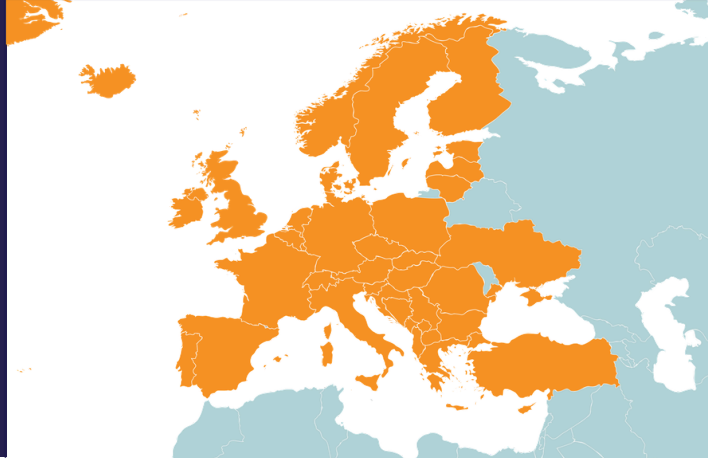


GRAPEVINE

IFES
EUROPE

The regional newsletter for IFES Europe
Summer 2026



Monty writes...

Summer can be mistaken for a “down time” in student work, but it is often an extremely fruitful and intense period, as it is the time for some national movements to hold their camps or outreach events. Summer is also when we as a regional team can spend quality time with staff and students - at events such as the kick-off meeting for the student leadership program, **Formación**; the first regional **Mark Camp**, immersing students and staff in scripture over several days; and **Bible and Culture** graduates' conference.

We hope you enjoy this edition which looks forward to the summer, and back at what God has been doing in the region over the past few months.

Monty
David Montgomery
Regional Secretary, IFES Europe



Keeping the faith... together!

In May, general secretaries and IFES regional team members - 46 in total - returned home from our annual General Secretaries' Gathering in rural Germany with more of a spring in our step, lighter loads on our shoulders, and bigger smiles on our faces.



We were blessed each morning with prompts for personal reflection and prayer from 2 Timothy by Eva Petržilková (IFES Europe Scripture Engagement and Leadership Development ministries, and cluster group leader).

We received excellent teaching in the same book from general secretaries around the region – and discovered that one in particular (Jussi Miettinen from Finland) used to be a professional athlete!

We heard moving personal experiences from Estonia, Greece, Luxembourg and Ukraine, and met first time general secretaries from Belgium, Great Britain, Italy and Switzerland. We shared ideas and experiences in small groups and were encouraged by IFES General Secretary Tim Adams. We enjoyed uplifting times of worship - who knew there were so many talented musicians among us?!

We ate, and talked, and ate and talked and ate some more. And we formed a multi part gospel choir, led by general secretary in Sweden, Lasse Axelsson, who taught us to sing “**You hold on, keep the faith, God is going to work it out...**” - a solid truth to take home with us and live by!

Pray with us

...give thanks for the spirit of friendship and mutual support that exists in our regional fellowship and pray it may always continue.

Welcome and farewell to our “fellow workers in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:3)



Dominik steps up in Croatia

In February Dominik Glavaš took on the role of General Secretary of STEP, Croatia.

“This is a great honour for me, especially because my father held this same position in the 1990s.

Although I grew up in Croatia, I studied in the USA at Wheaton College, where I earned my BA in Christian Ministry and Formation. After graduating, I joined STEP as a part-time staff worker for a year, and have now transitioned into a full-time role.

This marks a significant moment for our movement, as STEP has not had a full-time general secretary since 2019. With this transition come many challenges, but also many opportunities as we prayerfully consider how to serve as a student ministry in Croatia today.

Pray with us

...that God would raise up a new generation to take on the mantle of ministry among students
 ...for doors to open in new cities, such as Osijek and Split
 ...for wisdom, direction, and discernment as the team seeks to faithfully follow Christ and serve students across Croatia.



Yevgen stands in the gap in Ukraine

When CCX general secretary Misha Melnykov was called up for military service, Yevgyen Kulchytsky agreed to lead the movement in his place.

“I was born into a non-religious family in Crimea. We later moved to Lviv, where I attended school and studied at a music college, qualifying as a music teacher and conductor. I became a Christian as a student. I then studied at Irpin Biblical Seminary and received a bachelor’s degree in Pastoral Ministry, while serving as a volunteer with CCX Ukraine. After graduating, I began my journey as a staff member with CCX, first as an intern, then as a staff worker, team leader, and since March, as acting general secretary.

I am married to Inna, and we have a son, Marko, who is almost two. We currently live in Lviv and are actively involved in our local church, where I also serve as a deacon.

I am deeply grateful to God for his protection and for the great privilege of serving students and sharing the hope of Christ, especially during this time of war, uncertainty, pain, and challenges to faith. I thank God for his faithfulness throughout all these years, and I pray that I may continue to faithfully fulfill the calling he has given me.”

Please pray for us:

Pray with us

...for a just and lasting peace in Ukraine;
 ...for our government leaders and the military, especially the husbands of our female staff members, our graduates currently serving and our director Misha and his family.
 ...for wisdom and God’s grace in leading the ministry; for the spiritual and emotional well-being of our staff and students.
 ...for the ministries of evangelism and discipleship among university students. Pray that students would continue to come to know Christ, be transformed by him, and influence those around them for His glory.

Farewell to Kirsi and Gunn Elin

Kirsi, left with Gunn Elin, right



Pray with us

...give thanks for these two faithful leaders
 ...pray for this new chapter for Kirsi, in Estonia, and for Gunn Elin as she begins pastoral ministry in her native Norway.

Originally from Finland, Kirsi Vimpari has spent many years working in a church in Estonia for a Finnish mission organisation and we were privileged to have her seconded to us to lead EEUU at a time of crisis over six years ago. In spite of many challenges she has helped the movement reset and install a new board who have now overseen the transition to a new leader, Helina, whom we’ll meet in the next issue!

Gunn Elin Våge has served faithfully as sole pioneer in Luxembourg for 10 years. Each year has presented a different group of students - many internationals - at the university in Esch. Her positivity and resilience have brightened every gathering she has been to. Hardly a church or mission leader in the country does not know her. She spread the vision for reaching out to students and also to the transient working population in the capital city. We are praying for someone to come to fill the gap she leaves.

Finding God in Belfast

This February saw students encountering God for the first time at a city-wide mission in Belfast, run by CUI (Christian Unions Ireland). The speaker was Kenny Robertson from UCCF (GB) and the FEUER (Fellowship of Evangelists for the Universities of Europe).

- ▶ **J, a Chinese postgraduate student**, had never heard of Jesus before. She asked many thoughtful questions, especially: "No matter what I've done, can God forgive me?"
- ▶ **Two students** came one evening after seeing the publicity on Instagram and contacting a student they barely knew to ask if they could come along.
- ▶ **M, a Polish student from a Catholic background**, came to most of the events. He was deeply affected by one talk and broke down in tears afterwards with another student, saying he had been looking for purpose throughout his university years but felt he had wasted time and now wants to find God.
- ▶ **Y, from a nominal Muslim background**, came to the carol service in December and returned to two events during the week – the first three Christian activities he had ever attended.
- ▶ **E, a friend of a CU member**, was very keen to learn about faith. She cried when given a Bible and said she wants to believe but does not know how.



"It was a privilege to be in Belfast to help the Christian Unions at its three universities run their joint events week. Each hosted lunchtime events and first-contact activities on campus, meals for international students, and joint evening events where I spoke from Mark's gospel."

"The core mission team were prayerful, organised, and enthusiastic. They asked me to give three of the five evening talks in an interactive style – not previously tried in Belfast – and reported how much easier it made it to discuss the gospel with their guests."

"The ongoing challenge for Belfast CUs is helping more Christian students build meaningful friendships with non-Christians and invite them along. Attendance was lower than hoped, with relatively few non-Christians present, though 'low attendance' still meant around 200 students – and there were many encouraging individual stories."

Kenny Robertson, shown here (bottom row, right) with the team from CUI

Pray with us

... give thanks for those who have met God for the first time and pray for protection and encouragement as they continue their walk with him
 ...for Polish student "M" to find someone to read the Bible with
 ...for more opportunities for Christian students to make friends and build bridges outside of the CU.

From ballet to book clubs in the Balkans

How the student movement in Serbia is creatively growing God's kingdom in the campus and beyond

"What started small has grown to where we now have staff serving in five of the country's biggest university cities," explains Steve Brown, who, alongside his Serbian wife Tanja, has been serving in Serbia for 20 years, more than eight with EUS.

Today, the movement has 10 staff members, who disciple, mentor and train student interns and leaders. "They gain real-world ministry experience, which we pray and believe God will use for his kingdom for the rest of their lives," says Steve. "We use every opportunity to disciple students and train them to be disciples who make disciples of Jesus Christ!" through small groups, Bible studies, mission weeks, camps and conferences.

Serbia is a multicultural country with growing numbers of international students. EUS has international student ministries in several cities and holds an English-language church service in one.

Thinking "outside the box"

"We constantly strive to follow the Holy Spirit's leading in how to evangelize and disciple all students – and many others – as the Lord allows," Steve explains.

This vision has inspired a range of creative ministries. EUS translates and publishes works by Christian authors and partners on large-scale events with Ballet Magnificat and evangelist Nick Vujicic, a second-generation Serbian born in Australia, who uses his severe physical disabilities as a platform for sharing the gospel.

Outreach varies by city. In one, EUS connects with the community through English-language teaching and art workshops; in another, through a book club.

"In yet another, sports and music are tools the Lord is using," reports Steve. "Other outreach tools include trauma healing groups and classes, the Alpha Course, and of course street evangelism. We are almost constantly planning new events, praying that God will open the doors for reaching new students in new ways for the growth of the kingdom of God."

Partners with others - and with God

EUS is also building partnerships with visiting lecturers from other countries - medical staff, as well as scientists, social workers and historians "for the purpose of reaching out in Jesus' name". And it helps organise an annual anti-human trafficking conference.

"Serbia, and the surrounding countries, are a huge mission field!" Steve observes, adding "While we are constantly striving to reach and disciple more people, we know all success and growth is the work of the Holy Spirit!"



Steve with students and staff from EUS and a team from InterVarsity, USA, who partnered with them for 21 days of concentrated outreach in his city

Pray with us

...give thanks for all that God is doing through EUS to grow his kingdom in Serbia
 ...for continuing staff, student and financial resources to support this ministry
 ...for the existing staff – that their energy might meet their vision, and for protection for them and their loved ones as they engage in this strategic work.

"Being part of the IFES Europe family is very encouraging to the team. It means we're part of a global family full of brothers and sisters seeking God's kingdom, praying for and supporting one another. We know we are not alone."

Steve Brown, EUS

IFES InterAction cross-cultural ministry: shaping God-dependent young leaders

After a year serving abroad on the IFES InterAction program, partnering with national movements to reach students through discipleship and evangelism, three young volunteers reflected on the lessons that have matured them in their ministries.

Learning to rely on God

Like many committed young leaders, Anatolii, a graduate from Ukraine serving with VBH in Slovakia, was striving to “push past [his] limits” to produce results academically and in ministry. It almost led to burnout. For him, the greatest lesson from the year was moving from self-reliance to total surrender. “The Bible reminds us you should not always rely on yourself...” he reflected. “I [realised] it is important to let God manage the groups... to have faith that God will bring the people he wants to bring... and will help groups grow in the way he wants.”

Embracing boundaries

Czech graduate Naty also moved to Slovakia, where she discovered “everything that could have been complicated was complicated.” Tackling problematic housing and establishing life routines stretched her to her limits, but also taught her dependence on God. She learned to see rest and taking care of her health as an act of stewardship. “God’s plan is bigger than our imperfections,” she shared. “He’s going to be very glad that I [sleep 8 hours], because he loves me and wants the best for me.”

Pray with us

... for Anatolii, Naty and Bethan, continuing with the program for a second year
 ... for those stepping into their first year as volunteers in the autumn: Dorka from Hungary, Maureen from the Netherlands, Annie from Ireland, Katie, Hady and Tiana from the UK and Jimmy from Spain/Ecuador.
 ... for the movements welcoming them in Italy, Ireland, the Netherlands, Austria, Slovenia and Poland.

Redefining success

Bethan, from England, described how cultural surprises (such as learning the hard way that French society completely shuts down on public holidays) did not stop God providing. As she adapted to the slow, messy, relational work of discipling Christian students who were struggling with their faith, her idea of success shifted. “It’s not about the number of people, or the frequency of doing events... It’s more about being faithful where you are...”

Down-to-earth leadership support

InterAction provides volunteers with training and support for their year in cross-cultural student ministry. Host national movements agree to partner with the ministry and the sending movement to care for and train volunteers. InterAction conferences emphasise the call to serve with humility and grace: trusting in God’s sovereignty and learning to grow in the biblical identity of alien and stranger (Hebrews 11:9) as they engage in the challenge of living cross-culturally. Regular online “PitStops” (on topics like biblical rest and recovery, conflict, and managing stress) provide spaces of encouragement and learning.

The volunteers also benefit from being part of a wider network of IFES staff living cross-culturally, working in student ministry. The recent annual network debriefing conference provided a chance for members to meet, rest, reflect and be refreshed by God’s word and each other as, drawing on scripture, they focused on the highs and lows that accompany mountain-top encounters with the Lord.



Members of the InterAction network at the debriefing conference in Germany in June, with Dawn Clark, ministry coordinator, bottom right.



Partner with us to launch young people on a lifetime of service

InterAction provides opportunities for young European leaders to spread their wings, be spiritually stretched, and grow in resilience and God-dependence. Often it’s the springboard to full-time ministry in a number of contexts. For those struggling to raise enough funds to support themselves for a year, we try to provide scholarships.

IFES supporters:

Would you like to help young volunteers who are struggling to fund their placement? Please consider contributing to the [InterAction Scholarship Fund](#).

National movement staff:

Do you know a student or young staff member suitable for the program? Please contact interaction@ifeseurope.org

Equipping movements to prepare for mission

Around 200 university mission weeks now take place annually in Europe. Just as important as what happens during the events, is what happens afterwards, as two national movement workers from IFES Netherlands have discovered, thanks to FEUER*.

Henrike and Yvonne are both involved in mission weeks at IFES Netherlands. Henrike (on the right in the photo) is responsible for evangelism in the Dutch movement, and Yvonne (shown on the left) is a local staff worker and occasional mission week speaker. At the annual gathering in October 2025 for FEUER they signed up for workshops on planning mission weeks.

“Those sessions were interesting and practical. They emphasised how important it is to first organise the follow-up properly and then build the week from there.” Henrike posted afterwards on social media. “And we see throughout Europe that students are increasingly open to conversations about God. How special that we can create a whole week to talk to them about just that.”

To make it easier for teams to organise mission weeks, last year FEUER launched a valuable new [events week planning guide](#), with free downloadable resources.

*FEUER is the Fellowship of Evangelists in the Universities of Europe, a network to train, equip and encourage evangelists to proclaim the gospel to today’s students.



Pray with us

... for FEUER Director Michael Ots and the team preparing this year’s conference in October.
...give thanks for the growth in university missions and for IFES Europe’s Emerging Evangelists Network, nurturing and training new evangelists for this ministry.

Inspiring international students to impact the world at Global Impact in Hungary

Remi Tobler, Training Facilitator for our International Student Ministry (ISM), reports on a conference packed with valuable and inspiring content for 85 delegates from 35 countries.

Global Impact focused on envisioning, equipping, and inspiring participants for International Student Ministry through Bible teaching, seminars, and intercultural fellowship. Annette Arulrajah, IFES Associate General Secretary, led studies on the book of Daniel. Her teaching deeply impacted participants, encouraging them to live courageously and wholeheartedly for God. One attendee reflected on becoming a “radical pencil” in God’s hands - willing to be shaped, corrected, and used to leave a lasting mark for his kingdom.

Seminars addressed practical and spiritual themes such as discovering God’s heart for the nations, communicating

Christ across cultures, mental health, thriving in long-term ministry, and reaching Gen Z and Chinese international students. Participants especially valued learning how to communicate authentically with younger generations and how to prepare international students to return home equipped for ministry.

Many attendees described gaining a renewed vision for evangelism among students who are searching for meaning and purpose. Others were inspired by creative examples of seeker-friendly outreach events happening across Europe.

Staff and students had travelled to Hungary from across Europe and far beyond. One international student from Latin America, now studying in Germany, was deeply impacted by the conference. Sensing a calling to full-time ministry, she is now considering applying for IFES InterAction program (see p.5).



Sisters Rachel and Leah, students with SMD, Germany, at Global Impact.

Pray with us

...that Christian students will be moved to show Jesus’ love for the two million international students at universities in Europe
... for new Christian students going home to difficult contexts.