

Greener Together

ICYE's commitment for a sustainable
and regenerative future



International Cultural Youth Exchange

ICYE

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Introduction

Who we are

The International Cultural Youth Exchange (ICYE) is a non-profit international exchange organisation which provides intercultural learning and voluntary service to help people break down prejudices and acquire competencies for a more sustainable, just and peaceful world. ICYE organises long- and short-term exchanges in more than 40 countries around the world. Through its volunteering and participatory community programmes, ICYE is contributing to sustainable social change processes with an intercultural, human rights and intersectional approach. For more information, visit our [website](#).

Why a green policy

The ICYE Federation recognizes the urgency of the climate and environmental crisis and its central importance for global justice. We therefore believe that everyone has the responsibility to protect the environmental rights of current and future generations and our planetary boundaries. Swift and decisive action is needed. In line with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change¹ and the Agenda 2030 with its Sustainable

1 “The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change. It was adopted by 196 parties at COP 21 in Paris, on 12 December 2015 and entered into force on 4 November 2016.”
www.unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement

Development Goals (SDG)², ICYE is committed to take action to reduce the risks and impacts of climate change and contribute to environmental sustainability.

We are aware that our international volunteering and intercultural programs as well as our daily work can further aggravate climate change and pollution. Especially the associated air travel increases global emissions. At the same time however, our volunteering work fosters transcultural/intercultural³ understanding, social justice and joint peace work. This challenge between the CO2 footprint caused especially by international travel on the one hand and the benefits international volunteering provides on the other have to be addressed. The ICYE Green Policy describes the goals, actions and strategies with which our Federation will address this challenge.

We moreover believe that it is our responsibility as an international NGO dedicated to global solidarity and peace to also address the root causes of the existing climate injustices. These include e.g. climate colonialism, capitalistic economies focusing primarily on growth as well as unequal power relations between countries. Our Policy therefore can't be seen in isolation but is integrated and linked to different aspects of our work.

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- 2 “The [Sustainable Development Goals](#) are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere. The 17 Goals were adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, as part of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) which set out a 15-year plan to achieve the Goals.” <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>
 - 3 ICYE uses both terms as our organisational understanding of “intercultural” has been very much in line with what is now called “transcultural”, highlighting that culture is complex, dynamic and fluid. We recognize that it is about merging and transforming cultures in the process of learning from one another.

Furthermore, being currently present in 41 countries, we are able to raise awareness with diverse stakeholders, train our participants and advocate for environmental sustainability from an intercultural, human rights and intersectional approach. In our work, we will build on the wealth of local practices and knowledge on environmental sustainability that are key to promote and learn from.

The ICYE Federation is aware that the implementation of this Policy also requires a financial contribution. We are committed to identify ways to decrease the negative effects on the environment, promote environmental protection and internalise our ecological costs.⁴

⁴ The externalisation of environmental costs describes the shift in responsibility from the producer of those costs (e.g. a factory owner emitting pollutants to the environment) to the general society (e.g. the government running a remediation site). Internalising the costs means that the producers bear those costs themselves. see *Guan Long, Wang Lei, Cheng Sijie, Wango Bo. (2012) Research on Internalization of Environmental Costs of Economics. IERI Procedia, 2, 460-466.*

Our Environmental Goals







ICYE will take an intercultural, human rights and intersectional approach when promoting climate justice and environmental sustainability.

Main Goal

The ICYE Federation is committed to advance, sensitize on, and advocate for environmental sustainability and regeneration.

Sub-Goals






To achieve this main goal, the following sub-goals have been set for the next five years (2023-2028):






-  ICYE will raise awareness on environmental issues and the impact of climate change as well as campaign and advocate with partners for environmental sustainability.
-  ICYE will decrease the negative effects on the environment through different actions, including by contributing to avoid, reduce or compensate carbon emissions caused by the international mobility in all our work and activities.
-  ICYE will take on a leadership role in green volunteering and exchange programmes and develop ambitious ecological and sustainability standards in our work.
-  ICYE will encourage all its National Committees (NC) to strive for green and sustainable offices.

Environmental Strategies at Federation Level



At the Federation level, ICYE will mainstream an ecological approach in its work and internalise the corresponding ecological costs. This includes the following actions:

-  The Federation will develop strategies to compensate for the CO2 footprint caused by international travel within ICYE.
-  For events, meetings and trainings, especially the Board of Manager's (BoM) statutory and Sub-Committee meetings, the sessions of the General Assembly (GA) as well as other regional or global meetings or training workshops, the Federation will develop a green guideline to assess these meetings from an ecological perspective and act accordingly.
-  The Federation will develop guidelines for the NCs on how to assess their office culture and workspace from an ecological perspective and to act accordingly. For this, the experiences from the NCs and their good practices will be collected and shared in those guidelines.
-  The Federation will develop training and awareness raising materials for NCs to use in their daily activities.
-  Grant projects coordinated by the ICYE International Office will follow ambitious standards on ecological sustainability regarding travel, events, training as well as raising awareness on ecological issues.

-  The Federation will develop a Green Guide for participants applicable for all types of volunteering projects and exchanges.
-  The Federation will offer participants interested in ecological issues a green volunteering package with high standards of environmental action and projects specifically dedicated to environmental sustainability.
-  The ICYE International Office will participate together with other networks and partners in global campaigns on ecological topics.
-  The ICYE International Office will develop and implement strategies to convert the office in Berlin into a green office.
-  The ICYE International Office will support the Federation to raise funds for the implementation of our Policy “Greener Together”.

Environmental Strategies at NC Level



National Committees will embrace ecological sustainability at different levels:

- 🌱 NCs will invest in awareness raising for their different target groups and in training their staff, co-workers and volunteers on environmental topics.
- 🌱 NCs will engage with local organisations working on environmental issues and identify environmental projects in their countries that offer volunteer and exchange opportunities.
- 🌱 NCs will motivate participants to engage in local, national and global movements on climate change.
- 🌱 NCs will include campaign or advocacy actions and other forms of engagement regarding the topic in their work.
- 🌱 NCs will promote the Federation's ecological commitments in an honest and transparent way in their marketing work.
- 🌱 NCs will commit to develop, implement and evaluate strategies for a green office and, according to their possibilities, provide the necessary resources for this.
- 🌱 NCs will commit to work together to realise the commitments at Federational level.

Implementation and Evaluation of the Green Policy



Our policy “Greener Together” will be accompanied by an Implementation Handbook for the Federation. This will include checklists, relevant links, case studies and practical examples.

ICYE acknowledges that change takes time and that every action counts. As a Federation, we want to strengthen individual engagement but also strive to promote collective action to achieve systemic change.

A committee made up of representatives from NCs, BoM and IO will annually assess the progress of the implementation of our Policy “Greener Together”. They will use and respectively update an annual monitoring and evaluation plan with objectives, indicators and activities. In the Federation’s annual review report, the progress on the implementation of the Policy will be documented.

Abbreviations

- BoM** Board of Managers
- GA** General Assembly
- ICYE** International Cultural Youth Exchange
- IO** International Office
- NC** National Committee
- NGO** Non-Governmental Organisation
- SDG** Sustainable Development Goals

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