Chapter Chat ("My Dear Law Change") to a 40th Anniversary webinar later in November. Please do join when you can.

Meanwhile, training initiatives are expanding geographically. Work is underway in the Balkans and later Germany to deliver structured learning using Dr Ian Sumner's training videos, grouped into regional clusters and supported by live Q&A. A model example of doing more with resources we already have and doing it well.

Collaboration Across Borders (and Organisations)

Our engagement with external organisations is strengthening.

- Discussions are continuing with the Union des Avocats Européens for a joint mediation webinar next year and broader plans for an international mediation training series are developing apace - reflecting the growing importance of cross-border dispute resolution.

- At the European Judicial Network, IAFL Fellows regularly represent the Academy and contribute practical insights. These collaborations enhance not only our visibility, but our relevance.

A Growing Chapter

The Chapter continues to grow in both size and diversity, now comprising 346 Fellows across 36 jurisdictions.

New Fellows have recently joined from across Europe, and the Board of Admissions continues its careful work.

The Young Lawyers' Award has recently closed for applications and we have received 16 submissions. The award will be announced at the end of June and we welcome the opportunity to identify and encourage the next generation of international family lawyers.

Financially Sound and Organisationally Strong

Finally, a reassuring note: the Chapter remains in robust financial health, with a strong balance at the end of 2025. This stability enables us not only to sustain our current activities but to invest in new initiatives and opportunities as they arise.

In Closing

If there is a theme to the past few months, it is maintaining momentum. We continue to grow, to collaborate, and to expand our reach, whilst remaining anchored in what defines the IAFL: excellence in practice, generosity in knowledge-sharing, and a genuinely international perspective.

Enjoy the summer and hope to see you in Dublin!

Emma