

1949 - 2024

**75 years**  
**International**  
**Cultural**  
**Youth**  
**Exchange**

Inspiring change  
through youth exchange

*59. Newsletter*

# 75 Years with ICYE

**Dear friends,**

The year 2024 marks the 75th anniversary of ICYE. We are celebrating 75 years of promoting peace, social justice and intercultural understanding.

Over the years ICYE has changed a lot and has been through many ups and downs. ICYE has grown together with all of us, and it has always been a place for learning and reflection. Thanks to every single person involved in ICYE, all of us have worked tirelessly for 75 years to ensure cultural exchanges that promote our shared values.

More than **32,000 volunteers** later we are here, facing new challenges and responding to the changing world.

In this issue of the ICYE Newsletter, we invite you to go back in time with us and reflect on the way ICYE has grown over the years. You will find inspiring stories of former and current volunteers, interviews and updates from the Federation. We hope you enjoy reading the newsletter!

# The Voices of Volunteers

## ICYE Youth Engagement Committee

### Sophie Bader

ICYE Volunteer 2022/23

From Germany to Costa Rica

ICYE Youth Engagement Committee 2024/25

One sentence I'll always remember about my voluntary service was that my host father said that friendship and love don't have a language, because they are so universal. We can have friendships with people all over the world, no matter where they come from.

Your mind gets so open during this year, getting to know so many different people from different countries, from different backgrounds, exchanging and questioning yourself. Your mind gets so open that it doesn't fit in the old place anymore and you want to continue getting to know new people.

### Omar Moreno

ICYE Volunteer 2023/24

From Mexico to Germany

ICYE Youth Engagement Committee 2024/25

My perspective changed when I had to take care of a guy in a wheelchair. He had no barriers, he was always trying to be independent, he taught me how to see life from a perspective where limits are just in our mind.

My key takeaway is that there are no boundaries and we are similar in many ways. Volunteering is not an easy path. Some moments we don't know how to deal with ourselves, and there are going to be ups and downs. But you have to learn from the downs, and the good ones will stick with you.

Looking back I can never remember anything bad that happened. I just have highlights and how wonderful this experience was.



# Marjatta Linnanvuo

ICYE Exchange Student 1960/61

From Finland to the USA

I went to Virginia as an exchange student just before the last grade of my upper secondary school in Helsinki. It was not very common to apply for an exchange student program at that time. However, some pupils at my school had already done an exchange student period abroad. First I traveled to Stockholm by boat and from there by train via Copenhagen to Brussels. Then I had a flight with Sabena over the Atlantic Ocean to New York. The days-lasting journey made a feeling of a trip to the end of the world.



*Contacts with home and friends were handled with letters and cards. I phoned home only two or three times during that year.*

That was time before computers and mobile phones. At the beginning I missed home and Finland. American lifestyle seemed so strange. My American parents had no children, so all their energy and interest was directed at me. I got Americanized fast. Clothing changed at once. I felt awkward in my American dresses, hats and gloves.

In my school Falls Church High the atmosphere was relaxed. Teachers and schoolmates were friendly. School life, hobbies, sporting events and evening dress proms introduced me to an American way of living, and in half a year I started to look at things with American eyes. The ads on the radio began to sound interesting and hamburger places began to seem attractive.

Racial segregation in US was incomprehensible and it was hardly discussed in my family. At my school many classmates supported racial segregation. *The civil right movement was just emerging.*

With my family I traveled along the east coast to many nice places and hiked in the Appalachian Mountains. On Sundays we went to church. I was also taken to many cultural events in Washington D.C. In concerts I heard and saw many world-famous artists. At Harry Belafonte`s concert I even had a chance to meet him personally backstage. On Broadway I saw the musical My Fair Lady.

**The year in US as an exchange student was wonderful.** My eyes opened and interest in the surrounding world and internationalism aroused. I got interested in politics and learned to understand different kinds of people.

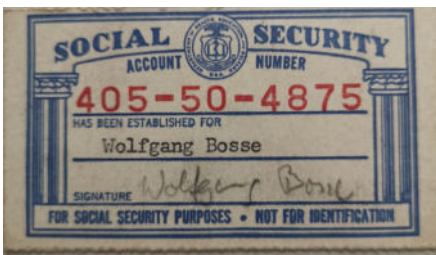


# Wolfgang Bosse

ICYE Exchange Student 1955/56  
From Germany to the USA

Personal archive

Wolfgang Bosse was an ICYE exchange student in 1955/56 and he shared with us different newspaper articles, letters, and postcards that he had saved from his year abroad. He got to experience the life in the USA, and he even met the president!



*Steve Pollock*

## HOOP-POLE JR.

MT. VERNON HIGH SCHOOL, MT. VERNON, INDIANA

February 7, 1956 Page 1

RECENT VISITOR

We were recently honored by a day's visit from Wolfgang Bosse, a student from Germany. Wolfgang was the recipient of a scholarship to go to a high school in the United States. This scholarship is sponsored yearly by various states and churches in the United States. Wolfgang is a very intelligent young man. He is 16 years old and is a senior at Henderson City High, Henderson Kentucky. His scholarship entitles him to live with an American family for one year. He is now residing in Henderson with a minister and his family.

Coming from a musical family, Wolfgang is a very talented cellist. He currently plays with the Evansville Philharmonic Orchestra and is in the All-City Orchestra in Evansville.

Wolfgang is very happy to be in America and is delighted with the American school system. He especially emphasized that he liked the extra curricular activities in our schools. He presented many of the differences between our school system and that of Germany when he spoke in our auditorium program. One of these differences was the courses that are offered here in relation to the ones given over there. They have only four years of grade school in comparison to the eight years we have. In their high schools they also emphasize the study of foreign language more than we do. For instance, he said that he studied Greek, French, Latin, German, and English. That is much more than is required here. In talking with him we noticed that on an over all scale their school is mostly all work and no play. Having visited our classes Wolfgang found our school to be run very differently from other schools he has seen in America. I'm sure we all enjoyed hearing and talking with Wolfgang, and we wish to thank Mrs. Martin, who is chairman of the auditorium committee, for bringing him over for a days visit.

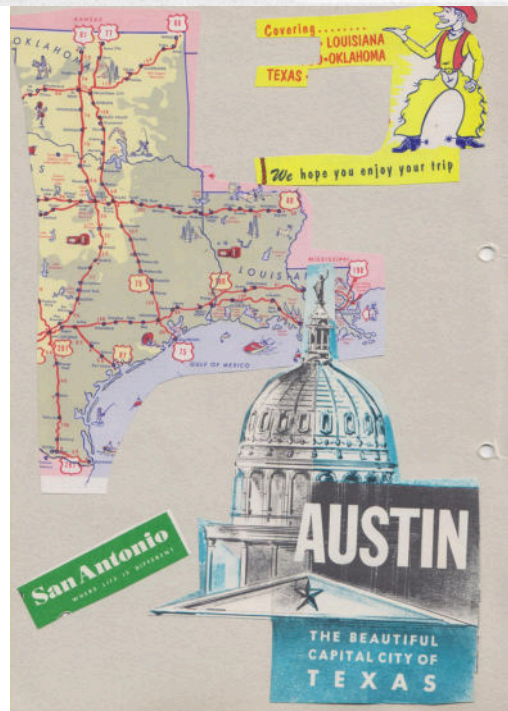
Ad in a Connecticut paper: "For Sale--CHIMP--parakeet guaranteed to say 'Davy Crockett.'"



Mr. John H. Eberly  
vor dem Weißen Haus

01. AUGUST  
1956

Präsident Eisenhower  
mit Austauschschülern  
des Brethren Service



## Irma Ertman

ICYE Exchange Student, 1960/61  
From Finland to the USA

*Today, more than 50 years have passed from my year as an ICYE exchangee in the USA - it's time for reflection from the point of view of a retiree!*



What was the most important, the most meaningful I got from the exchange experience? I have come to the conclusion that it definitely is the people: My dear American family with whom we have kept up the contact for decades, including new generations, visiting, sharing joys and sorrows. My American and other ICYE friends, of which I wish to mention especially Laura, ICYEer herself a year before me in Sweden, and her husband John in Iowa, as well as Anna Thora from Iceland, in Iowa at the same time as myself, and her husband Magnus - such true friends through years! And of course, the wonderful group of former Finnish ICYE activists that still gathers at least twice a year in toto plus in smaller groups through the year.

Yes, certainly one of the important goals of the exchange year was to learn English fluently, as we did. It has also been a valuable facilitator professionally, it has given courage and self-esteem to meet and understand people of different cultures and circumstances. **The ICYE exchange year was truly an eye-opener and a beginning of a long friendship, be it people, countries, languages or professional choices!**



In a survey in 2021 in which 209 alumni participated, nearly all the respondents say that their exchange/ volunteer year with ICYE has influenced their lives. In what way, that varies - e.g. some say, they have become a global citizen, others mention that their values have changed, they indicate they have become a better, interculturally more sensitive person with a broader view of the world, respecting other people's beliefs and ways of life. The aspect of independence and self-confidence is mentioned over and over and how the time abroad influenced career paths.

**"I became a better person, I learned to value people and my surroundings more. My exchange year was the best year of my life."**



## Karin Press

ICYE Exchange Student 1953/54  
From Germany to the USA

*In an interview from 2021 Karin Press shares some insights from her exchange year in the USA and how this impacted her life. Here are some of the highlights from her story:*

My American family had 3 children. A wonderful family, but of course life there was very different from back home in post-war Germany. I felt like I had landed in paradise. Where, for example my own mother stored 350 kg of potatoes for the winter, you just went to the grocer and got a bag of 2kg.

When the school year was over and before I returned to Germany, I was asked to give a lecture tour through youth camps of the Church of the Brethren. That was very exciting. In fact, 20 years later, a man came up to me and asked me if I knew him. No. "But I was the boy who always sat at your feet during your lectures on those two evenings." I was really pleased that someone remembered me and my words like that.

Later, after I was back in Germany, we classmates from the USA met again and again over the years, either all at official class reunions in the USA, which took place every two years; or in person, when someone came to Europe and visited my family and me. I still email with one or the other almost daily.

My three children and their children have also been exchange students. At least 2 of them with ICYE. None of them would want to miss the time abroad. The exchange has made everyone much more confident.

As 'words of wisdom' I can pass on this: With open eyes and an open heart, without prejudice, accept what you find.





## Interview with Adeolu Onamade

Treasurer at the ICYE Board of Managers (BoM)

ICYE Nigeria

### How did you join ICYE?

My journey began in the early 1990s when I started working as a co-worker with ICYE Nigeria. At that time, I was driven by a strong [belief in the power of volunteering to break down barriers between cultures and promote mutual respect and understanding](#). My early work involved helping foreign volunteers settle into Nigerian society, assisting them in overcoming the culture shock, and preparing Nigerian volunteers for their own international experiences. This initial experience with ICYE ignited a lifelong passion for international volunteering and set the stage for my continued involvement with the organization.

### What makes you stay in ICYE?

I have seen firsthand the transformative power of volunteering — how it can change lives, foster understanding, and build bridges between cultures. The recent introduction of new [policies](#), such as the [Safer Together Policy](#) to address sexual violence, the [Greener Together Policy](#) to promote climate justice, and the [Code of Ethical Practice](#), resonates with my values and commitment to ethical and sustainable volunteering.

### What makes ICYE different than other IVS organisations?

Its unique approach to intercultural exchange, commitment to long-term volunteering, emphasis on reciprocal exchange, and focus on social justice and ethical practices make ICYE distinct in its field.

### How has ICYE changed since you started with ICYE?

The expansion of ICYE's network has led to a more diverse range of volunteer opportunities, allowing the organization to address a broader spectrum of global issues. This growth has been accompanied by a deepening commitment to ethical standards and safeguarding, ensuring the protection and well-being of all participants. With a focus on global citizenship education, ICYE is empowering volunteers to become informed and engaged citizens who can contribute to a better world.

### Why would you recommend international volunteering for young people?

International volunteering for young people offers a unique and transformative experience. It not only fosters personal growth and intercultural understanding but also provides the opportunity to contribute to meaningful social change, build lifelong connections, and enhance career prospects. *Most importantly, it equips young people with the knowledge, skills, and perspective needed to become engaged global citizens committed to making a positive impact on the world.*



# Photos taken over the years

Kenya, XXII ICYE General Assembly, 2001



South Korea, Regional Conference, 1998



Nigeria, Mid-year conference, 1994



Cartagena, XXIII GA, 2003



Nigeria, Citizenship & Leadership Training, 1996



New Zealand, XXVI GA, 2009



# Decolonise IVS!

In the final months of our 3-year long Erasmus+ funded project, we were excited to reflect on the achievement of our objectives:

1. Efficient and diverse consortium -> high quality project implementation,
2. Dialogue and research space on neo-colonial and racist structures in LTMV
3. Examine and deconstruct colonial power structures and climate colonialism within their structures, programmes and partnerships
4. Participatory advocacy plan to address existing inequalities in IVS

These vibrant dissemination spaces began the process of sharing our outputs and lessons learned:

## Workshop: Empowering Youth through Decolonised Mobility

12-13 April, 2024  
Brussels, Belgium

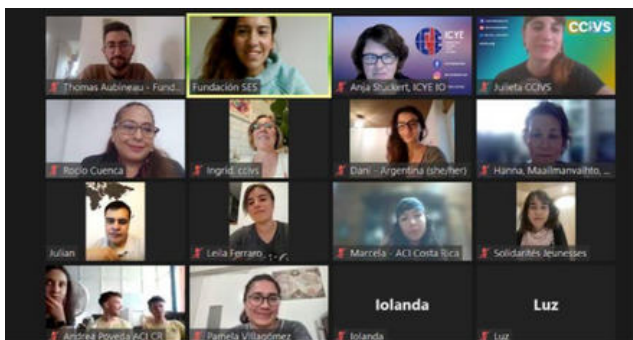
## Webinars: Decolonise IVS!

### Dissemination event

18th June, 2024 - Spanish  
9th July, 2024 - English



get ready for equality..



## Visual Storytelling Training

5-11 May, 2024  
Vienna, Austria



## Tool Fair and Training of Trainers

7-13 August, 2024  
Emen, Bulgaria

You can also read more about the Decolonise IVS! project, and the outcomes in the last issue of the [Decolonise IVS! Newsletter](#).



# ICYE Youth Engagement Committee

March-August 2024

Since they were selected in March, the members of the ICYE Youth Engagement Committee (YEC) went through an on-boarding period that ended with an in-person meeting in Kenya where 8 of them worked on creating an action plan.

During the 5-day workshop participants discussed how they can engage and retain more people in our Federation, how to attract more volunteers and ensure meaningful youth engagement.

They also worked together to organise a Networking event with local organizations. They presented their action plan and collected valuable feedback from the guests. Among the topics discussed were: Decolonising IVS, storytelling as a tool for youth engagement, types of volunteers, and the action plan of the YEC.

After building a strong foundation, the YEC will continue their work online. The Federation appreciates their work and will continue to support them!





# LIVE-Ex

5-8 June, 2024  
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania



# LIVE

Exchanges

*We are so happy to share with you the start of our new project for Virtual exchanges - LIVE-Ex!*

In May 2024, our new project manager - Nicolaus Mukasa - was in Berlin for his onboarding. Then, from June 5-8, our team gathered in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania for a kick-off meeting for the LIVE-Ex Project. Participants from the ICYE IO, CCIVS, ASTOVOT, SAVWA, ICYE Nigeria, AJUDE, ZWA, COFO, ICYE Kenya, and UPTZ came together and worked together to strategize the LIVE-Ex Project, which will last three years.

Now the team is preparing for a meeting in South Africa in October and we are so excited to see what they will achieve in the future!





# Strategy Workshop

22-24 June, 2024  
Berlin, Germany

At the end of June, the National Committees from Argentina, Costa Rica, Germany, Kenya, Nigeria, Philippines, Switzerland and Thailand, together with the Board of Managers and the International Office of ICYE gathered in Berlin for a 3-day **Strategy Workshop to work on the first draft of the ICYE Strategic Plan for 2026-2030.**



They developed the objectives and strategic areas for the Plan. The first draft of strategic plan recommends actions to support the Federation to improve the quality and impact of our volunteer youth exchange programmes, increase financial sustainability and strengthen cooperation among its members. In the next months, the working group will discuss the draft with the members and collect their feedback.

# Board of Managers Meeting

25-26 June, 2024  
Berlin, Germany

After the Strategy Workshop, the Board of Managers stayed for an additional 2-day meeting with the International office.

They talked about the challenges in the Federation, the progress of the working groups and projects as well as the tasks for the IO in the next six months.



# The volunteers at the ICYE International Office

In September there were changes at the ICYE International Office in Berlin and we said goodbye to our previous volunteer Ruslana and also welcomed the new volunteer for the next year - Simone.

We are very thankful for Ruslana's exceptional commitment and passion to making a meaningful contribution to the work of International Office during the her volunteering time. She was key in launching the ICYE Youth Engagement Committee and greatly improved ICYE's social media presence. We wish her the best of luck in her next journey in Brussels with the European Commission.

## Hello from Simone!

*Hi everyone!*

*I'm Simone, 27 years old and from Denmark. It says in my blue book from high school that in 10 years I'll be living in Germany, going to the Oktoberfest and riding nice ponies – there aren't that many horses in Berlin Mitte, but I guess you can imagine, how incredibly happy it makes me going to the office and seeing the Fernsehturm (TV Tower) every morning. I made it in 8 years, so I guess I'll have to stay for a couple more.*



*I've been a part of ICYE Denmark since January, and since mid- September in the International Office. So far, it has taught me so much, I don't even know where to begin and where to end. I've never had a workplace filled with such cool, unselfish people, that show up and give so much of themselves to others.*

*I love being a part of this community, and I'm proud and happy with the opportunity to be working for all of you at the office here in Berlin.*

*Some of you I've met already, and some of you I hope I'll get the chance to meet within the next year!*

*Ciao ciao und tchüssie <3*



**Co-funded by  
the European Union**