

# Annual Report



**2023-24**



75 YEARS  
**ICYE**  
1949-2024



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# Preface

As we reflect on the programme year 2023-2024, we stand at the threshold of a significant milestone—75 years of ICYE's commitment to fostering peace, intercultural dialogue, and global solidarity through youth exchange. This year has been one of deep reflection and forward momentum, filled with a renewed sense of purpose as we continue to build on the foundation laid by exchangees, coworkers, volunteers, host communities, host families, mentors, trainers, alumni, and other ICYE supporters who came before us. We are grateful to our predecessors around the world!

Programmatically, ICYE has focused in 2023-24 on continuing to strengthen the quality of our programme and the collaboration among member organisations. A key highlight of this year was the successful XXXIII General Assembly held in Accra/ Ghana and the election of the new Board of Managers with representation from all four regions. This gathering was a powerful reminder of our collective resilience as a global Federation and an opportunity for us to reflect on peace as a founding objective of ICYE. In a world still marked by conflict and suffering our commitment to fostering understanding, solidarity, and peace through youth exchange feels more urgent than ever.

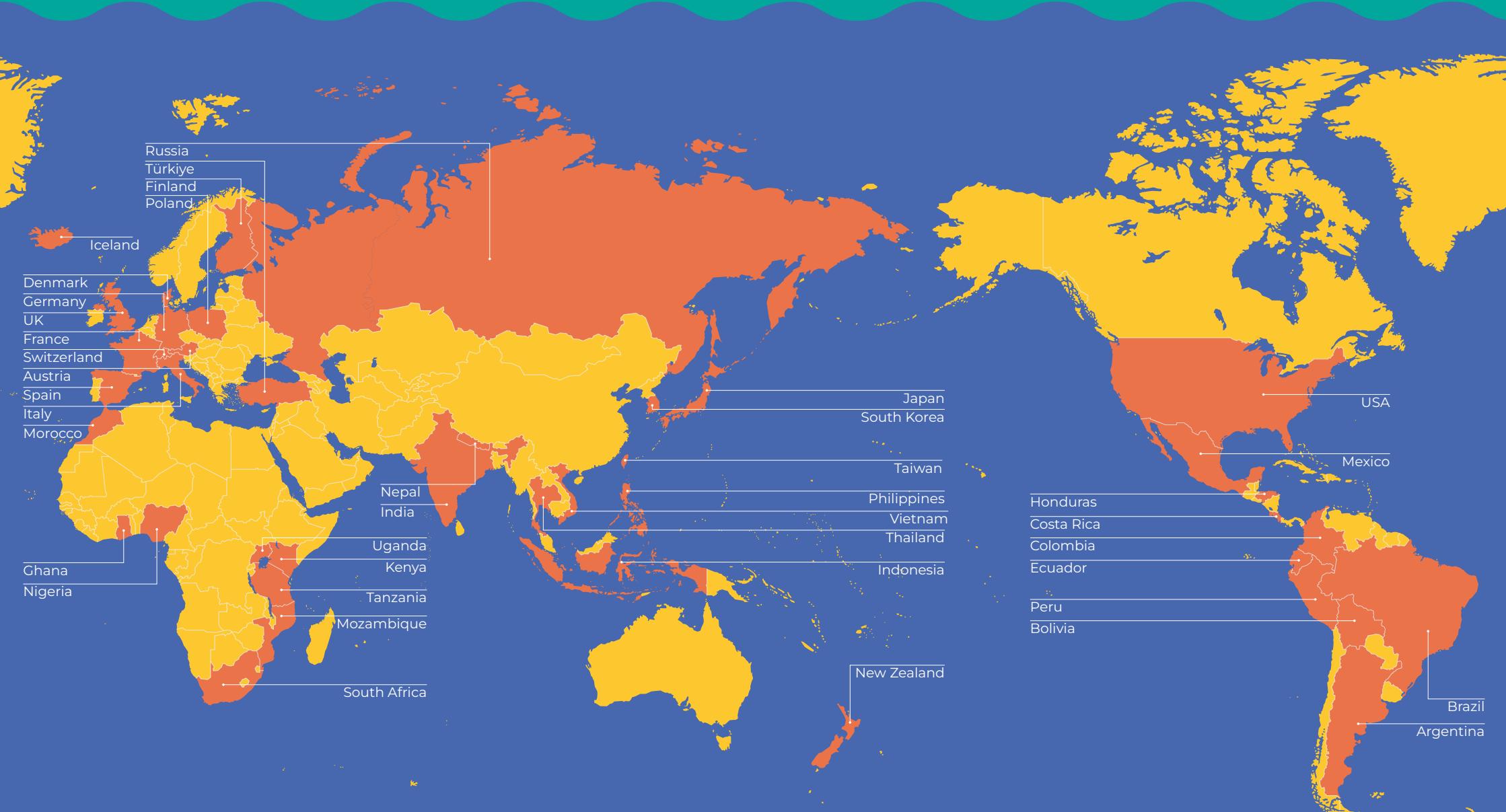
As we celebrate #75yearsICYE, we are also looking ahead. The future of ICYE remains central, with the Future of the Federation now as a standing committee, leading discussions on how we

can strengthen cooperation among our members, adapt to an increasingly digital world, and ensure the sustainability of our Federation for the next generation of global youth. The development of our 5-year strategic plan incorporates the outcomes of many of these discussions and charts a collective, sustainable path forward as we look toward the next decade.

The establishment of the Youth Engagement Committee (YEC) marks a pivotal moment in our evolution, ensuring that youth leadership and participation are at the forefront of shaping the future of ICYE. The YEC's Action Plan for Youth Engagement builds on ICYE's 75 years of fostering social change through youth exchange, empowering the next generation to lead us into the future.



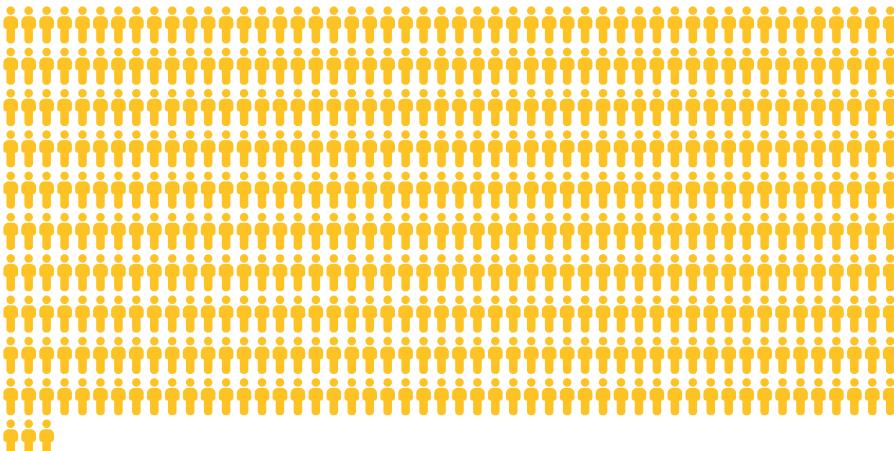
# ICYE in 2023-24



## Our volunteer numbers in 2023-24

In 2023-24, the ICYE Federation consisted of 32 full members and 9 associate members. Unfortunately, at the end of this Financial Year, our member in Uganda was deregistered at the national level. Former board members have since started to set up a new organisation and we are hoping to welcome them again as a member in 2024/25, pending they can again fulfil key prerequisites for membership.

**503** ICYE international volunteers



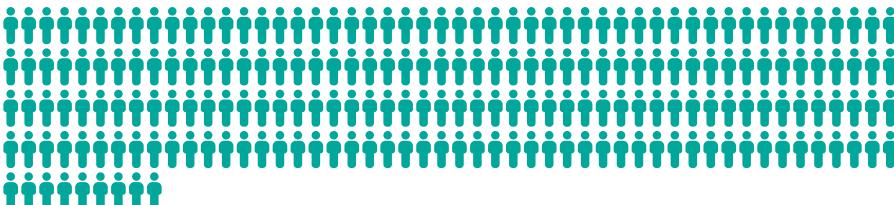
**05** South-South exchanges



**15** virtual volunteers

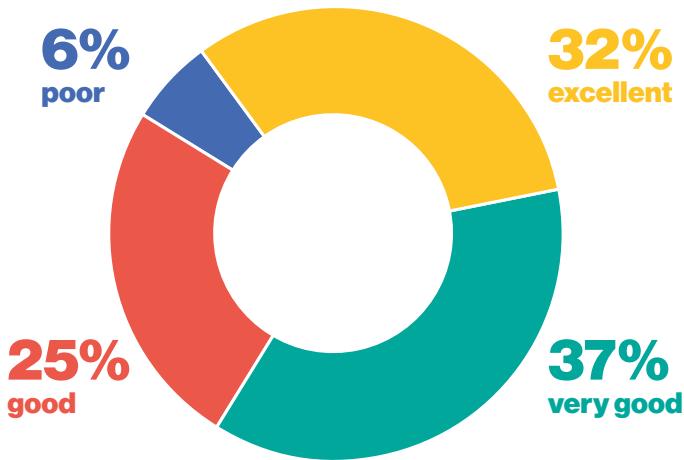


**209** National volunteers



In the programme year 2023-24 ICYE members offered volunteering opportunities to 503 young people (compared to 558 the year before). 15 volunteers engaged in virtual volunteering and 5 volunteers participated in a South – South exchange. ICYE members also engaged with young people with fewer opportunities: 6 volunteers identified as having a disability, 28 faced economic or social obstacles and 33 came from a minority group. Volunteers were also exchanged outside of the ICYE programme: 501 through the European Solidarity Corps programme, 130 through other government funded programmes and 214 with other organisations in countries where ICYE doesn't have a member or with organisations from other networks like Alliance or NAVO, often for short term workcamps which are not considered a part of the programme.

#### Volunteer feedback from survey 2023-24 on overall satisfaction with their volunteer placement



In 2023-24, the ICYE Federation had 346 active host projects – of which 45% were in the educational field, which includes schools and kindergartens, 14% targeted health issues and 13% worked with excluded groups, the remaining projects were more or less equally distributed among the fields of environment, human rights, sports and arts, office work and others.

18 young people were denied a visa and were therefore unable to take up their volunteering assignment. Others did not manage to get an appointment with the consulate in time and some opted out because the barriers or costs to obtain a visa were too high (like travelling to another country to apply for their visa). For one volunteer the consulate considered the volunteer's work to be too similar to a paid job. Others were denied a visa as it was presumed that the young people would not return to their own country. Additionally, the visa requirements have changed in several of the countries with higher fees for some and higher required amounts of funds in the bank account to show financial liquidity for others. At the same time, digitalisation is advancing in various countries with visas being issued electronically or receiving a QR code when entering the country. While digitalisation simplifies many processes, online visa applications have their own kind of challenges – this includes e.g. technical difficulties, like reliable internet access, language barriers which can lead to misunderstanding of information required, lack of flexibility and the human factor, or not accepting certain payment methods available in a country.



*For me, I have learnt a lot about letting myself enjoy experiences, people and new challenges rather than letting insecurity and fear get in the way. Having to adapt and ask for help, be more proactive, overcome social hangups and put myself and my skills on display every day, definitely affected my self-esteem and I struggled so much with it. However, because of being put in those positions so many times and with great support, I feel like I have learnt and overcome so much that I never would have before.*

Volunteer evaluation 2023-24

## Our new Board of Managers

In the General Assembly in November 2023, a new Board of Managers (BoM) was elected for the next two years:

- Hester Kuijk Breitenmoser, director of ICYE Switzerland, was elected as the new chairperson. She had been a member of the ICYE BoM already from 2022-2023.
- Adéolú Onamade, director of ICYE Nigeria is the ICYE's new treasurer. He had been a member of the ICYE BoM already from 1997-2001.
- Mariela Ortiz Suarez, Volunteer Programme Manager of ICYE Argentina/ SES, was confirmed as a member. She has been in the BoM since 2022.
- Rhenelyn Queen Dadulo, director of ICYE Philippines/GIED, was elected as the second member.





## Challenges our members faced in 2023-24

Many member organisations reported that they are still struggling financially and were unable to reach their planned long-term volunteer numbers in 2023-24. This struggle is evident in the 10% decrease in volunteer numbers compared to the previous programme year - 2022-23, when after the pandemic numbers were picking up again more strongly. Unfortunately, this trend has not kept up. Several external factors contributed to the disruption of the trend, including barriers to receive visa for European countries or the very high costs related to obtaining visas for some countries. Additionally, the economy was an important factor, with rising prices and lower salaries, making it more difficult for families to afford the costs of the volunteering programme. Exchange rates and difficulties to access stable currencies like the Dollar and Euro made the recruitment very challenging for some members. Staff turnover and the high cost of the incoming programme were challenging for others. Members also reported that it is more difficult to find host families and host projects, seemingly because both families and projects tend to have less resources than before the pandemic. This means that projects hesitate to take on the additional workload of hosting a volunteer.

## Staff situation in ICYE member organisations in 2023-24

**46**

Full time, paid staff



**49**

Part time, paid staff



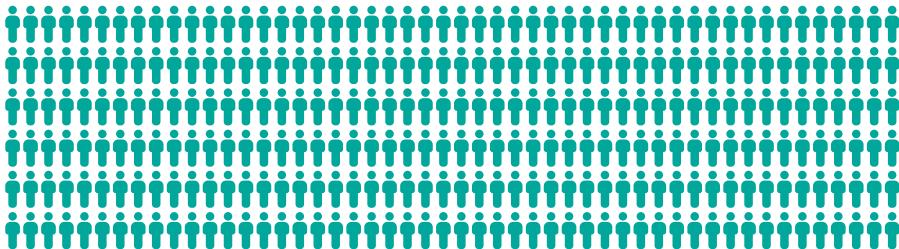
**26**

Interns/ trainees



**288**

Co-workers supporting the office



## Achievements in 2023-24

Many members are proud of the high-quality work they have been offering and the impact the exchange programme had on the volunteers they hosted. Some members have been able to increase their volunteer quota or have been able to host volunteers again for the first time after the pandemic. ICYE Japan e.g. highlighted that they hosted the largest number of volunteers since before the COVID pandemic. Some NCs are also working on new volunteering approaches - ICYE Brazil e.g. obtained the ESC Quality Label for Humanitarian Aid volunteering to start hosting, while ICYE Türkiye reported that they

are currently coordinating or partnering in five projects related to the ESC Humanitarian Aid programme. ICYE Denmark focused on implementing a green strategy and was able to engage Green Ambassadors for their programme.

Some members also highlighted the advocacy work they have engaged in - ICYE Costa Rica e.g. has successfully lobbied for financial support with the Federation of Social Organisations. ICYE Ecuador has been advocating successfully with other NGOs for a new Volunteer Law and is now working closely with the government and other IVS organisations to develop the guidelines accompanying the new policy. ICYE Türkiye launched in collaboration with the Izmir Provincial Directorate of Civil Society Relations a 'youth' category for associations to better support youth-focused organisations.

ICYE Mexico officially started a new regional committee in Queretaro where the local law requires students to volunteer. ICYE Nepal was happy to receive four volunteers in a new Organic Farm Project. ICYE Ghana was the proud host of ICYE's General Assembly in November 2023. ICYE Finland has renewed their equality plan and are taking determined action to make volunteering easier for young disabled people by e.g. cooperating with organisations that work with people with disabilities. Most of the volunteers they receive through the European Solidarity Corps are disadvantaged because of their economic situation or educational background or because of discrimination due to a minority status.

## Grant funded projects

Ten ICYE members (4 from Europe, 4 from Africa, 1 from Asia and 1 from Latin America) took part in 25 EU funded projects in 2023-24. Eight members (3 each in Europe and Latin America, 2 in Asia Pacific) received funding for a total of 16 projects from other donors. The grant projects addressed topics like the empowerment of young people, sexual violence prevention, decolonisation of IVS, promotion of inclusion and diversity, prevention of extremism and discrimination, environmental issues, waste upcycling, community development and health. ICYE Argentina received funds to do research on international volunteering in the country while other members were able to implement several trainings for young people and youth workers. Funders besides the European Commission included among others Cardiff University, the Danish Youth Council, France Volontaires, the Austrian Ministry for Education and the University of Islam Malang.

## Campaigns

Nine members participated or coordinated campaigns in 2023-24. ICYE Argentina, ICYE Ecuador and ICYE Peru participated in campaigns to prevent sexual violence. ICYE Denmark promoted the Green Ambassadors campaign and ICYE Nepal joined a campaign to distribute school materials for children in remote areas. ICDE India supported medical camps that provided free health checks and medical attention. ICYE Tanzania coordinated the Day of the African Child campaign with Global Peace Tanzania and other youth organisations. The ICYE members in Latin America implemented together a campaign on social media to promote the German Weltwaerts programme.

## Partnerships

In 2023-24, members reached out to other organisations and were able to collaborate with other non-governmental organisations, universities and local authorities. ICYE Austria together with Ljubljana Pride, Lunaria and Cazalla kicked off a new project to mainstream inclusivity in their work. With their partner organisation INEX SDA in Czech Republic, ICYE Austria also started a small-scale partnership to work on the improvement of an app to support the learning measurement of international volunteers as well as a handbook for youth group leaders. ICYE Colombia started new partnerships with three environmental organisations: ANDOKE, YutopiaLab, Mucura. ICYE Peru and ICYE Mexico reported on their collaboration with the UNIR University in Rioja, Spain which supported their volunteers to learn Spanish. ICYE Ecuador shared about their new collaboration with Universidad Internacional de Ecuador, with WASMU – an indigenous project, a medical centre, a humanitarian aid consortium and the local government of Canchagua. ICDE India has been collaborating with the Sri Devaraj Urs Medical College, the J L Jalappa Speciality Hospital and with the women's project Simcodes. ICYE Thailand has been working together with Hatyai Municipality, with several schools and a learning centre, as well as Kok Muang Credit Union Cooperative. ICYE Türkiye partnered with POVOD through THE:PLACE programme to promote social inclusion and intercultural dialogue. They also organized a job shadowing event by securing a grant from the Anna Lindh Foundation for the first time and conducted the Türkiye - Germany Youth Bridge project. ICYE Vietnam is collaborating with a new partner Jump Korea.



# Voices from our volunteers

## My voluntary experience in Ghana (2023-2024)

By Paula Carolin Buekers

Even if I tell somebody back in Germany about my voluntary year in Ghana, show them my pictures and tell them all the details, they will never be able to imagine what I was able to experience here. One year working as a volunteer in a completely unknown environment is a step that has definitely changed my life and I am so grateful that I had and still have the opportunity to live that.

The moment I took the decision to come here, I knew I would have to leave my comfort zone and face the upcoming cultural clash with open-mindedness and interest in experiencing something new. But I still had no idea what to really expect from Ghana. When I first stepped out of the



airport in Accra, it was the heat that directly overwhelmed me. In the following days and weeks, I realized that the heat was something to get used to rather easily.

Not only did I underestimate the difference between German and Ghanaian food but also the business on the streets and the shouting and bargaining on the markets was confusing for me. I felt like an alien. It took me quite some time before I could say that I feel like I know how most Ghanaian people live, what they like and dislike, what and who they believe in and lastly, how I can integrate myself into this society.

The biggest help for me to get to know new people and learn more about Ghana was working in the project. My volunteer coworker Yulina and I have been working in the American Cooperative School in Effiduase since September 2023. As a team, the two of us are teaching eight classes in French. I am not going to lie: That was quite a challenge in the beginning, and it still is. Our colleagues emphasized we can always ask for help if it was too much for us. But we wanted to give it a try!

I am convinced that looking back to the very start, we have made huge progress within the past nine months. Whereas at first, we were insecure on how the grading system works, how we should remember all the 270 names of our students and what and how we should teach them, I think it is not pretentious to say we have grown to



become reasonably organized and nice teachers now. Every now and then, we are still having a bad lesson in which our class is doing everything but what we want them to, and we don't know how to make them listen. Sometimes that can be very frustrating. But all in all, we have learned how to manage the classes as best as possible, and we put much effort into making our lessons exciting for the students by integrating French games and other fun activities. As volunteers, Yulina and I have a special role to maintain in the school. It seems like the students do not only see us as their teachers, but also as some kind of friends because we also like talking to them outside the classroom. Yet, sometimes that also makes it difficult to gain respect and authority in the classroom.

In our free time, we like visiting some of our colleagues at home. For example, there is a teacher called Naomi who invites us to her house every now and then. Most of the time, we cook Ghanaian food together and she takes us to church or any other program. Moreover, we also enjoy spending time with one of the office staff members in our school, Juliana. She lives together with her four sisters and their families. They have four children in our school, two of whom we teach French. So, every time we come and visit, we are playing with the children around or talking to Juliana and her sisters. We are happy that there are many people like Naomi or Juliana who have been so friendly and welcoming towards us that we are now able to call Effiduase our second home.

In a little bit more than two months, I will travel back to Germany. I am looking forward to my return with a smile in one eye and a tear in the other. While I will be so glad to finally see my loved ones again, I will also be sad about saying goodbye to a memorable year that can never be repeated like this. And that's what makes my voluntary experience and those of all the others special and unique.

# A Brazilian in Switzerland

By Alexandre F. Kirchner

Hello, my name is Alexandre F. Kirchner. I am from Brazil, doing voluntary work in Switzerland for a year. I have been here for five months already, working in a daycare centre in the forest ('Waldkita'). So far, it's been one of the best experiences of my life. I am able to work in an area that is new to me, and the experience of working with children is rewarding. You can see their joy – which reminds me of my own childhood. Being able to speak German and Swiss German is incredible. Moreover, I am able to learn about the culture and real life in Switzerland.

At the daycare centre I work with children between one and three years old. We go with them to the forest and have activities on site. I teach them about social skills, counting numbers, names of fruits and animals. We also eat outside in the forest. Only on rainy days we go inside a house or place protected from the rain. I only talk to the children in German. For more specific questions, I would address the teachers in English, but I prefer to avoid this. I study German and have friends at home who also help me.

During my time in Switzerland, I already had the opportunity to meet new friends, join a football team and engage in cultural experiences. I am taking advantage of my free days to travel and see beautiful and wonderful places. It is very interesting to see the differences between my country and



Switzerland. Of course, I have had difficult moments too, as the language is still a bit difficult, I am far away from my friends at home and it is challenging to adapt to the new routine and the customs that are different from the ones I am used to.

I speak from the heart though when I recommend this experience to everyone, because you learn a lot, you have new life experiences, can appreciate a new culture and overcome challenges as well as live incredible moments, make new friends, create good memories and learn another language. Finally, it is rewarding to know that even though you are from a n o t h e r country and have different customs, you can still feel welcomed and create a new family.



# Launch of ICYE's Youth Engagement Committee

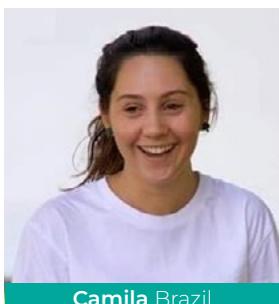
After the approval at the General Assembly in Ghana in 2023, ICYE selected 15 young people from all around the world to create the first Youth Engagement Committee (YEC). They started working together in April 2024 with the goal of empowering young people to engage more actively in the Federation. Young people's voices are vital to shape the future of international volunteering. Bringing their unique perspectives and skill sets, they will support ICYE by addressing the challenges young people face today, involving them on different levels in our network and by giving them the space to voice their needs and participate actively.



**Alyssa** Philippines



**Ayomipo** Nigeria



**Camila** Brazil



**Corina** Philippines



**Heidi** Mozambique



**Lucie** Switzerland



**Marcela** Costa Rica



**Melanie** Mozambique



**Mette** Denmark



**Nicole** Ecuador



**Nour el hoda** Morocco



**Omar** Mexico



**Sophie** Germany



**Stephan** Austria



Other YEC member:  
**Bridget** USA



75 YEARS  
**ICYE**  
1949-2024

## 75 Years ICYE

"The ICYE program, which celebrates its 75th anniversary this year, has a rich history of fostering global understanding and cooperation. Established in the aftermath of World War II, ICYE aimed to heal the wounds of conflict by promoting cultural exchange and volunteerism among youth from the US and Germany, countries that only a few years earlier had been at war. Over the decades, ICYE evolved into a global movement, with volunteers from all corners of the Earth working together to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set forth by the United Nations.

As ICYE celebrates its 75th anniversary, it is heartening to see how the spirit of volunteerism has spread across the globe. Today, volunteers from diverse backgrounds come together to support communities, whether it is through building schools in rural Africa, providing healthcare in South America, or promoting environmental conservation in Asia. Each volunteer, in their own way, contributes to a global mosaic of compassion and action.

As we look to the future, the importance of volunteerism cannot be overstated. In a world facing unprecedented challenges, from climate change to social inequality, the need

for global cooperation and empathy is greater than ever. Programs like ICYE serve as a reminder that we all have a role to play in building a more just and sustainable world." Excerpts from Dr. Ed Gragert, "Building a Just World: The Legacy of Volunteerism". Volunteer from the US to South Korea - 1966-67 and ICYE-US Executive Director 1979-90

In a survey with 209 alumni in 2021 - among volunteers who participated in the ICYE programme as early as 1958 - 99% of the respondents said that their exchange/volunteer year with ICYE has influenced their lives, often in significant ways: *"For the first time I really got involved in social and political issues, and the whole year abroad on my own was a vital step in my personal development."* 89% stated that their experience with ICYE also impacted other people in their life and 88% are still in contact with people they met during their year abroad, like other exchange students, staff, co-volunteers, host families, local friends.

## **Gracias A La Vida**

### **Marjatta Linnanvuo Exchange student from Finland to USA – 1960-61**

I was an exchange student in Virginia/ USA 63 years ago! It was a different world back then. I wanted to see the world, see other countries and nationalities, learn about foreign cultures and, of course, learn English well.

It was the time of the Cold War confrontation between two superpowers, two different economic systems and two different ideologies. So little time had passed since the war in

Finland that the idea of going to the United States of America, a liberal and rich country far from the threat of communism, was a great joy. After a six-month period of familiarisation, I adapted very well to the American way of life. However, I tried to be objective and rational and not to absorb everything.

My curiosity to see and experience more of the world led me to apply in 1963, through the then National Board of Health, to study medicine at the University of Göttingen in West Germany. My application to study in Germany was greatly influenced by the fact that I had a state-guaranteed loan for the whole duration of my studies, the repayment of which I did not worry about because it was somewhat guaranteed to be employed in Finland.

I spent six years studying medicine, which I remember with nostalgia. Life in Göttingen was very international. From Göttingen it was easy to travel to other parts of Europe. I got to know many countries and made good friends. Learning German was also important and enriched my life.

After graduating as a doctor, I specialised in internal medicine, and acquired a special qualification in renal diseases and rheumatic diseases. For the longest time (forty years) I worked as a doctor for kidney diseases at Oulu University Hospital. I treated dialysis patients and kidney transplant recipients. I married and had three children.

Now I have been living in my hometown Helsinki for years. Two of my children and their families live near Helsinki, my youngest in London. My eldest daughter is married to a Russian person who has been born in Ukraine and my daughter who lives in London is married to a British man.

My middle son is married to a Finn. I have six grandchildren, all of whom have seen a lot of the world and speak many languages. My eldest grandchild, Daniela, 20, is in her third year of ice dancing

training in Michigan. She came to Helsinki in August with her newest ice dance partner Matthew to introduce him to the Finnish ice dance judges, as they plan to represent Finland in international competitions. I have to tell you a funny coincidence related to this.

I asked Matthew where he lives in the USA. Virginia, was the answer. That's where I was an exchange student. I went on to ask him where in Virginia. Near Washington D.C., said Matthew. That's where I was, too, I continued. I lived in a town called Falls Church. That's my home-town, exclaimed Matthew. It's a small world!

I'm still working. I work as a doctor for the long-term ill people living in nursing homes. The job is tailored to suit me, I'm 81 years old! I will stop working at the end of the year. It has kept me fit and in rhythm.

To sum up the impact of my exchange year on my life, it made me more international, more open to the world and more understanding of others. In the words of songwriter Violeta Parra, "Gracias A La Vida", I can also say "thank you to life, I got a lot from it!" This is the good I have tried to share.



# Reporting our policies

## Safer Together

ICYE's policy addressing sexual violence in international volunteering.



11 participants from NCs plus one representative of a host project participated in the training in Songkhla/ Thailand from March 08<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024 while 14 NC representatives and eight representatives of ICYE Ecuador's partner projects took part in the workshop in Quito/ Ecuador from April 10<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Engaging in participatory activities facilitated by the participants, they build their capacities as trainers and learnt how to address, prevent and respond to sexual violence in international volunteering in a professional and survivor-centred way.

The Sub Committee to Support Policy Implementation shared global templates and guidance with all the members and is

In the programme year 2023-24, the ICYE Federation implemented two more Training of Trainers for National Committees in the Asia-Pacific region and in the region of the Americas.

supporting members to set up their own action plans in the new programme year on how to implement the commitments of ICYE's Safer Together Policy. Activities that members will be required to implement entail for example identifying a focal person in each office, including activities in the pre-departure, on-arrival, mid-term and final camps, and developing a response and referral route with concrete steps to ensure cases of sexual violence are professionally addressed.

In the annual volunteer evaluation, 64% of the volunteers rated ICYE's approach to address sexual violence in a professional and survivor-centred manner as very good or good while 36% felt it could be better or that it was not adequate (4%).

As outlined in ICYE's *Safer Together Policy*, we are collecting information from our members regarding the cases of sexual violence each year as an important accountability mechanism. We are publicizing the numbers in the annual report as a way to de-stigmatize speaking out against violence.

There were 15 cases of sexual violence reported by 9 members in the programme year 2023-24. 11 of the survivors were female volunteers, 1 was a female staff, 1 a male volunteer and 2 other.<sup>1</sup> The types of sexual violence reported were:

- 9 cases of sexual harassment,
- 3 cases of rape/abuse,
- 1 case of online sexual harassment and
- 2 cases referring to other types of sexual violence (e.g. stalking).

While the huge majority of people suffering from different forms of sexual violence were women, the perpetrators are mostly male: 6 of the perpetrators were people from outside of ICYE,<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The gender under the category 'others' was not defined.

<sup>2</sup> The gender under the category 'others' was not defined.

followed by 5 male volunteers, 2 male ICYE staff and 2 male host family members.

Seven of the 15 cases were reported to the authorities. The others were not reported, because the survivors decided not to report their case or because there was no chance of it being followed up by the police or the judiciary, as sexual harassment or stalking in some countries is still not considered a criminal act.



**NOTE:** We have set up an email where volunteers, staff and others can report cases of violence against children or cases of sexual violence/ harassment: [reporting-cases@icye.org](mailto:reporting-cases@icye.org)

## Care to Engage

### ICYE's Policy on Safeguarding Children

In 2023-24, the Sub Committee that is supporting the implementation of the policy developed guidance on how to prevent corporal punishment, guidelines for our communication and media work and for case management as well as information on why ICYE is phasing out its offering volunteering opportunities in orphanages.

In 2023-24, four members reported four cases of violence against children. A total of 27 children - both boys and girls were affected. In one case a volunteer witnessed physical violence in her project by the caretakers with 20 children being affected. The ICYE member is currently following up with the project. In another case, 2 boys were suffering from physical and emotional violence by a female host family member – here as well, ICYE has taken steps with the support of a specialised NGO to address this case of domestic violence. Two girls and one boy suffered corporal punishment by their teacher. In another case, a male volunteer was accused of emotionally and sexually violating two girls. This case was brought immediately to the authorities and is being investigated.

# Greener Together

## ICYE's commitment for a sustainable and regenerative future

At the General Assembly in Ghana in November 2023, full members approved the establishment of a Green Fund with the aim to support climate justice projects in the Global South. Following this decision, the working group developed guidance that included clear criteria to select projects for funding, an FAQ on how to manage the contributions to the Fund and an information flyer. The group also started to work on training materials for volunteers on climate justice.



At the national level, members engaged in different activities to promote environmental regeneration and address climate change impacts in their countries. On 31<sup>st</sup> of May 2024, VASE/ICYE Ecuador headed to the community Pululahuato to reforest and restore the natural flora in the reforestation project „Las Nubes“ (the Clouds). Their voluntary activity had the aim to counter the CO2 emissions caused by the flights of an international training of trainers in April.

In the annual evaluation survey, 62% percent of the volunteers rated ICYE as being committed to promoting environmental sustainability, while 19% rated ICYE as “very committed. Another 19% believed that this commitment is not visible. Asked for their feedback, they suggested increasing discussions around sustainability in the pre-departure and on-arrival workshops, minimising air travel, using public transportation, and coordinating group travel for volunteers to reduce carbon footprints. They also recommended that host organisations adopt greener practices and develop ecological projects while involving local communities in sustainability efforts.

GIED/ ICYE Philippines organised two Eco-Cultural Camps in the first months of 2024, hosted by the Local Governments of Barili and Alegria, Cebu – local partner institutions of ICYE Philippines. The camps aimed to raise awareness and understanding on the impact of climate change on local communities, support environmental mitigation and protection efforts and enrich inter-cultural understanding through dynamic integration with local people to build friendship and solidarity and contribute to peace. GIED regularly organises year round ecological and cultural work camps as part of its work on actively engaging towards ecosystem's restoration and protecting and conserving our living soils.



Colombia hosts about 10% of the planet's biodiversity. ICYE Colombia, in accordance with the ICYE Green Policy, has therefore developed agreements with projects that promote biodiversity conservation, regenerative agricultural production and environmental education. These projects (Fundación YutopiaLab, ANDOKE) offer spaces for international volunteers to experience first-hand the biological richness and exuberance present in these territories.



## Our new Green Fund



*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.*

**Margaret Mead**

ICYE is aware that our international volunteering and intercultural programmes as well as our daily work have an impact on climate change. Especially the associated air travel increases global emissions. With the Green Fund, we want to invite volunteers and other stakeholders to contribute to our shared individual and organisational responsibilities to protect the planet and each other.

For each volunteer exchanged in the ICYE programme, our members will contribute a defined amount to the Green Fund. The resources from the Green Fund will be used to support small scale local partner projects that engage in climate justice initiatives. Each year, a selection committee made up of representatives from each region and from the ICYE Youth Engagement Committee will select projects that members have submitted for funding.

# Our projects in 2023-24

## Decolonize IVS!

Courtney Kelner  
Programme and Grants Officer



August 2024 marked the conclusion of the Decolonize IVS! project, a 2.5-year initiative that brought together 10 International Voluntary Service (IVS) organizations. The project aimed to confront the lasting effects of (neo-)colonialism and to address the entrenched power dynamics and structural inequities in our work. Through open dialogue, reflection, and collaboration, we have deepened our understanding of how these issues shape the IVS movement and have explored ways to build a more inclusive, diverse, and environmentally sustainable path forward.

The project's key achievements include the creation of practical tools to support this ongoing process of decolonization:

- a self-assessment tool for IVS organizations to evaluate their practices,
- a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) designed to educate volunteers on decolonial perspectives, and
- the Deco Cards — a set of discussion prompts for workshops.
- Additionally, we collaborated with CCIVS to revise the Sustainability and Long Term Exchange Guidelines.

The evaluation from this project shows promising results, with partners reporting a significant shift in awareness and actionable changes across the participating IVS

## LIVE EX

**Nicolaus Novatus Mukasa**  
LIVE Ex Project Manager



In 2024, ICYE with CCIVS and eight partners in Sub Sahara Africa launched the LIVE-Ex (Exchange and Cooperation for a Living Earth) project, an initiative aimed at empowering youth across Sub-Saharan Africa by enhancing their digital and advocacy skills through virtual exchanges. The project aims to equip participants, through a mentorship programme with the skills to become active voices in promoting social and climate justice, as well as training them to be proficient in the use of digital tools to increase their employability and ensure they can participate actively in the global digital economy.

The project is being implemented by AJUDE (Mozambique), ASTOVOT (Togo), CCIVS (Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service), COFO (Malawi), ICYE (International Cultural Youth Exchange) - project coordinator, ICYE Kenya, ICYE Nigeria, SAVWA (South Africa), ICYE Tanzania and ZWA (Zimbabwe).

With a decolonial perspective, LIVE-Ex addresses a pressing need for climate justice, digital inclusion, and intercultural cooperation by facilitating structured virtual dialogues and community actions among young people with the focus on building their capacities.

In June 2024, to kickstart the project, a first coordination meeting was held in Tanzania. This meeting laid the groundwork for the strategic collaboration among all the partners,

discussed the development of the training content, and reflected on how to organise the community actions. The meeting was a key opportunity for networking, sharing experiences, and creating a shared vision for the project.

## Partnership Thrives in Kotka

**Minna Räisänen**

Communication Officer ICYE Finland

Kotka. Six years ago, the Koskenrinne Residential Service Association in Kotka began receiving volunteers from the International Cultural Youth Exchange (ICYE) program from around the world to integrate into the daily life and celebrations of their elderly housing services.

"Kotka, as a port city and historically known as the 'America of Savonia,' showcases multiculturalism in Koskenrinne among both our clients and staff. It has been meaningful to build the collaboration with Maailmanvaihto volunteers in this diverse group," says Koskenrinne's Executive Director, Sirpa Kotola.

"Collaboration is a learning opportunity for the volunteers and for us at Koskenrinne. Different ways of doing things come together, and we agree on common rules. Cultural exchange enriches everyone. During the volunteer periods, new people meet, and language skills are improved on both sides."

Last year, Koskenrinne participated in the competition for good practices organized by the Union for Senior Services (Vanhus- ja lähiimmäispalvelun liitto VALLI ry) with their ICYE volunteer collaboration and multicultural work community. Koskenrinne won the final audience vote in the category of "Developing the Organization and Well-being of Staff." The voting took place at VALLI's 70th-anniversary forum.

"In the final we highlighted our employees' views of Koskenrinne as a workplace, and our ICYE volunteer Yu Ting Lin, or Emily

as she's known, shared why she came to Finland as a volunteer and what it has given her. Our presentation, including the Taiwanese 'dementia prevention dance' performed with Emily – also a form of cultural exchange – secured our victory," says Kotola.

"We are extremely proud of the recognition we received. The first value in our strategy is human dignity, which means that every client, every employee, volunteer, and student is valuable as they are."

Yu Ting Lin, who travelled from Taiwan to Finland for volunteer work shares what collaboration with the Koskenrinne team means to her: "For me, it means creating. I am a social worker and came to Finland to learn about social services and exchange experiences. When I return to Taiwan, I will bring my experiences with me, which I plan to use in creating something new."



## ICDE's Multi-Activity Project Launch

**Robinson Doss**

**ICDE India**

ICYE/ ICDE India, launched its own Multi-Activity Project at KOLAR (a suburb of Bangalore City) on the 29th July 2023, also commemorating the 40th Anniversary of the ICYE programme being conducted in India.

The Multi-Activity Project spans over an area of 0.4 hectares and can accommodate six long term international volunteers. The facilities include a modern, well-equipped kitchen, a dining area and a large room for conferences which could also be converted into a dormitory for up to 15 volunteers, during camps.

Volunteers can engage in a variety of voluntary activities in the project:

- Farming and agriculture
- Environmental conservation, water harvesting and protection of soil erosion
- Animal welfare & breeding
- Education and work with children
- Fine arts, music & sports

Over the years, having facilitated international voluntary services for youth with its networked projects, ICDE/ ICYE India has taken a big leap with this new initiative and vision and embarked to have its own project to be directly involved in community development and environmental sustainability.



# Our Partnerships



Coordinating Committee on International Volunteer Service (CCIVS): In 2023-24 the International Office has continued to actively engage alongside the other major International Voluntary Service networks (Alliance, Service Civil International, and the Network for Voluntary Development in Asia) in CCIVS' working groups. Since the CCIVS General Assembly in November 2023, ICYE now has a permanent seat at the Executive Committee. Luz Gutierrez, director of VASE/ ICYE Ecuador got elected for ICYE into the EC for two years.



United for Intercultural Action (UNITED): ICYE is a member of this European-wide network to stand against nationalism, racism, fascism and in support of migrants, refugees, and minorities.

# Our Finances

In the program year 2023-24, the Federation continued to recover financially from the loss of previous years, generating a surplus of 21.732,17 €. Compared to 2022-23, our income increased by 146.221,65 € to a total income of 575.659,26 €. Despite a slight decline in the income generated through the fees charged for the volunteers (minus 1580,77 €), the International Office was able to cover these through the structural, institutional and private funds raised. The increase in grants from 113.712,92 € in 2022-23 to 278.796,59 € in 2023-24 was mainly due to the approval of the EC funded project LIVE Ex which ICYE is coordinating as applicant.

On the expense side, the costs increased in 2023-24 by 129.194,14 € from 424.732,95 in 2022-23 to 553.927,09 €. This was mainly due to the LIVE Ex project costs that ICYE received but had to transfer to the implementing partners. The staff costs were also higher compared to the previous three years, as all staff are now once more working full time after the Corona pandemic. Some additional costs that came up this year included the consultancy to develop ICYE's new branding and the purchase of two new laptops as well as the replacement of a broken fridge and carpets in part of our office space.

With the surplus being allocated to the reserve funds, these have now increased to 185.720,04 €. The reserve funds include the Fund for the General Assembly, the Training and Programme Development Fund, the Insurance Fund, the Operating and Salary Reserve Fund and since 2023-24 a Free Reserves Fund.

In September 2024, the external auditor from BerKon GmbH confirmed in their unqualified audit report that the audit has not led to any reservations.

## THE ICYE FEDERATION

### Balance Sheet

	2021-2022	2021-2022	2022-2023
<b>Assets</b>			
Cash in Bank or Hand	610.807,71 €	549.667,85 €	543.412,87 €
Federation's Credits (Member Organisations)	8.457,55 €	13.782,56 €	63.432,25 €
Other Assets	10.031,40 €	17.698,02 €	37.146,91 €
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>629.296,66 €</b>	<b>581.148,43 €</b>	<b>643.992,03 €</b>
<b>Liabilities and funds</b>			
Federation's Debts (Member Organisations)	446.092,36 €	400.991,11 €	367.956,82 €
Liabilities Erasmus+ Projects	13.341,79 €	0,00 €	65.041,85 €
Other Debts	10.579,30 €	16.169,45 €	25.273,32 €
Restricted Funds	66.860,56 €	71.565,22 €	84.811,32 €
Unrestricted Funds	92.422,65 €	92.422,65 €	100.908,72 €
<b>Total liabilities and Funds</b>	<b>629.296,66 €</b>	<b>581.148,43 €</b>	<b>643.992,03 €</b>

# THE ICYE FEDERATION

## Financial Overview

	2021-2022	2021-2022	2022-2023
<b>Income</b>			
Fees and Contributions by members	141.950,57 €	206.780,65 €	205.199,88 €
Income for volunteers' insurances	75.110,08 €	95.367,33 €	88.970,02 €
EC Grants	121.615,69 €	113.712,92 €	242.209,61 €
Other Income/ Grants	38.675,36 €	13.257,89 €	36.586,98 €
Interests	-887,17 €	318,82 €	2.692,77 €
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>376.464,53 €</b>	<b>429.437,61 €</b>	<b>575.659,26 €</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Overall Federational Costs	59.052,17 €	75.786,51 €	48.392,84 €
Insurance Costs	75.278,48 €	93.221,24 €	86.277,82 €
Grants Project Expenses and Sub-Committee expenses	83.210,69 €	45.960,35 €	176.551,21 €
Staff Costs	134.036,12 €	163.606,94 €	185.294,88 €
Office and Communication, IT Costs	18.039,74 €	24.764,93 €	26.487,43 €
Bank and Audit Costs	6.964,86 €	5.912,77 €	9.676,91 €
Other Expenses	16.887,06 €	15.480,21 €	21.246,00 €
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>629.296,66 €</b>	<b>581.148,43 €</b>	<b>643.992,03 €</b>
<b>Program year result</b>	<b>-17.004,59 €</b>	<b>4.704,66 €</b>	<b>21.732,17 €</b>
Depletion of/Allocation to reserve funds	17.004,59 €	4.704,66 €	21.732,17 €

# Outlook

In the programme year 2024-25, ICYE will continue to address pressing global issues like climate and social justice, peace, respect for diversity, gender equality and environmental regeneration through our policies, the work in the Sub Committees, our grant funded projects and the strengthening of our exchange programme.

At the Federational level, a key element in 2024-25 will be the discussion of the draft strategic plan for 2026-2030 among the members, especially addressing the decrease in volunteer numbers and the impact this has on the Federation. In preparation for the 34th General Assembly in November 2025, the members are developing strategies to make ICYE a stronger network in the coming years.

To be able to continue fostering intercultural learning and providing meaningful international volunteering opportunities, ICYE in 2024-25 will invest in organisational transformation, programme quality and youth engagement. With the launch of the Youth Engagement Committee (YEC) in 2024, we are strengthening the voices of young people in our work and in our organisational structures. Their contributions will be key in driving our strategic way forward. In August 2024, they will meet for the first time in person in Nairobi, Kenya to develop their YEC action plan and reflect on the way they want to collaborate among themselves and with the Federation.

The different Sub Committees will continue to work on the areas decided on during the last General Assembly in November 2023. To further improve our programme quality, we will revise our minimal quality standards, develop a new competence framework for the volunteers and define a more robust theory of change as part of our quality assurance work. We will further strengthen the collaboration among member organisations and discuss how to address power imbalances that impede the equal participation in ICYE.

Moreover, we are hoping to continue the discussions and reflections around decolonisation at organisational and programmatic levels as well as continuing the advocacy work we started in the Decolonise IVS! project.

In September 2024, we will launch ICYE's new visual identify as part of the 75-year anniversary celebrations. Our rebranding effort stems from a strong desire to create a visual identity that reflects our enduring commitment to interculturality, solidarity, diversity, peace, and community action. Besides the bold new logo featuring an upside-down world map, symbolising our global reach and the inclusive, intercultural community we foster, we will introduce a fresh, dynamic colour scheme that reflects the energy, diversity, and optimism of our global community.

# Acknowledgements

The ICYE Board of Managers would like to thank all the ICYE members for their outstanding engagement in facilitating meaningful and impactful voluntary services to curious and eager volunteers. We thank you for always going the extra mile and making sure that on a local, individual level intercultural learning takes place and little seeds of more mutual understanding and peace are being planted. We trust that our world will benefit and pick the fruits from our programmes.

The ICYE Board of Managers would also like to acknowledge the great contributions to the ICYE Federation by the team of the International Office, who coordinated the work with the Youth Engagement Committee, fundraised for operational and programmatic resources and strengthened the cooperation with all the members and with our sister networks.

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