



CEO Report

International Association for Counselling Conference, June 2024.

Dear Members, Partners, and Stakeholders,

I am delighted to present a report to the International Association for Counselling (IAC) Conference for the period 2023-2024. This has been a time of remarkable growth, innovation, and resilience. We have faced numerous challenges, but through the dedication and commitment of our members, volunteers and partners we have made significant strides in advancing the field of counselling globally.

1. Organizational Growth and Development

In 2023 and 2024, IAC expanded its membership base by 45%, now representing many more counsellors from around the globe. Our continuous efforts in outreach and engagement have strengthened our community, providing a robust platform for knowledge exchange and professional development.

A revised IAC Constitution and Bye-Laws are being proposed to membership at the 2024 General Assembly. The revisions ensure that IAC can adapt to changes, improve governance, and operate effectively while aligning with our mission and objectives. The review and updates of byelaws demonstrate a commitment to good governance and continuous improvement.

2. Financial Health

Despite economic challenges, IAC finances are improving. Our revenue is mainly dependent on membership, conferences, and sponsorship/fundraising. Successful introduction of new membership tiers and services has helped. Sponsorship levels have increased. Thanks to ACA (USA), EBCC & NBCC, LivingWorks, and the CCPA for their support. It is much appreciated. Financial stability allows us to invest in furthering our mission and expand our impact.

3. Global Outreach and Partnerships

IAC has forged closer partnerships with key organizations, including the World Health Organization (WHO), UNESCO, the European Parliament, and various regional/national counselling and mental health associations. These collaborations have enabled us to participate in global initiatives, influencing mental health policies and practices on an international scale. In particular we welcome the two WHO representatives, Dr Kenneth Carswell and Dr James Underhill to our conference.

Invitations to the Associations' Roundtable were issued to over ninety counselling associations and organisations. As a result, the 2024 Associations Roundtable will be well attended and serve as the central forum for inter-regional association dialogue.

4. Education and Professional Development

In response to the growing need for accessible professional development, IAC launched an online 'Transcultural Counselling' training program in 2021. The interest and uptake reflect the demand for high-quality counsellor education. During 2025 this course is due to be updated with several more country case studies and interviews.

Counsellors attending the Naples (2024) conference attain eighteen (18) IAC Continuing Education (CE) / Continuing Professional Development (CPD) hours/units.

5. Advocacy and Awareness

During 2023 and 2024, IAC intensified its advocacy efforts, focusing on mental health awareness and the importance of accessible counselling services. We conducted multiple campaigns, including World Mental Health Day, which reached high audience numbers through social media, and website activity.

6. Research and Innovation

IAC's commitment to advancing research in counselling and mental health has been unwavering. The *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling* is published under the auspices of the IAC and promotes the exchange of information about counselling activities throughout the world. The journal now has an improved Impact Factor of 1.5 and Cite Score of 2.3. The journal publishes conceptual, practical, and research contributions that provide an international perspective on: Theories and models of guidance and counselling; Counsellor education and supervision; State of the art reports on guidance and counselling in specific settings; Social justice and equity (e.g., issues of diversity, advocacy, racial or ethnic identity, religion and culture, gender issues); Special applications; and Counselling services in countries with social and economic challenges. Many thanks to Dr Rick Balkin, Editor, International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling, for his leadership.

The 'World Mapping of the Counselling Profession' research project is in its seventh year. Over those years we have learned and document much about the quantity, standards, or practice of counselling in many of the world's 196 countries. This long-term project aims to bring about impactful development of the counselling profession globally. It already has enabled significantly enhanced connectivity, advocacy, and information sharing. IAC are grateful to the European Board for Counsellor Certification (EBCC) for their support for the project -- allocating weekly EBCC staff members hours to research and update the mapping webpages. The information gathered clearly shows an exponential increase in counselling activity worldwide.

7. Member Services and Benefits

Listening to our members' feedback, we have enhanced our services to better meet their needs. Membership provides a wealth of benefits that support professional growth, enhance credibility, and foster a sense of community. By offering access to resources, education, advocacy, and networking opportunities IAC membership offers a valuable step towards achieving professional goals in the international arena. Dr Nate Perron's IAC Counselling Practitioner's Roundtable is a good example of a membership offering that combines education, exchange and professional networking.

8. IAC Regional Development

IAC has a regional structure that provides inclusivity and representation at a regional level. The purpose of IAC Regional Branches is to progress IAC's strategic regional aims, namely: Advocacy for the Legal Recognition of Counselling; Advocacy for the Counselling Profession with Intergovernmental and Regional bodies; Agreeing on Region-Wide Counselling Standards; Supporting National Associations; Assisting in the development of counselling in countries; and Region-specific Education, Research and Practice Programmes.

IAC-Europe meetings are taking place regularly and an interim leadership team is in place. An application to establish an official IAC-Europe branch is in progress. Meetings also take place at IAC-Africa and IAC-Caribbean. We strongly commend the hard work and commitment of all those involved in regional development.

9. IAC Conferences

This year's (2024) conference in Naples is being attended by over 780 delegates (385 in-person and 395 online). Our annual conferences showcase cutting-edge research and innovative practices, fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing. We are exceptionally grateful to our esteemed colleagues at AssoCounseling (Italy) for partnering with us in 2024.

We look forward to soon announcing the dates and details of the 2025 conference – to be held in beautiful Malta – in collaboration with the Maltese Association for the Counselling Profession (MACP) and the University of Malta.

10. Policy Development

IAC is interested in partnering with associations to create, or enhance, international counselling policy/guidelines. Some recent and current examples:

- IAC and Multiple Associations: Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Professional Counsellors.
- IAC and LivingWorks: Bringing together expertise and resources to create a shared vision of a world safer from suicide.

- IAC and the American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA) are establishing Global Remote Counselling Guidelines.
- IAC / CCPA / BACP: Working together to promote policy development, research and exchange of information regarding climate change counselling.

Global policy partnership is a fulfilling and rewarding process. Participation will benefit your association and strengthen the profession worldwide. Please visit our global policy development page on our website.

11. Communications

Through effective communication, the visibility, credibility, and impact of IAC's work has been shared with key stakeholders, including members, partners, volunteers, sponsors, intergovernmental agencies and the general public. Through the work of our communications Director and team, awareness about IAC's mission, projects, and impact has significantly increased. Desiree Carlson, our social media Director has also been invaluable in boosting awareness of counselling and IAC initiatives. We encourage our members to view IAC as their communications conduit to the global community of counselling.

Looking Ahead:

As we look to the future, IAC is poised to continue its growth and impact. Our strategic priorities for the coming year include:

- Expanding our global impact through new partnerships, membership and initiatives.
- Increasing our advocacy efforts to ensure mental health, well-being and counselling are prioritized in both global and regional mental health and well-being agendas.
- Enhancing our regional structure to provide more opportunities for member involvement.
- Continuing to promote research and innovation to advance the field of counselling.

I am truly grateful to our members, partners, volunteers, and Executive Council. In particular, Dr Bill Borgen's visionary leadership and unwavering support has been both a personal, and team, inspiration. Together, the IAC team is making a difference and moving closer to our vision of 'A World Where Counselling is Available to All'.

Thank you for your commitment to the International Association for Counselling. I look forward to another year of progress and success.

Warm regards,

Naoise Kelly, CEO, IAC, June 2024.
