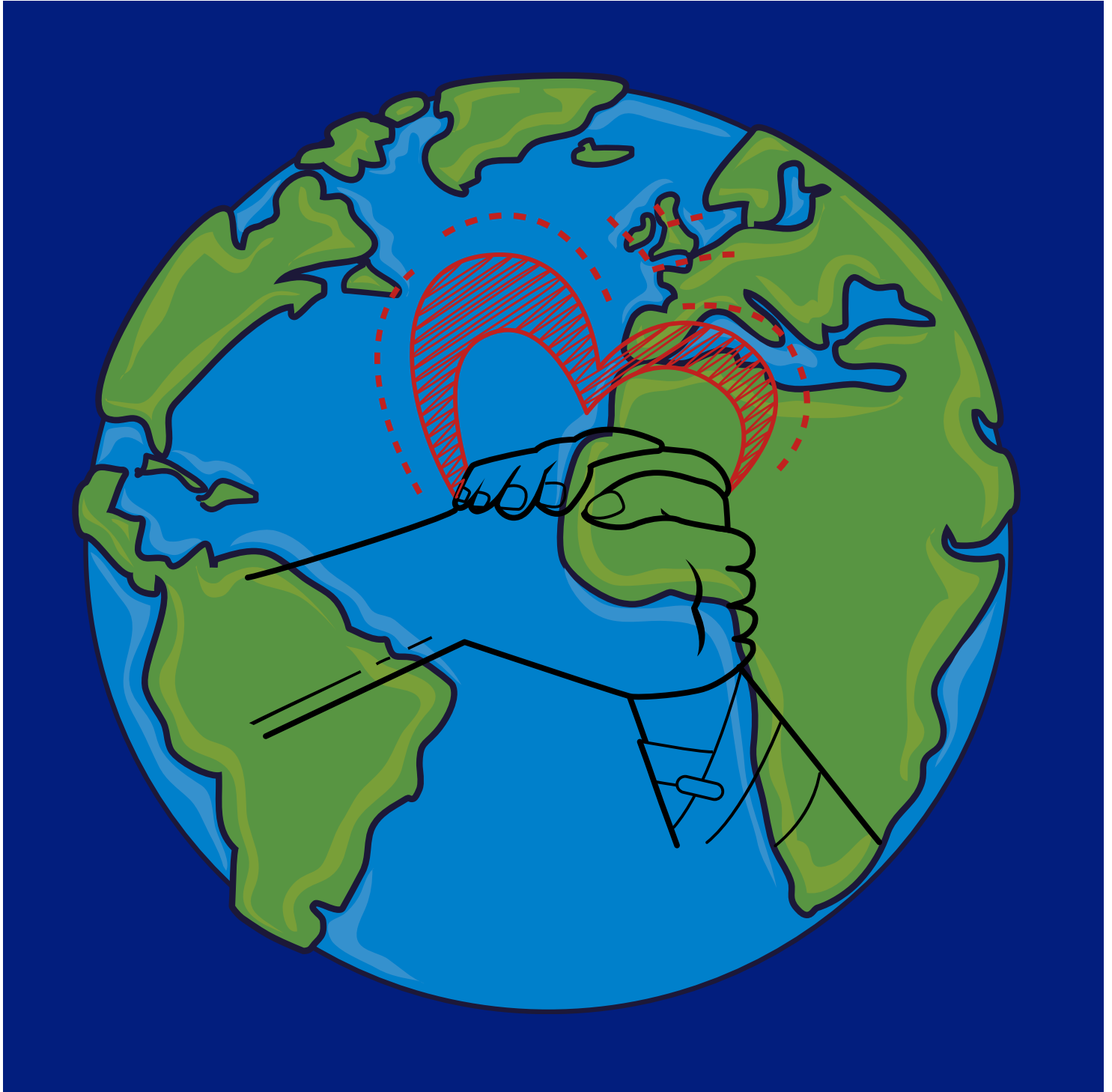


Intercultural Talk

ICYE NEWSLETTER - NO.53



WHAT AWAITS YOU IN THIS ISSUE:

P.1
"DO YOU REMEMBER?"

P.2
A SHORT HISTORY OF
VOLUNTEERING

P.3-15
HISTORY OF ICYE
ALUMNI

P.16
NEW COLLEAGUE
AT THE IO

"Do you remember?"



BY SIMONE BECH

ICYE has been around for over 70 years. More precisely, since 1949, founded shortly after the war. As one alumni says: "I went abroad because we want to make sure that this never happens again."

In other words: ICYE was a peace organization. An organization that send exchange students across national borders. Initially, only from the U.S. to Europe and vice versa. Nowadays, ICYE is placed all over the world. Sending volunteers abroad - no longer exchange students.

However, due to the pandemic, the number of volunteers has decreased significantly. That's why we at ICYE think it's more important than ever to remember. To remember all the young people who have traveled abroad over the years on their life's journey - returning with a changed attitude, new friends and family.

Because; to remember is to keep hope alive and get through it together.

So in this issue, read more about the history of volunteering, find out what alumni from the 1960s to today have experienced on their exchange year with ICYE and about our brand new scholarship fund that supports volunteers in the Global South.

Sit back and let's reminisce together - but let's also remember that one day we will go abroad again to explore new cultures and have experiences for life.

#BeingStrongTogether

Happy reading. ICYE



First ICYE Group, 1949

A short history of volunteering

When did it even begin, the concept of volunteering as we know it today - *volunteering* to do something? Let's take a deeper look at this.



To do this, we have to go all the way back to 12th century England. At that time, there were no more than 500 hospices run by volunteers. Volunteering at that time was not necessarily something you did altruistically to help others - but rather associated with religion and religious institutions.



Although there were traces of volunteering in England as early as the 12th century, it was not until the 19th century that the word "volunteering" appeared and was used in our language.

This, when people willingly joined military service. For that reason, the word "volunteering" became more associated with military service - rather than community service as we know it today.



Officially organized volunteerism reached its peak in the early 20th century. This was, for example, because of the great wars, when young people organized themselves to help wounded soldiers.



The biggest revolution in volunteering was sparked by the Internet - surprising, isn't it? It made it possible to spread the word globally and not be limited by physical borders.



Therefore, the Internet was the way to spread the word of volunteering - and aren't we all happy about that!



History of ICYE alumni - 1960s to today



South Korea in the 1960s

Ed is now 72 years old and lives in the U.S.A. He went to South Korea in 1966-67 and attended a Korean high school as an exchange student. For the last 3 months he volunteered at an orphanage.

Why did you decide to go abroad with ICYE?

"I decided to apply for a "gap year" after graduating from a US high school because I was interested in exploring the world (and myself) before entering university. ICYE was very active in my home town."

How would you describe a typical day on your stay abroad?

"The school day was a bit demanding and I clearly did not function too well for several months as I learned the language, but it was a great opportunity to make friends etc. In those years, Korean high school boys and girls did not socialize much and when it happened it was only in large groups. Going to pubs was not allowed for high school students and since most wore a school uniform, it was easy to identify who was a student."



ED, 1966-67



ED, TODAY

What is your best memory with ICYE?

"Being in a country as someone from a totally different racial background meant that I could never blend into society. I always was identifiable as a foreigner. But, after being comfortable with the society and language, which is one of the more difficult ones in the world, I was able to be accepted as no longer an outsider, but someone who shared the culture and loved the people of Korea. It felt very good when someone thought I was Korean when talking on the telephone!"

Can you say today that your exchange year with ICYE has influenced your life?

"Influenced my life? Absolutely. When I returned to the US and entered university, I changed my studies from sciences to Asian history, and then accepted a position at the ICYE-US office, becoming the Director of ICYE-US that year continuing for 11 years. Most importantly, being outside of the U.S. in Asia at the time of the Vietnam War opened my eyes to how US foreign policy was damaging countries. The rest of my life has been spent opposing wars and supporting progressive movements."

What are you looking forward to most, the time after Corona?

"TRAVELLING again. I have been in Asia many times since my year and I want to return. Since my daughter and 2 very young grandsons live in Argentina, I want to get on a plane again and travel to Argentina to see them."

Central America in the 1980s

Dirk is now 59 years old and lives in Belgium. He went to Central America with ICYE in 1984-85. He worked with community building, coffee harvesting, teaching and construction.

Why did you decide to go abroad with ICYE?

"Experience another world."

How would you describe a typical day on your stay abroad?

"Dealing with challenges."



DIRK, 1984-85



DIRK, TODAY

What is your best memory with ICYE?

"Enthusiasm of young and old for a new society and living in the open nature."

Can you say today that your exchange year with ICYE has influenced your life?

"My career is determined by cultural exchange, migration and diversity."

What are you looking forward to most, the time after the corona?

"Travelling."

Switzerland in the 1980s

Erick is now 55 years old and lives in San Pedro Sula, Honduras. He travelled to Switzerland as an exchange student in 1985-1986.

Why did you decide to go abroad with ICYE?

"I met some exchange students from Switzerland after my A-levels, and I wanted to see the world, speak other languages, meet people from all over the world and travel."

How would you describe a typically day in your project?

"I went to school very early, ate tons of yoghurt, sausage and cheese at lunch, chocolate, every day, then went to the gym after school, and home in the evening."

What is your best memory with ICYE?

"During that time, I felt like I could really integrate into life there, professionally and personally. I knew I had become a Swiss when I was accepted as an equal while working there."



ERICK, 1985-1986



ERICK, TODAY

What are you looking forward to most, the time after Corona?

"Sending my kids to Europe with ICYE, going back to my activities as a photographer, a teacher and freelance photographer of landscapes."

"The best time of my life so far and I believe it will remain so! I dream of going back to Switzerland every day!"

Can you say today that your exchange year with ICYE has influenced your life?

"The world as I knew it changed, as knowing people from all sides of the world showed me I was just the same as anyone else on the planet. This world just needs communication and understanding. It allowed me to learn German, and today I teach German in my school."

Germany in the 2010s

Archana is now 41 years old and lives in India. From August 2004 to August 2005 she went abroad to Germany. Here she worked in a project called: "Fürst Donnersmarck Foundation, Berlin."



ARCHANA, TODAY

Why did you decide to go abroad with ICYE?

"After graduating with a Master degree in Social Work in Hyderabad, India, I wanted to understand the social work scenario abroad and I chose to volunteer in Germany."

How would you describe a typical day on your stay abroad?

"Since the apartment was also housed in the campus where the Foundation was, there was not much of travel involved to the volunteering place. I shared the apartment with 5 other volunteers. I along with the rest of the volunteers would lunch together in the apartment would head for our German class. Thereafter we would take a stroll in the city of Berlin and get back home and end our day with dinner together."

We became a family of one along with the volunteers."

What would you say are two of your absolute best memories of your stay abroad with ICYE?

"WUNDERBAR [=wonderful]. Personally enriching memories that would stay with me forever. I made and continue to remain friends with the volunteers and a German couple who almost were like my parents and two German friends who I continue to stay connected. The best 1 year of my life with the most wonderful memories."

Can you say today that your exchange year with ICYE has influenced your life?

"Yes, I could come back and share my experience with other social development professionals, who also replicated the group home concept for mentally and physically challenged adults."

What are you looking forward to most, the time after Corona?

"I understand that Corona has changed the world upside down. But I understand that there are countries around who are showing their compassion towards other countries in need. Nothing is permanent in life and family matters most in these challenging times. It is my prayer that God heals the world of the COVID-19 pandemic."



ARCHANA, 2004-2005

Colombia in the 2010s

Sabrina is now 27 years old and lives in Belgium. She went to Colombia in 2013 and worked at the Centro de Atención Integral a Las Personas con Discapacidad.

Why did you decide to go abroad with ICYE?

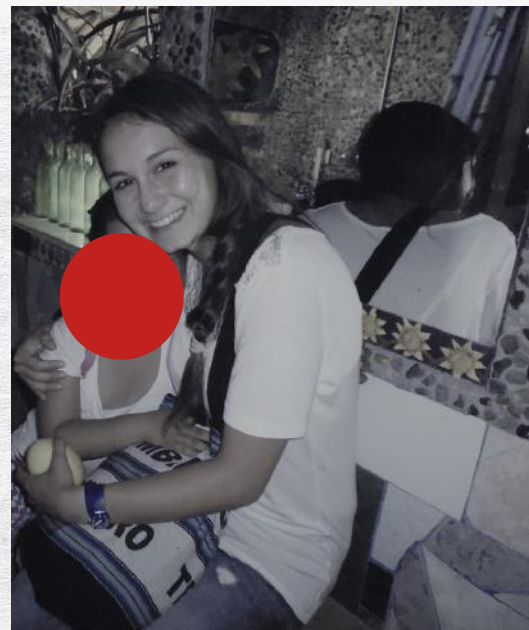
"ICYE was the best fit for me and the organization I felt comfortable with. I support the values, the concept and the organization."

How would you describe a typical day on your stay abroad?

"Waking up early, having breakfast (juice of tomate de arbol and a yoghurt granola bowl with typical Colombian fruits which prepared my host dad for me), volunteering at the project (every day of the week we had different activities such as agriculture, music, crafts etc.), had lunch together at home with my family, spent the afternoon in the project. In the evening I normally spent time with the family or read a book. On the weekends I visited friends or went to Medellin, whenever I had the possibility I also traveled around Colombia."



SABRINA, TODAY



SABRINA, 2013

What is your best memory with ICYE?

"In my project we started to produce chocolate pralines (as a social project) with little teams. I will never forget the fun and laughter together during the production process in the kitchen and the feeling of responsibility and pride the participants gained when they sold the pralines in the village. My second memory is about spending some days in a small village called El Valle in the department of Chocó. There I slept in hammocks, observed turtles, spent time with the locals and learnt how to surf."

Can you say today that your exchange year with ICYE has influenced your life?

"My stay with ICYE has definitely influenced my life because everything that followed was based on the time in Colombia. It was some kind of a starting point. With the knowledge of Spanish I e.g. could study two semesters of my bachelor degree and it influenced my decision to volunteer in other community projects in Austria and abroad (e.g. in a refugee camp in Greece)."

What are you looking forward to most, the time after the corona?

"I am looking forward to see and hug my friends again. To travel and to visit everybody I could not see in the last months. Most of all I am looking forward to see worldwide improvement of the current situation."



EXTRA:

**READ MORE
ABOUT SABRINAS
STAY ABROAD ON
NEXT PAGE
- ALL HER
THOUGHTS AND
MEMORIES ABOUT
IT WRITTEN DOWN
ON ONE PAGE.**

"Colombia has been my steppingstone for a deep love and connection with Latin America".

Read Sabrina's story and learn how she fell in love with another country and why her stay abroad influenced her life in more ways than one.



We may speak about life changing moments or experiences quite often but not all of them really determine our direction. Colombia, on the contrary and without doubt had a significant impact for my life and many of the decisions I have taken after my stay there. Back in 2013 I was curious about Latin America, but I did not really had a profound idea of the culture, society and the incredible landscapes. I precisely remember the first time I participated in an informative meeting of Grenzenlos/ICYE Austria in Vienna and Sara Paredes asked me "Why not Colombia?".

Therefore, I also asked myself the same question and chose this country as my temporary secondary home. Colombia has been my steppingstone for a deep love and connection with Latin America. Whenever I spend too much time outside of this continent, I feel homesick for its people and everything they are achieving. Although all of these countries suffer from violence and exploitation – especially Colombia, I have been always strongly surprised and impressed by the endurance and friendliness of its people.

Colombia gave me a second family, a new language and it let me grow. It also gave me a lot of time to think and for self-reflection – but most of all it taught me how to be patient. As a former highly stressed and impatient person, living in a country where the buses do not stick to timetables and punctuality is less important, made me change my attitude. Most of my friends showed up two hours late and nearly everything was answered with "ahorita" [=now]. Colombia changed me to an extremely patient person and taught me to see things from a different perspective.

Almost eight years later, as a volunteer in a Greek refugee camp, a Palestinian friend told me that part of my name in Arabic is translated to "patience" (sabr الصبر).

In Colombia I started to learn and love the Spanish language. Being able to communicate in the same language opened doors and intensified friendships. Without Colombia I would never have been able to study in Mexico, work in Barcelona or live in Argentina. Although Austria will always be my home, I have found a second home in Colombia. There is no single day I do not miss waking up with the view of the green hills in Antioquia, picking some guayabas in our garden or simply prepare arepas with my family.

I deeply admire from all my heart this unique country and its amazing, smiling people. Whenever I would have the possibility to repeat my volunteer experience there, I would not hesitate to pack my bag and go back to El Carmen de Viboral and my familia paisa.

Germany in the 2010s

Francisco is now 31 and lives in Mozambique. He was a volunteer in Germany from 2014-2016, working both as a class assistant and a dance teacher.

Why did you decide to go abroad with ICYE?

"My first reason was the will to learn the language, as I found it very interesting, as well as extend my experience (learn by doing) and make friends."

How would you describe a typical day on your stay abroad?

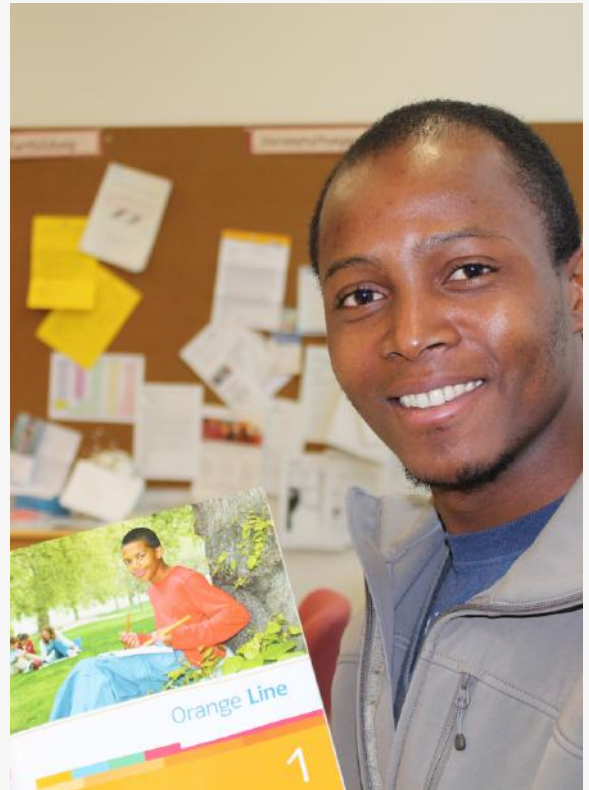
"Learning and Conquer. I was learning each and every day: At my host families house and at my work placement the most and with the friends I was able to make. Conquer: It was not that easy to get the trust of people, I had to break a lot of ice and stereotype with black and Africans."

What is your best memory with ICYE?

"There are many of them, but I would say the first best memory was to supervise a work camp of ICYE participants. That was a trust credential for me as a foreigner and another one would be to join make part of a project called "Talk Workshop" that aimed to let youths to express through dance, graffiti and rap about racism."



FRANCISCO, TODAY



FRANCISCO 2014-2016

What are you looking forward to most, the time after the corona?

"Being honest, I'm looking forward for a face to face meeting with the former participants I met in Germany. What I would also be looking forward to see happening after Corona or in the new way of being with Corona is how to potentially use what we gained in our experiences."

Can you say today that your exchange year with ICYE has influenced your life?

"Surely I can say my experience with ICYE has enabled many skills and influenced my choices and decisions, my life generally. Also it has contributed on solidifying my dreams."

Last golden words from ICYE Alumni:



"With my year of experience in Germany, I have come to understand that Germans are one of the most loyal people, friends who will continue to stay connected and very compassionate.

If I can, I would love to travel back to Berlin, Germany to meet my friends, the wonderful German couple and visit the Foundation where I had a chance to volunteer."

"Don't loose, believe in a better world."



"ICYE affected (and continues to affect) my life in so many ways. It would be impossible to list all of them. I think that foremost is that it enabled me to have empathy, to want to know what it's like to "walk in others' shoes." It gave me an appreciation for humanity in all its fascinating and wonderful diversity. It ingrained in me a desire to make the world a better place in everything I do."



"I deeply admire from all my heart this unique country and its amazing, smiling people. Whenever I would have the possibility to repeat my volunteer experience there, I would not hesitate to pack my bag and go back to El Carmen de Viboral and my familia paisa."

"My dream is that there would be a solid landing after the year abroad as for some of us African youths going abroad is a dream and we would like somehow to apply it around us. So I believe ICYE could work with the German diplomacy in the countries to open to those youths innovations. Im not asking them to be responsible for our way forward in live, only to be a local open gate for the projects we might have."



"This experience, as different as all the countries that exist, is so important in people's lives!!! I need my kids to travel and see the world. I so recommend that all children whose parents are in capacity to do it, send them to visit the world, to experience the world and its culture!!
The best time of my life so far and I believe it will remain so!!!! I dream of going back to Switzerland every day!!"

"NOT A SPECIFIC 'BEST' MEMORY - JUST ONE EXCELLENT MEMORY!"

BEST MEMORY

Former Volunteers and
Exchange Students with ICYE



"FRIENDS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD."

"THERE'S NOT A SPECIFIC MEMORY. THE EXPERIENCE, AS A WHOLE, CHANGED ME, MADE NEW OPPORTUNITIES POSSIBLE."

"THE TRUE UNDERSTANDING THAT THERE WAS A WHOLE WORLD OUTSIDE MY SMALL SOUTHERN ITALIAN HOMETOWN."

"FINDING A HOME IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY."

THE EXPERIENCE OF FEELING 'AT HOME' IN A NEW CITY, NEW COUNTRY, NEW CONTINENT.

"EVERY SINGLE DAY."

"THE FACT THAT I HAD THE FEELING I BELONGED SOMEWHERE."

"THIS WAS THE BEST WAY TO LEARN ABOUT ANOTHER CULTURE (GERMAN) AND ABOUT MYSELF."

"I MADE SOME FRIENDS FOR A LIFETIME."

"KNOWING PEOPLE ALL OVER THE WORLD AND STILL HAVE CONTACT."

"GETTING TO KNOW A DIFFERENT CULTURE."

"A GIANT STEP IN BECOMING ME."

THE EXCHANGE YEAR

- & HOW IT INFLUENCED YOUR LIFE



PERSPECTIVE

"Gave me a worldly perspective, helped me mature and give me focus. I got my Bachelors degree in Linguistics and Masters in Education to teach ESL."

EVERYTHING

"Basically everything, gained a lot of independence, confidence and a knowledge of being capable to overcome even what at the time seems like an impossible hurdle."

DIVERSITY

"The ICYE year set the path of what I would study, the career I've had, and my ability to live with diversity of people and beliefs."

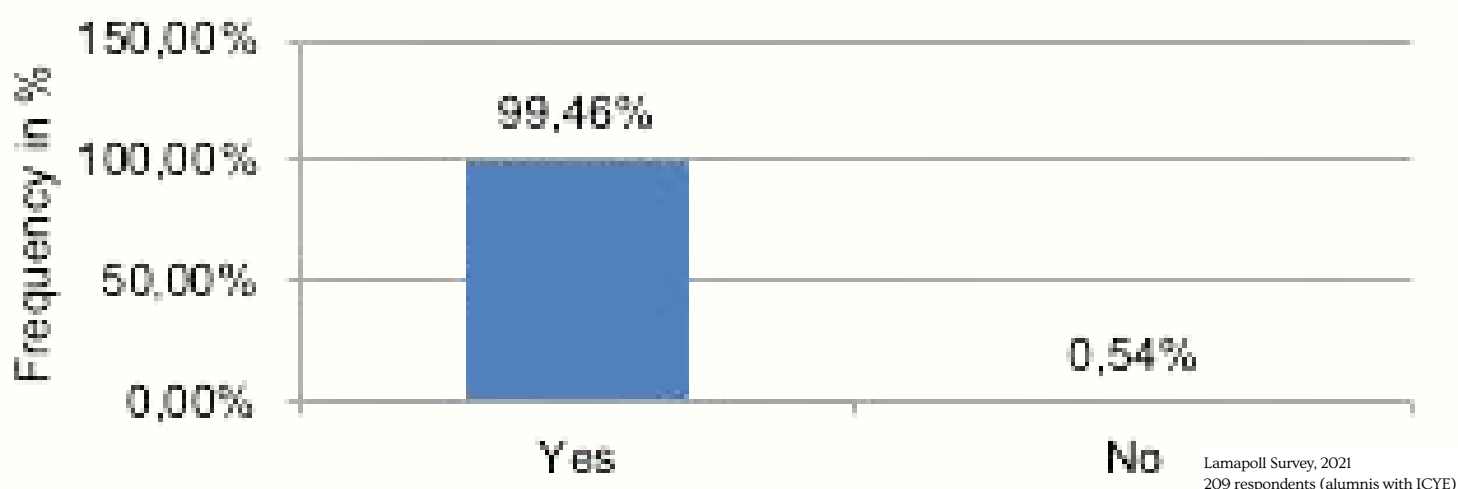
"The Exchange year has definitely changed my life. It expanded my horizons, and it made me braver and more conscious of who I am."

"My year abroad has never left me. It remains a part of me. It has helped me shape the rest of my life since that time. In a very good way."

AND "WOULD YOU DO IT AGAIN?"

This question was asked in a survey conducted by the
International Office, ICYE.

The results speak for themselves:



WALKING DOWN ICYE MEMORY LANE

By Simone Bech

In this issue, we looked at former exchange students and volunteers who have traveled abroad with ICYE - from the 1960s to today. And what a change. From Ed, who was an exchange student in Korea in the 60s, in a society not comparable to today, to Fransisco, who was abroad in Germany 50 years later.

Even if you traveled 70 years ago or are on an exchange today, one thing points to the same thing: you have great memories of your time abroad - and for some of you, your exchange year even influenced your life. Whether it's that you gained a new worldview, you made new friends for life, you found a new family, you had new intercultural experiences, you grew and you may have even become a new version of yourself.

I could go on.

Let's not forget these memories and keep hope high - we will travel again and we will explore new cultures and languages again. Let's remind each other of this.

Thank you.



ICYE would like to thank those who participated in the Former Exchange Students Survey and those who participated in an interview.

We are more than grateful for that.

Besides that, we would always love to hear more about your stories and memories from your exchange year.

So please write to us at: icye@icye.org or on Facebook/ Instagram if you would like to share it.

Please use the hashtag #icyememory if you share it on social media. We would love to see it and re-share it.



Happy summer.



Warm regards,
ICYE

Say hello to Courtney Kelner

BY SIMONE BECH

Courtney Kelner, 37 years old and from the USA, is the new Programme and Funding Officer at the International Office in Berlin. Find out below what that means exactly, about her volunteer experience and our new scholarship fund.

Why did you apply for this position at ICYE?

"I came to work at ICYE because I wanted the challenge of working globally on projects with others who are also interested in social and environmental justice. I enjoy collaborative work and finding new ways to put our ideas into action."

Tell me more about your voluntary experience?

"I did my voluntary service in Kyrgyzstan from 2008-2010 as a part of the Peace Corps (a US government programme). I served in the multicultural city of Osh, where I worked on capacity development and grant writing with a local NGO, as well as English language tutoring and HIV/AIDS prevention outreach at the university."

How would you describe a typical working day at the International Office?

"At the IO, I spend my day looking out the window at the church yard, but also writing too many emails! I am also writing funding applications to the EU, so we can do more Federation-wide projects together and initiating a new ICYE South-to-South Scholarship Fund."



COURTNEY KELNER ON ONE OF HER MANY WALKING TOURS, PRIVATE PHOTO

"The scholarship fund focuses on South-to-South volunteering because that is even harder to get funding for! And because collaboration among young people and communities from different parts of the Global South is important!"

What is this new scholarship fund?

"The new scholarship fund is aimed at making the joys and learnings from international volunteering an opportunity that more young people can take advantage of! We want to enable young people from the Global South to get their voluntary service funded, which is something that often only European volunteers manage to do through state-supported programs, or the US ones like I did with the Peace Corps. The scholarship fund focuses on South-to-South volunteering because that is even harder to get funding for!"

If you would like to support the fund, you can donate via our fundraising page [here](#)."

