



the global voice of
the legal profession®

Guide to Bar Issues Commission Membership



The global voice of the legal profession

The **International Bar Association** (IBA), established in 1947, is the world's leading organisation of international legal practitioners, bar associations, law firms and law societies.

The IBA influences the development of international law reform and shapes the future of the legal profession throughout the world. It has a membership of more than 80,000 individual lawyers, and nearly 190 bar associations and law societies spanning 170 countries.

Inspired by the vision of the United Nations, the IBA was founded in the same spirit, just before the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was proclaimed in 1948.

The principal aims and objectives of the IBA are:

- to promote an exchange of information and views among its members as to laws, practices and professional responsibilities around the globe;
- to support the independence of the judiciary and the right of lawyers to practise their profession without interference;
- to support human rights for lawyers worldwide through the IBA's Human Rights Institute;
- to provide members with world-class professional development to enable them and their organisations to deliver outstanding legal services;
- to deliver top-level international networking opportunities; and
- to be committed to the development of international law reform.

The IBA covers all practice areas and professional interests, providing members with access to leading experts and up-to-date information.

Through its various committees, fora and task forces, the IBA facilitates the exchange of information and views among its members as to laws, practices and professional responsibilities relating to the practice of law around the globe.

By joining the IBA you become part of the leading global network of lawyers. Partners from nearly every major law firm in every major city worldwide are members. They join the IBA for its combination of education, information and networking.

Bar Issues Commission

The Bar Issues Commission (BIC) is the Division within the IBA dedicated to our Member Organisations and issues of concern to them and their members within the IBA dedicated to our Member Organisations. Its leadership provides programmes, projects and networking opportunities relating to the interests of bar associations and law societies, providing a platform for Member Organisations to discuss and work together on subjects of common interest.

The IBA's BIC supports the activities and interests of nearly 190 IBA Member Organisations by providing a forum for discussion on issues of common interest.

The bars and law societies were the founding members of the IBA in 1947, creating a worldwide organisation of the legal profession to work together in supporting the principles of the United Nations and upholding the rule of law worldwide to contribute to world peace and the protection of human rights.

As a Member Organisation of the IBA, your bar or law society will have access to the combined knowledge of nearly 190 bars and law societies worldwide. You will join the IBA Council as a member and have automatic membership of the BIC.

This membership allows you to:

- nominate up to 3 bar representatives to become IBA members, who can then attend IBA Conferences and webinars at discounted member rates;
- share information with, and learn from, other bars and law societies around the world;
- discuss and vote on resolutions that can affect and influence the legal profession worldwide;
- receive support from the IBA should your bar association or law society be under undue pressure by the authorities or experience difficulties; and
- enhance the education of lawyers belonging to your bar association or law society by using a variety of educational facilities.

BIC Committees

BIC Policy Committee

The BIC Policy Committee addresses issues of concern to bar associations and law societies, as well as the legal profession in general, by creating and recommending policies and guidelines for adoption by the IBA Council, and by ensuring that proposed IBA policies affecting member organisations are reviewed to ensure that such policies have the support of member organisations before being submitted to the IBA Council. The Policy Committee comprises 20 representatives from a cross-section of jurisdictions and legal frameworks worldwide. The many documents approved by the IBA Council, such as the International Principles on Social Media Conduct for the Legal Profession and Updated IBA Guidance Note on Business and Human Rights, are now international benchmarking documents used by bar associations and law societies across the globe.

In 2022 the BIC Policy Committee committed a great deal of its thought, time and expertise to the important and controversial current debate in legal ethics about 'lawyers as gatekeepers'. Bars and law societies are custodians of the profession's value system. In 2023 the BIC Policy Committee committed a great deal of its thought, time and expertise to the important and controversial current debate in legal ethics about 'lawyers as gatekeepers'. Bars and law societies are custodians of the profession's value system. The Policy Committee will ensure that, in 2025 and beyond, the views of legal professional bodies will continue to be heard at the centre of this debate.

BIC International Trade in Legal Services Committee

The BIC International Trade in Legal Services (BIC ITILS) Committee focuses on cross-border legal practice and the rules governing international trade in legal services as set out by the General Agreement on Trade in Legal Services (GATS), bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements (FTAs) and national legislations. The Committee monitors the work of the World Trade Organization and FTAs globally and provides support, information and guidance to bar associations and law societies to equip them and their members to face the challenges and make the most of opportunities arising from cross-border legal practice. The committee also runs the Globalisation conference series which bars and law societies can express an interest in hosting.



IBA Annual Conference, Toronto 2025, BIC Showcase: time to let go – defining legal services and the role of lawyers

BIC Regulation Committee

The BIC Regulation Committee monitors, researches and exchanges information regarding developments in lawyer regulation around the world. Over the past 2 years the committee was also involved with the regulatory issues surrounding Lawyer Regulation and Climate Change and also the issue affecting widespread parts of the world with no access to legal representation so called ‘legal deserts’. The Committee has produced an online global directory of regulators of lawyers as a resource for practising lawyers and bar associations:

https://www.ibanet.org/IBA_Regulation_Directory_Home.

Bar Executives Committee

The BIC Bar Executives Committee (BEX) is a forum for Senior Staff in Bar Associations and Law Societies. The BEX organizes meetings twice a year during the IBA Annual Meeting and Mid-Year meeting. The meetings take place in the premises of the Bar Association or Law Society located in the city where the IBA meeting is organized. The topics of the BEX meetings are current issues of interest to Senior Staff working full time in the Bar Association or Law Society, ranging from ‘Threat against lawyers’ to ‘International trends for change in the regulation of the legal profession’.

BIC Working Groups

From time to time the BIC establishes working groups that are composed of members from across various IBA divisions and committees. The four current working groups are:

- Crimes Against Humanity – tasked with reevaluating the current Draft Convention on Crimes Against Humanity released from the Sixth Committee of the United Nations for consideration and negotiation.

- Climate Change – coordinating the cross-IBA work in this area
- Anti-Corruption – coordinating the cross-IBA work in this area
- Artificial Intelligence – continuing the comparative analysis work of guidances, ethics rules and best practices of bars in the use by lawyers of AI.

BIC Anti-Corruption Working Group

This Working Group, convened under the umbrella of the BIC, will bring together a select group of lawyers from across the IBA to address the evolving and interconnected responsibilities of the legal profession in promoting integrity, transparency, and ethical practice worldwide, with a particular focus on the role of bar associations. While called the Anti-Corruption Working Group, the scope encompasses lawyers’ ethical roles, compliance issues, beneficial ownership, money laundering, terrorist financing and other such related concerns under the overall rubric of ‘Anti-Corruption issues’. In particular, the work of the group will focus on:

- The role of bar associations in generating, upholding and supporting relevant rules of professional conduct, including setting standards, providing guidance, and fostering a culture of compliance.
- The role of the lawyer as a trusted adviser, counsellor, officer of the court, and guardian of the rule of law.
- Anti-Corruption – including raising awareness, promoting best practice, and strengthening lawyers’ contribution to combating bribery, fraud, and related misconduct.
- Anti-money laundering (AML) understanding and best practice, including the lawyer’s role in risk assessment, client due diligence, suspicious activity reporting (as applicable), and compliance with relevant domestic and international standards.
- Beneficial ownership transparency, including the lawyer’s role in ensuring accurate disclosure and preventing misuse of corporate structures.
- Terrorist financing, including related issues of human rights.
- Legal ethics in a broad sense, covering supervision, conflicts of interest, confidentiality, independence, and professional integrity.



BIC Artificial Intelligence Working Group:

The BIC Artificial Intelligence Working Group has been established to assist member bar organisations and attorney regulatory bodies worldwide in navigating the rapidly evolving use of artificial intelligence (AI) in legal practice. In line with the BIC's mission and building on the resource document prepared for the IBA report *The Future Is Now: Artificial Intelligence and the Legal Profession*, the AI Working Group is reviewing the current landscape. It is in the process of developing a proposed set of best practice principles that align with global rules of professional conduct while addressing the increasing integration of AI by lawyers and legal professionals. The proposed best practice principles are intended to help member bar organisations and attorney regulatory bodies ensure that AI is used in ways that remain consistent with professional codes of conduct. As AI introduces both significant opportunities and complex challenges for the legal profession, the AI Working Group's guidance will drive awareness of the standards needed to support responsible and ethical AI adoption across legal practice.

BIC Climate Change Working Group

The Climate Change Working Group (CCWG), convened by Dominique Hogan-Doran SC and Fiona McLeod KC, comprises a steering group of individuals from across the world who have lead work on climate change at their bar association or law society. Its mandate is to design and implement tools and activities that build capacity of bar associations and law societies to support competence of their lawyers in a manner that is aligned with international law and the goals of the UNFCCC Paris Agreement.

Planned CCWG activities will include the following core workstreams:

- drawing inspiration from the IBA's Climate Registry (an online registry where bar associations and law societies share steps they are taking to address climate change), the CCWG will prepare a toolkit to help bar associations and law societies which are new to climate change issues, with guidance on matters such as how to convene a climate committee, or prepare a public declaration.
- the CCWG will work with academic experts to design a global model curriculum for continuing legal education for lawyers on climate change, covering matters such as the fundamentals of climate science, intersections between climate change and human rights, ethical issues and strategic litigation.
- the CCWG will provide a platform for showcasing and encouraging innovative initiatives of regional and local bar associations and law societies in this space.

BIC Projects

The BIC continues its efforts to engage with and connect the member organisations through its committees and various projects. Dr George Artley, Legal Manager, Legal Projects, has assisted with a number of projects, as well as helped to plan and coordinate the BIC's sessions at the 2025 Milan Bar Leaders Conference and the 2025 IBA Annual Conference in Toronto.

BIC over the years

At the end of 2017, responsibility for capacity building for developing bars shifted from the IBAHRI to the BIC. Capacity building includes, among other things, governance and leadership structure, strategic planning, financial responsibility, membership services, regulations, professional ethics, disciplinary procedures, risks and compliance, and access to legal aid.

Over the course of 2021 and 2022, the BIC has been approached by a number of its members for assistance in amending and updating their governance structure and regulatory frameworks. Work is ongoing in these areas, with plans to assist with benchmarking for non-member developing bars wishing to join the IBA.

The BIC has also created a regional forum model within its officer group, with responsibility for outreach and engagement with members being allocated to specific officers from different parts of the world. This model has proven a great success, with online sessions designed to facilitate networking and discussions on issues affecting that particular region (such as attacks on the rule of law) taking place regularly among African, Asian and Latin American bar leaders. It is hoped that the frequency and scope of these sessions will only grow in the future.

BIC News

The BIC issues timely newsletters and from time to time a broader publication relating to the news and activities of the BIC.

Assistance on Membership Qualifications

In cooperation with the IBA's Credentials Committee, the BIC continues to assist member bars to maintain their respective IBA memberships and advise, if necessary, bars that want to become IBA members.

Establishing a new IBA Professional Wellbeing Commission

In 2019, the BIC, via Deborah Enix-Ross (then BIC Vice-Chair), Steven Richman (then BIC Senior Officer) and Legal Manager, Legal Projects, George Artley (BIC Project Lawyer), were tasked with leading a Presidential Taskforce into mental wellbeing within the global legal profession.

The initial stages of the project involved the launch of two major global surveys, one for individual lawyers and the other for legal institutions such as law firms and bars, at the end of 2020. In 2021, the taskforce's report, *Mental Wellbeing in the Legal Profession: A Global Study*, was launched to great international acclaim and interest.

The BIC has subsequently been instrumental in campaigning for the creation of a special professional wellbeing commission as a permanent body within the IBA. This approach succeeded when the creation of the commission was approved by IBA Management Board in Miami in October 2022. The BIC will be participating as an institutional member in the Commission and driving its success in the future.

BIC Conferences

The BIC holds an annual Bar Leaders' Conference, with approximately 130 senior bar representatives from over 80 countries in attendance. There are also sessions and discussions arranged for bars at the IBA Annual Conference and regional conferences on key topics such as professional ethics and changes to the regulation of legal services.

The BIC also holds select bar leader forums that take advantage of existing regional forums and committee sessions, to meet with local and regional bar leaders. In 2025, for example, such conferences were held in Lima, Peru and Johannesburg, South Africa, in conjunction with the regional forums in those areas.

International seminar series on 'globalisation, ethics, and professionalism'

The BIC has previously organised international legal ethics seminars in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, while its International Trade in Legal Services Committee has held globalisation seminars in Africa and Latin America. The BIC subsequently decided to pilot a combination of these seminar series in Jakarta, Indonesia, which took place virtually in 2021.

A special one-off seminar, tailored to the needs of Latin American Lawyers, was held during the Miami Annual Conference in October-November 2022. The BIC continues to develop papers of interest, such as guidance for bars relating to



BIC Bar Leaders' Forum

issues concerning social media and professional indemnity insurance, and through what was known as the Programme for Excellence, continues its tradition of programmes that promote the documents around the world.

Who represents the Member Organisations at the IBA?

Member Organisations are part of the Bar Issues Commission (BIC). Each organisation that has paid its annual subscription to the IBA can appoint up to three representatives to the BIC free of charge. These representatives are treated as IBA members and receive member benefits:

President / Chairperson

The President / Chairperson of your organisation is entitled to attend all IBA Council meetings and BIC events. We will also want to invite the President / Chairperson to the Annual Bar Leaders' Conference and any other events that are relevant to your organisation.

IBA Council Member

The second BIC representative should be an officer or senior executive who can regularly attend IBA Council meetings. This representative is sent the IBA Council agenda via email in addition to the President/Chairperson.

Bar Executive Officer

A senior executive or officer within the Member Organisation will be the key liaison person, handling the majority of IBA and BIC correspondence (for example, receiving and arranging payment of fees; receipt and distribution of BIC updates, information on conferences, policy committee projects et cetera). This contact will also be invited to conferences and bar executive meetings.

The IBA membership year runs from January to December. Each organisation must pay their invoice and confirm its representatives for the coming year.

BIC Officers

The ten members of the BIC itself are selected through an application and nomination process with notices going out with invitations to apply.

The IBA Council

The IBA Council is the governing body of the IBA. It elects the IBA President, Vice-President, Secretary-General and the BIC officers; it proposes debates and passes resolutions; and receives reports from all IBA Divisions. When the Council meets, it aims to provide an international platform to give a fair hearing to all points of view from its members. Through the IBA, all Member Organisations can find a voice on this international stage.

The Council meets twice each year: once during the IBA Mid-Year Meetings, held in May, and again during the IBA Annual Conference, held in September/October of each year.



Each organisation is allocated votes according to the number of members it represents in its own organisation, with one vote being allocated per 1000 members represented by the bar or law society up to a maximum of ten votes. Most votes in the meeting are taken using a voting card so all bars have equal representation. On the few issues for which a counted vote is required, the President or Council member will be given the relevant number of votes for their bar association.

How to become an IBA Member Organisation

The IBA welcomes applications from national, regional and city bar associations and law societies around the world.

Bars may be voluntary or regulatory but must be able to demonstrate that they are an independent body formed for the administration and enhancement of the legal profession in their jurisdiction. All bars must submit a copy of their constitution with their application which will be reviewed by the IBA Credentials Committee, who will then give an opinion to the IBA Council as to the eligibility of the bar for membership.

Applying for Membership



Online

Organisations interested in applying for membership of the IBA can learn more information on the IBA website at:

www.ibanet.org/Membership/BIC-membership.aspx



Email

For further information on how to apply, please contact:

memberorg@int-bar.org



Call

To discuss organisational membership and ask any questions, please contact:

+44 (0)20 7842 0090.

Fees

Bar Association fees are based on the number of individual members that they represent on a scale going up to 20,000+ members.

Full Member Organisation 2026

Band	Number of Members in Organisation	Full rate (£)	40% discounted rate
A	1-299	90	55
B	300-999	325	195
C	1000-4999	655	390
D	5000-9999	1315	785
E	10000-19999	1975	1185
F	20000+	3295	1975

Sustaining Member Organisation 2026

Band	Sustaining Member Organisation	Full rate (£)	40% discounted rate
A	1-499	75	45
B	500-1999	125	75
C	2000-2999	195	115
D	3000-4999	260	155
E	5000+	390	230



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