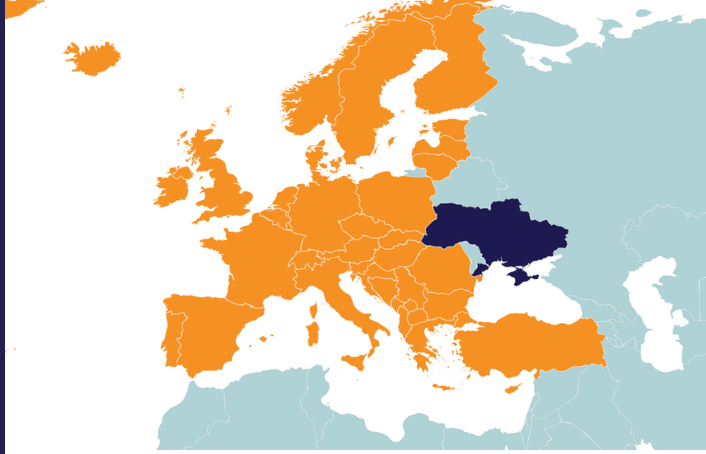


GRAPEVINE

IFES
EUROPE

The regional newsletter for IFES Europe
Autumn/Winter 2024



Monty writes...

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a blessed advent and Happy Christmas, praying that you will know the reality of Immanuel, God with us, as you rest and reflect at the end of this year.

This past Sunday we were reflecting in our church on the vision of Isaiah 11: the new King and the new Kingdom; but also the new knowledge that we will have of God, when we enjoy that Kingdom in all its fullness. Our knowledge of him will be fully experiential: in fact the whole world will truly know him.

It is our privilege as God's servants in student ministry to share in this knowledge, as we grow in him. And also to share this knowledge, as we witness for him and encourage and train our students to spread that knowledge in their campuses around Europe.

The Gospel – "the Good News for all people" – was shared with the shepherds that first Christmas, and they in turn shared it with all whom they met. I pray that we will all have the opportunity to do the same this year.

*David (Monty) Montgomery,
Regional Secretary, IFES Europe*

"God is calling me for something special"

Formación – an investment in the future of student ministry



IFES is known for its focus on student-led initiatives. One important way we encourage this is through our year-long student leadership training program, Formación, which has been led by Eva Petržilková.

This summer, around 45 students from 25 European countries (and Israel) embarked on this life-changing journey, as they gathered for a kick-off meeting in Bulgaria - described as "the best Formación ever".

Guest speaker Timothée Joset from Engaging the University charged students with being light and salt within their contexts. A team of around 20 young national movement staff facilitated the student groups and will mentor individuals as they embed their learning in practical ways in the year ahead.

"...Made me realize that God is calling me for something special... I'm really excited for the mentoring; I believe it's going to help me continue growing and serve God's purpose in my life. Very grateful for this opportunity."

A student from FCSI Israel

"Such a special and important time. It gave me the space I needed to refuel when I was running on empty. One of the best parts was having my group leader and now my mentor. I'm genuinely excited to see what God has in store for me ... this journey has already made a huge impact on me."

Anonymous student

Please pray with us

*that the 45 **Formación** student leaders will grow in faith and discipleship, and that the seeds planted in this year will bear fruit in their future lives and ministries.*



“I just want to be useful and worship Jesus”

InterAction – developing cross-cultural student ministry

Student-led ministry doesn’t have to stop with graduation. Our InterAction program gives young graduates an extended opportunity to experience cross-cultural mission within a different European context.

It’s an initiative that supports the key IFES strategy of Thriving Together: by sharing resources, building good practice and forming a vital support network, Christian witness is strengthened across the region.

During their one- or two-year placement, they support students in discipleship, evangelism and international student ministry, and help launch new groups.

[Read how](#) God has used Olivia’s language gifts to lead her to ministry in Austria, and brought Sam from the other side of the world back to his family’s roots in Italy...

Please pray with us
for all InterAction volunteers,
program coordinator Dawn Clark and her team.

“What I do will be continued by those who ‘drive society’”

Students changing the world in **Ukraine**

Like many who commit their lives to student ministry, the realization that this work has national significance is what fuels Arthur in his role with CCX in Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine.



“Students are those who ‘move’ the country forward... BUT! To do this, they themselves need a strong vector of movement - the Bible... in our team we see that young people are very open and in search of answers to questions: Who am I? Where should I go? What to hold on to? We discuss these questions together, hold debates, Bible studies...”

And the result is tangible. As one student said:

“I began to notice that our gatherings have had a great impact on me, on different areas of my life! At the university, in training, at work, in communication with others, and even on my future plans. I seem to have learned how to live this life.”

“Ukraine is going through difficult times, but I know for sure that this strong and sensible young generation will have the future it deserves.”

Arthur, a staff worker, CCX, Ukraine

CCX student, Ukraine

Please pray with us
for Arthur and all the staff and students in CCX, as we continue to intercede for peace in Ukraine.

“Christ brought something new into my life”

Life-changing summer camps in southern Europe

This summer students from the UK travelled to support summer camps in Kosovo, Greece, and Montenegro. The Bulgarian movement also held two Bible camps, and from Serbia came a testimony of one student who gave his life to Jesus at a camp two years ago:

“When I understood what human nature was like, the nature of sin that we all carry in ourselves, my life got a different meaning. God freed me from anxiety and nervousness and gave me hope, patience and peace!

EUS General Secretary Samuil, adds:

“A lot of Serbian students are struggling with anxiety, depression, because of the state of the world. Many are open to belief in God. We want to help them find Jesus, because he is genuinely the only one who can heal their hearts and minds.”

Click here to find out about a [life-changing summer break](#) for students across Europe in summer 2025!

Please pray with us

for all those who have made a step of faith at summer camps across Europe in 2024.

“Evangelism training with a difference!”

The 2024 FEUER conference trials a ‘show and tell’ approach



Modelling has long been seen as a highly effective training tool. This year well over 200 delegates from more than 40 countries across Europe and beyond had the opportunity to see the best evangelism practices in real life from the team running the annual meeting of FEUER - The Fellowship of Evangelists in the Universities of Europe.

They met in Greece, in November, to be equipped and encouraged to proclaim the gospel. As well as hearing sample evangelistic talks from experienced university evangelists, they also had the chance to experience an entire sample event, as FEUER Field Director Michael Ots explains:

“The whole evening was run as if we were in the middle of a university events week, This helped to demonstrate not just how to do an excellent talk (which Glen Scrivener from the Steiger Network delivered) but, also how to hand out flyers, do first-contact evangelism, host events, and how to use music and testimony.”

They also heard stories from some of the almost 200 events weeks that had taken place across Europe over the previous year.



Read uplifting stories of evangelism in Europe and beyond in Michael’s [conference report](#).

Please pray with us

that God would continue to use the FEUER network to turn the hearts of students and others towards Jesus.

35,000 joining in worldwide prayer for student witness

Sanctuary: World Student Day 2024



(Image, EUSCG Facebook page)

“Pray that God would raise more student leaders to pioneer new groups in the Southwest region of France!”

This was one of the prayer cards submitted by European students for IFES World Student Day, on 18 October.

Well over 100 individuals and groups from around Europe took part in this annual global prayer event for student ministry that drew almost 35,000 participants worldwide. One group from EUSCG in Montenegro marked the day by giving out small gifts and posting photographs on social media.

Please pray with us

for the IFES international services communications team as they plan the 2025 day of prayer.

Meet Sem: setting a new beat in Belgium

Flemish-speaking movement ICHTUS welcomes a long-awaited leader

Like many general secretaries, Sem Thomas has acquired many useful skills on his journey towards leadership!

A student of Occupational Therapy, after graduation he went straight into student ministry. Over 14 years he fulfilled a variety of roles: as student worker, Mark Drama director/coordinator, webmaster, communications officer and human relations (even studying Strategic HR Management).

During the last two years he has worked in a secular context as Learning and Development Specialist in an international company. And in his spare time he is a runner and a drummer in a jazz band!

As Sem prepared this autumn to take on the role of General Secretary for ICHTUS, the Flemish-speaking movement in Belgium, we asked for his thoughts on what lay ahead:

“From where I’m at I think one of the biggest issues is a lack of interest in coming to the local groups. Most of our groups are smaller than they used to be. We also have a lot less full-time staff than, say, three years ago.”



One priority will be to revisit the vision and strategic plan laid down seven years ago.

“I hope we have a clear vision and strategy by the end of this academic year, and that both students and staff grow in their motivation and passion for living and proclaiming the gospel holistically among students in Flanders and Brussels. I hope to see students place Christ in that central place in their lives.”

We are so thankful for Sem, his wife Rianne and their two children (10 and 11), who, he tells us, are looking forward to meeting students again regularly.

Please pray with us

for ICHTUS in Belgium: “The team has been working without a gen sec for more than a year, and some of them are tired. They all did tasks, took roles, that they did not want to take, just because it was necessary. Please pray that they may find time and space to recover from that and that I [Sem] can support them in the best way possible.”



A season of anniversaries

Celebrations in **Finland, Norway** and **the Netherlands**

In the second half of 2024, Monty was honoured to attend several major anniversary celebrations for long-established movements in northern Europe.

In August, Finnish movement **OPKO** celebrated their 60th anniversary at a beautiful lakeside location in the heart of the countryside, with a community event over several days that attracted all ages, from babies to grandparents.

The main celebration enjoyed a festival atmosphere as everyone dressed in costumes from the 1960s. Teachings and speeches that reflected the long history of OPKO and its importance in Finnish Christian youth work were followed by an evening of music that celebrated OPKO's diversity and spirit of togetherness.



(Image, OPKO Facebook page)

Please pray with us

for Jussi Miettinen and his team as they take the ministry forward into 2025 and beyond.

One of Europe's oldest student movements, **Laget - NKSS** in Norway, celebrated its centenary year in October. At the special celebration evening, IFES General Secretary Tim Adams spoke of Norway's foundational role in the very beginnings of our global fellowship:

"Some of you may not know that before IFES was officially founded in 1947, there was a series of international conferences for people involved in university ministry. The very first one took place here in Norway in 1934. It was Professor Ole Hallesby, who gave the opening address... Even today it is still a powerful call to action. Hallesby says that after many years where he felt the university world was closed to Christian ministry, he now saw God opening doors — not only in Norway but in many other countries... 'This is the hour of God', he says, urging the conference to work together and join in with what God is doing."

Today Laget has a staff of over 50, serving 4500 students in 200 groups all over Norway.



(Image, Laget - NKSS Facebook page)

Please pray with us

giving thanks for all who have played a role in Christian witness in Norway's universities over the last 100 years. Pray too for incoming General Secretary Anne-Lin Hynnekleiv, who in mid-2025 will take over from Karl-Johan Kjode.

A season of anniversaries / continued

Celebrations in **Finland, Norway** and **the Netherlands**



In November **IFES – NL** (Netherlands) celebrated its 65th anniversary with an afternoon and evening that included talks, workshops and food, in Utrecht's beautiful church of St Jacob.

Celebrating with them, Monty paid tribute to the contribution the movement has made over the years to the life of IFES Europe, and provided a snapshot of recent developments within the wider region:

"Through [the] changes, students and staff of IFES Netherlands have been a significant voice in the region, and have sacrificially blessed and encouraged many within smaller and struggling movements.

Two things that have remained constant in that time, of course, are the need for students to find forgiveness, hope and joy in Christ; and the faithfulness of the God we serve. Today, we continue to be blessed with how God is at work on our campuses.

We have witnessed an exciting pioneer work start just this year in Kosovo, and seen 1,000 student leaders gather together in one of our largest and oldest movements.

We have been humbled by the resilience of our staff in Ukraine planting new groups among the refugee students in the west of the country, and the Polish movement support work among Russian speaking refugees.

We have seen international students come to faith in many countries, and the first indigenous general secretary emerge in Turkey.

We have heard reports of hundreds coming to evangelistic events in Spain and Serbia, and a fruitful sports ministry develop in Albania.

A new student cafe and contact centre has opened in Thessaloniki, Greece, while in Norway, local IFES staff are invited into the high schools in many of the major cities to answer questions about the Christian faith.

Across our 44 movements we are diverse but united for the Gospel. I know that IFES NL could add many of their own stories to this series of snapshots."

Please pray with us

that for staff and students in IFES-NL, the next decade will be even more fruitful and fulfilling than those that have passed.