



Annual Report

2024-25



75 YEARS

ICYE
1949-2024



Contents

Preface	4
ICYE in 2024-25	6
YEC	18
Voices from our volunteers	21
Our work on DEI in 2024-25	24
Reporting on our Policies	28
Safer Together	28
Care to Engage	30
Greener Together	31
Our projects in 2024-25	34
LIVE EX	34
Host Projects promoting DEI	37
New Trends in IVS	42
Our Finances	44
Outlook	47
Our Partnerships	49
Acknowledgements	50

Preface

As we reflect on the programme year 2024–2025, we are reminded of both the fragility and the resilience of our global community. This year has been marked by the retirement of long-serving colleagues who leave behind a legacy of dedication, as well as by the stark realities of natural disasters and man-made crises—from post-election political repression to ongoing wars—that continue to affect young people and communities across the world. In such times, ICYE’s mission of fostering peace, social justice, environmental sustainability, and solidarity through youth exchange remains not only relevant but profoundly urgent.

Amidst these challenges, there has also been much to celebrate. Across the Federation, anniversaries have highlighted the rich history and continued vitality of our movement: ICYE celebrated its 75th anniversary, United Planet USA its 23rd, and ICYE Philippines its 10th, to name a few. These milestones are a testament to the enduring power of international voluntary service (IVS) to connect people and inspire action across generations. The diversity of organisations in the Federation further demonstrates how – with organisations both new and old – we use every opportunity to learn from each other and grow together in our commitments.

Programmatically, ICYE has continued to innovate and advocate. Advocacy collaborations with our sibling networks have sought to increase the visibility of the IVS movement and

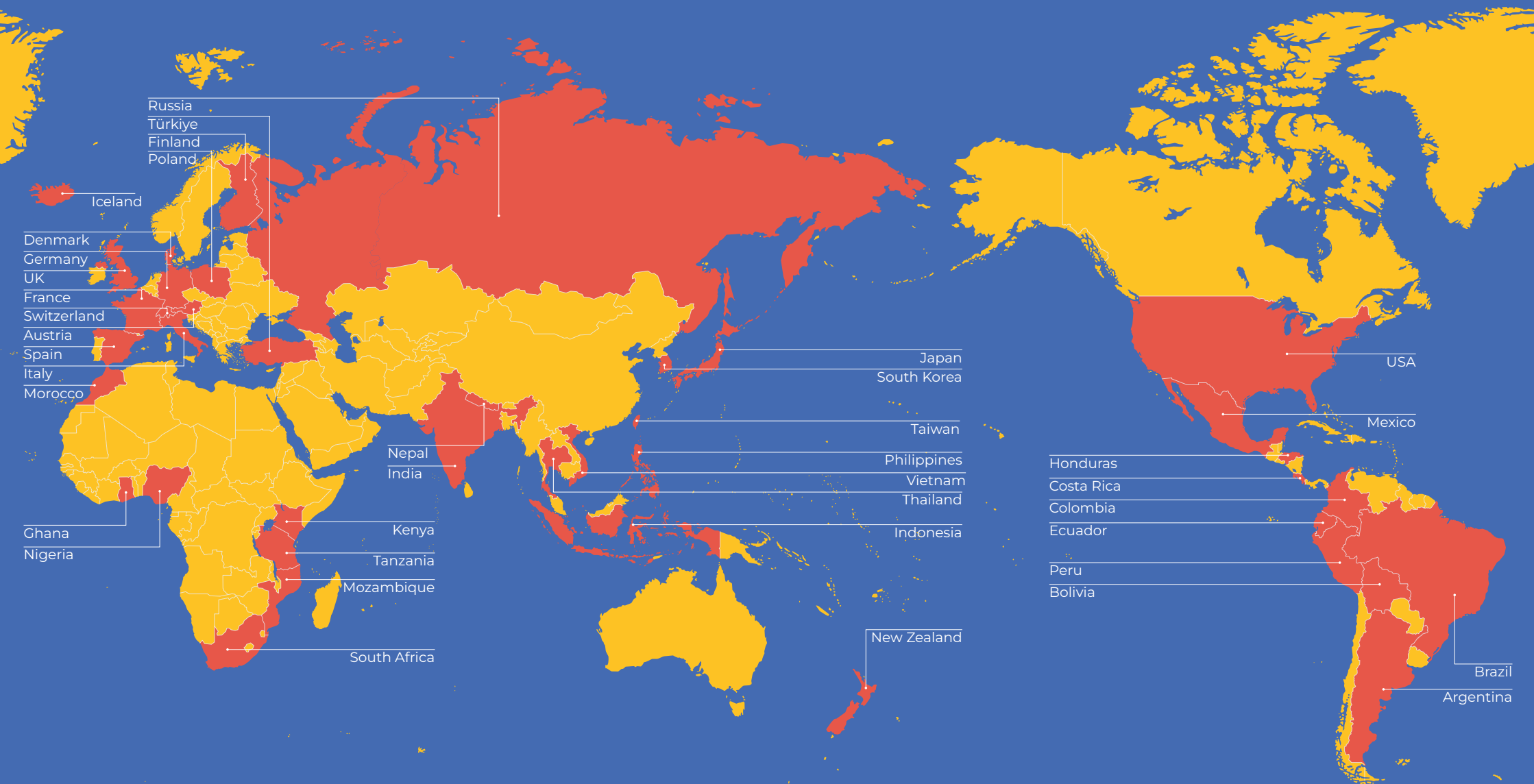
contribute to collective “future thinking” about where intercultural exchanges must go next. Members have shown creativity and resilience in diversifying funding streams, developing new forms of projects and cooperation, and even experimenting with virtual exchange through the promising LIVE-Ex mentorship programme and its online dialogues that reach even wider.

Our Federation’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) has been particularly visible this year. The DEI Sub-Committee carried out significant interventions, including the launch of new tools and the hosting of Community of Practice sessions, while many member organisations advanced DEI at national and local levels. Together, these actions strengthen our ability to create truly inclusive spaces for youth participation. You can read more about these in the following pages of this Annual Report.

As we look forward, we carry with us the lessons, challenges, and achievements of this past year. ICYE remains committed to working in solidarity with our members and partners to ensure that youth exchanges continue to be a vehicle for peace, justice, and intercultural understanding in an increasingly polarizing world.



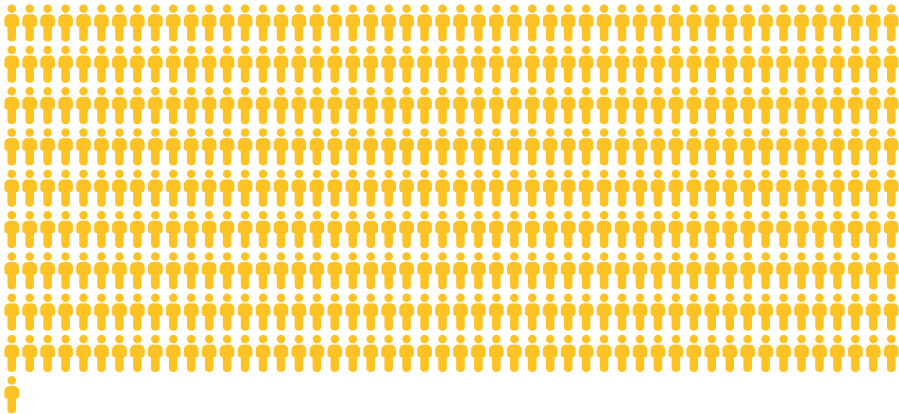
ICYE in 2024-25



In 2024-25, the ICYE Federation consisted of 31 full members and 9 associate members. Several members are also part in other networks: 10 in CCIVS, 5 in Alliance, 3 in NVDA. ICYE Kenya is part of NAVO, ICYE Mozambique of SAWC - Southern Africa Work-camp Cooperation and ICYE Türkiye is part of LOOM (Intercultural Learning Network) and the Prisma European Network.

Our volunteer numbers in 2024-25

451 ICYE international volunteers



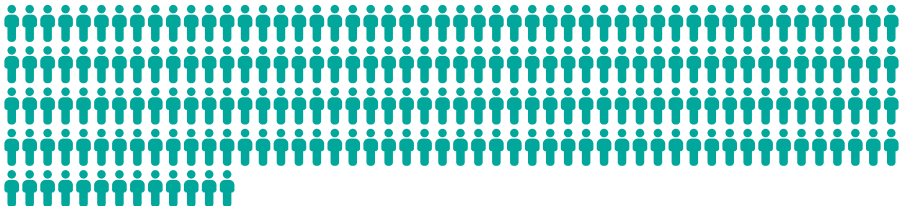
10 South-South exchanges



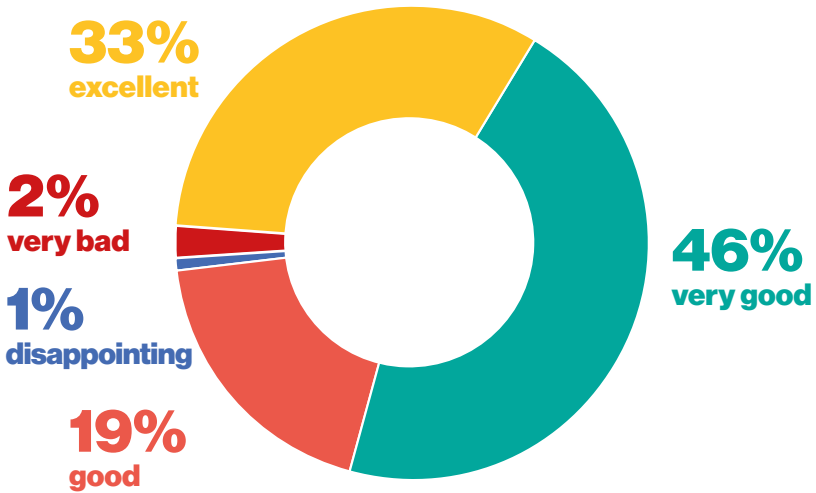
26 virtual volunteers



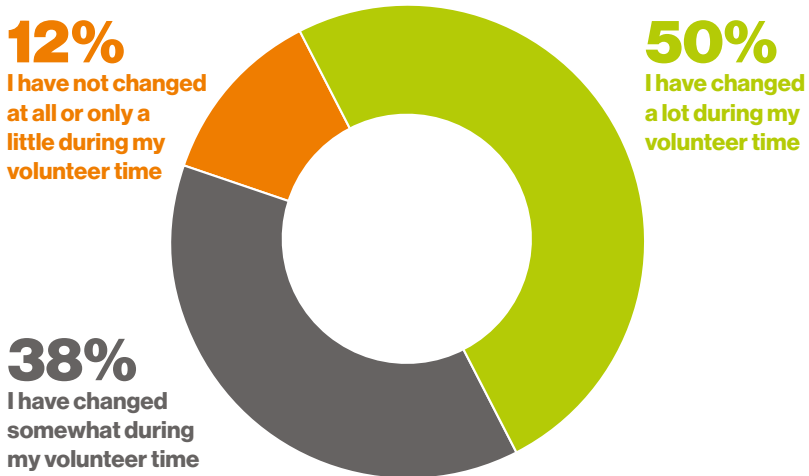
213 National volunteers



Volunteers' overall satisfaction with their exchange



Impact of volunteering



In the programme year 2024-25, ICYE members offered volunteering opportunities to 451 young people (compared to 503 in 2023-24 and 558 in 2022-23). 226 volunteers additionally engaged in virtual volunteering – most of them through three

members (ICYE Mozambique, ICYE Nigeria and ICYE USA). Ten volunteers participated in a South – South exchange – five more than the year before. ICYE members engaged with 24 young people with fewer opportunities. Volunteers were also exchanged outside of the ICYE programme:

- 733 through the European Solidarity Corps programme,
- 254 through other government funded programmes and
- 286 with non-ICYE organisations in countries where ICYE doesn't have a member or with organisations from other networks like Alliance, often for short term workcamps which are not considered a part of the ICYE programme.

During the programme year, 29 young people were denied a visa and were therefore unable to take up their volunteering assignments. Others faced delays in securing consular appointments or withdrew due to high financial and logistical barriers—such as the need to travel abroad to apply as there is no corresponding consulate in their own country. In some cases, applications were rejected without justification, based on assumptions that the volunteers would not return home. Visa requirements have also become more demanding in several countries, with increased fees and higher proof-of-funds thresholds. At the same time, the digitalisation of visa systems—such as electronic issuance and QR code entry—has simplified some processes while introducing new challenges, including unreliable internet access, language barriers, inflexible online systems, and limited payment options.



I learnt that I had many prejudices considering disabled people and their independence. I was able to overcome them and broaden my horizon in an unexpected manner

Volunteer evaluation 2024-25

In 2024-25, the ICYE Federation had 438 active host projects – of which

- 38% were in the educational field,
- 13% worked on environmental topics,
- 13% targeted health issues and
- 12% engaged socially excluded groups.
- The remaining projects were distributed among the fields of sports and arts, human rights, office work and others.

Achievements in 2024-25

Several members reported that in 2024-25 they have expanded their programmes (e.g. to include a stronger focus on active citizenship) and their collaborations. ICYE Austria and ICYE Germany celebrated their 75th anniversary with ICYE Germany publishing [75 Years Commitment for Peace](#). ICYE Denmark has increased the number of young people they are working with to 719 active youth in six local branches. ICYE South Korea worked closely with the YMCA in Seoul who contributed to their staff salaries. Several members highlighted that their biggest achievement was to survive financially.

ICYE Austria was able for the first time to send Humanitarian Aid volunteers as well as strengthening their collaboration with schools through numerous workshops, e.g. on extremism prevention. They advanced in their work on inclusion by offering counselling, cooperation with other organisations, and supporting volunteers with special needs. Together with the Social Ministry of Austria they finalised the [Quality Standards for the International Volunteering Service](#) (in German only) which includes an E-Learning component for volunteers. On March 12, 2025, they were awarded the ÖGK Corporate Health Promotion Seal that followed a two-year process of coaching, workshops, and 'healthy dialogues'.

Challenges our members faced in 2024-25

Many members reported that finding sufficient volunteers to participate in the programme remains a big challenge. The economic situation in many countries still poses a major barrier for the programme along with an overall increase of costs. Moreover, finding adequate accommodation and sufficient host projects for the volunteers, remains challenging. In some countries, the instable political context or an increase of violence in the country makes some volunteers choose other destinations.

Several members mentioned that a high staff turnover and finding suitable employees result in a significant overload for the existing staff, thereby limiting member's ability to develop new strategies and initiatives.

Moreover, the current visa requirements/restrictions/processing times and the exceptionally high cost of obtaining visas make it more difficult to find suitable candidates. More volunteers also encounter mental health issues. Additionally, it has become more difficult to motivate returnees to engage with ICYE after their volunteering time.

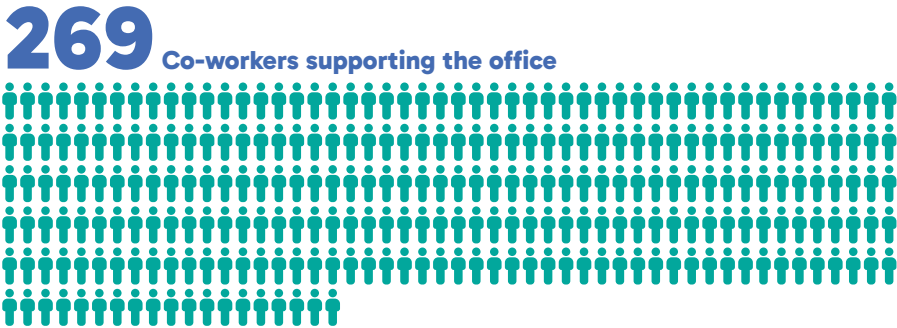
ICYE Nigeria faced a major operational challenge following the decision of the European Commission to halt the sending of volunteers financed through the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) due to security concerns. This decision significantly impacted the organisation's incoming volunteer programme. Despite this suspension, ICYE Nigeria successfully implemented impactful volunteer exchanges, placing international volunteers in underserved communities such as Makoko and Bariga, where they contributed to education, youth development, and community support.

In Denmark the ESC programme was cut by 75% which led to a severe reduction of resources in Dansk ICYE and limited the programme's development comprehensively.

ICYE Russia continues to be unable to host volunteers due to the war with the Ukraine. Sending volunteers is also a challenge as many countries don't issue visa to Russian citizens anymore. Moreover, plane tickets are costly, and few flight connections exist to European countries.

The region where ICYE Brazil is situated suffered a severe flood in May 2024 with the airport closed for about 6 months which led to the cancellation of their incoming volunteers for August 2024.

Staff situation in ICYE member organisations in 2023-24



Grant funded projects

Members reported coordinating or participating in 29 EU funded projects and in 12 projects financed by other donors. These included grant projects on:

- environmental topics (like LIVE-Ex - in which ICYE Mozambique, ICYE Tanzania, ICYE Kenya, and ICYE Nigeria participate, 'Eco Stories' by ICYE Costa Rica, 'Green Ambassadors Kenya' by ICYE Denmark, 'Kijani Plastic' by ICYE Kenya),
- humanitarian aid (e.g. 'Loca and Solaric' by ICYE Ecuador, 'Solidarity Action for Sustainable and Inclusive Development' by ICYE Brazil and ICYE Vietnam)
- inclusion ('Inclusive Organisation' by ICYE Austria, 'Inclusive local communities' by ICYE Denmark, 'Inclusive Learning in Volunteering Experiences' by ICYE Türkiye).
- ICYE Germany implemented 'Globe - Workshops for returnees and pupils'.
- ICYE Peru got funds from the Ministry for Women to work with vulnerable groups.
- ICYE Argentina conducted [Voluntariar – Estudio sobre Voluntariado Internacional en la Argentina](#) with funds from France Volontaires and engaged in cultural sponsorship projects supported by the Government of the City of Buenos Aires and Banco Supervielle.
- ICYE Türkiye participated in the 'MEDiterranean Youth for Creative Impact' and the 'Volunteers for a New Beginning - Migrant and Refugee Empowerment' projects.
- ICYE USA organised virtual exchanges together with the American Student Association and the Stevens Initiative.

Campaigns

In 2024-25, members again participated in different campaigns:

- Several ICYE members engaged in the Living Earth and LIVE -Ex Campaigns.
- ICYE Costa Rica shared about their ecological projects in the CCIVS podcast *Rooted in Nature - Stories from the Beach to the Cloud Forest*.
- ICYE India conducted Free Health Checkup camps in rural areas.
- ICYE Argentina and ICYE Mexico participated in the *Anti-Racism* and the *Greener Together* social media campaigns from the ICYE International Office.
- ICYE Denmark organised the *Glocal Dinner* campaign, where members created dinners from around the world for friends and family, promoting ICYE.
- ICYE Ghana promoted the world heritage sites with UNESCO.
- ICYE Philippines took part in the 1st Central Visayas Region Volunteer Expo 2024, the International Bamboo Day 2024, National Volunteer Month in December 2024 and IVD 2024 Celebration.
- ICYE Tanzania contributed to the climate justice campaign by engaging in beach clean-ups and tree planting.



I learned new traditions and how to resolve difficult situations on my own. I learned to value my solitude and to take risks, as well as making friends along the way. It has been the best experience of my life

Volunteer evaluation 2024-25

Partnerships

ICYE members have engaged with partners at different levels. Some found new partners for host projects while others are working together with IVS organisations in projects with whom they did not collaborate before - like our members in the LIVE-Ex project who are collaborating with other IVS organisations in Sub-Saharan Africa.

- ICYE Costa Rica started to collaborate with a famous pizzeria to organize their language café and ICYE Ecuador has built a new partnership with the Asociacion Humboldt – a language institute - to promote ICYE's volunteering programme with the students.
- ICYE Peru started looking into a collaboration with VolTra in Hong Kong while other members are securing more partners in Europe, as the ICYE members often can't host all their volunteers.
- ICYE India is cooperating with several companies to facilitate their Corporate Social Responsibility activities.



- ICYE Türkiye is partnering with several organisations (Les Têtes de l'Art, Asociación Cultural En Construcción, UNDP).
- ICYE Mexico has entered into a new agreement with Universidad Pablo Guardado, an important university in the south of the country, that will promote their short-term programme as part of their exchange programme. ICYE Philippines has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Foundation University and Negros Oriental State University. ICYE Thailand has started collaborating with NOCN in the UK to include the *Diploma in International Volunteering* in their volunteering.
- ICYE Argentina is implementing a project with La Flecha, funded by France Volontaires. They are also developing initiatives with the National University of San Martín and have started to establish stronger ties with other organisations in Argentina that host volunteers from the Weltwärts programme.



Learning to adapt to different ways of thinking and communicating has been my biggest intercultural lesson. Being surrounded by people with different backgrounds taught me to stay open, listen more, and not assume my way is the only one. Personally, I've grown more confident and independent by stepping outside my comfort zone

Volunteer evaluation 2024-25



The Youth Engagement Committee (YEC)

The Youth Engagement Committee (YEC) was established in early 2024 with a primary objective to remind the Federation of the unique challenges faced by young people and to harness their potential as catalysts for positive change. In August 2024, the YEC had its first in-person meeting in Nairobi, Kenya. This was the first time youth representatives from ICYE's global network gathered in person to reflect on the Federation's goals and challenges. At this encounter, the YEC created their Action Plan and presented it to an audience of local stakeholders from Kenyan NGOs, international volunteering organisations, and UNESCO. The YEC Action Plan seeks to achieve the following objectives at the Federational level.

To ensure equitable work and participation, each goal has a working group that meets at least once a month. Furthermore, there is one monthly plenary meeting where each group presents their ideas, progress, and challenges.

ACTION PLAN



GOAL 1

Engage young people before, during, and after their volunteering abroad.



GOAL 2

Ensure the active participation and engagement of youth at different levels of the ICYE Federation.



GOAL 3

Decolonise the narrative and language on volunteering in the ICYE Federation

The YEC's first goal is to become a platform for former and current ICYE volunteers to connect, grow and promote ICYE's values. To achieve this vision, the YEC has contributed to the revision of the Minimal Conditions and has started planning interventions on promoting homecoming workshops for returnees, as they are vital to ensure the continued engagement of volunteers after the completion of their voluntary service.

Goal 2 is key to the success of the YEC since it allows the members to merge into the structure of the Federation and build on their cultural and generational perspective. Since ICYE's target audience are young adults, it is indispensable to give them a voice and incorporate their ideas to create a journey of mutual learning. YEC members have contributed strongly to the ICYE Anti-racism Week joint campaign, the ICYE 75th anniversary Newsletter, a YEC special edition Newsletter, and ICONic youth event hosted by CCIVS.

Regarding Goal 3, the YEC is actively participating in the DEI Sub-Committee, where they organised the online dialogue *Volunteering and Intercultural Understanding: A Decolonised Approach to Global Engagement*. The YEC is also working on developing a decolonized glossary of expressions so that the Federation and its members can be more attentive to the narrative and language of their communication work.

One of the strengths of the YEC is the representation of a variety of countries and every region. To embrace a participatory space, the YEC designed guidelines for decision-making and participation that secure an efficient distribution of responsibilities. These documents also allow the creation of ad-hoc committees according to circumstances, such as the General Assembly. Additionally, the YEC views their Action Plan as a living document that can be developed and adapted to the changing realities and opportunities.

In March 2025, YEC members gathered in Denmark for a workshop on empowering young voices. They worked on their communication skills, youth engagement strategies, and hosted a Council of Europe - EYF monitoring visit. The workshop strengthened the group's confidence and cohesion, reaffirming the importance of youth engagement within ICYE. Looking ahead, the YEC aims to deepen its collaboration with the European Youth Foundation and the Council of Europe to expand opportunities for young people's participation and ensure that their voices continue to shape the Federation's future.



As I went through each day, it really was an experience learning how to adapt and do even small things in a different way. It really brings perspective.

Volunteer evaluation 2024-25



Voices from our volunteers

My volunteering experience in Austria

Laure Cades-Haquin

Six years ago, I did nine months of civic service in France, wanting to take a break from my studies. This first experience taught me a lot on a personal and professional level—working in a team, managing conflicts, public speaking, leading workshops, and more. I got to know myself better and gained a clearer understanding of my professional aspirations. This first experience of civic engagement profoundly changed my life, so I wanted to continue this commitment, but this time on a European scale. Taking part in a European Solidarity Corps (ESC) mission seemed to perfectly match my aspirations.

I met my partner during this first assignment in France, so it was obvious to us that we would do this volunteering together. Because of our respective disabilities (I have a motor disability and use a rollator or sometimes a wheelchair), we decided to start with a short-term assignment of two months before considering a long-term one. In 2024, we carried out a mission at the Istituto Dei Sordi di Torino, where we taught Italian, ran adapted cooking workshops, and took part in Italian sign language classes. This experience confirmed our desire to continue with a long-term mission.

As for our current project, we were supported once again by our sending organisation, Parours le Monde Grand Ouest, especially in finding a suitable mission. The search took around eight months, but it was worth it. Before applying, I prepared

a document explaining my needs related to my disability, with pictures to make things clearer. That helped a lot during the selection process.

We discovered the organisation ICYE Austria through our contact person at the sending organisation—they were offering a six-month inclusive project in Vienna. The description immediately appealed to me, and I remember finalising my application the day after Christmas, hoping so much to be selected. A few weeks later, my boyfriend and I had a video interview to discuss our motivations and needs, and soon after, we received the wonderful news that we had been chosen.

We are now both volunteers in Vienna: my boyfriend works in an organisation that supports people with disabilities, while I volunteer at the ICYE Austria office. My tasks include administrative work on mobility projects, communication on social media, sharing my experiences at events, and organising activities for other volunteers.

Before starting, we took part in a three-day preparatory visit to meet the team, see our accommodation, and discuss the necessary arrangements. This visit was essential—it helped me feel confident and well supported by both the sending and host organisations. Whenever we faced a challenge, we found practical solutions together: for example, installing handrails in the office to improve access, and arranging personal assistance during my first two months. I now live independently and receive financial support for disability-related expenses while waiting for reimbursement from the French system.



My colleagues are very welcoming and attentive, and I feel fully integrated into the team. At the beginning, I was worried about using public transport because of the crowds and the gap between the platform and the train, but Vienna is a very accessible city. For the first two weeks, someone accompanied me, and now I travel independently. People often offer help in the street, which I find very touching.



Thanks to this experience, I'm gaining confidence, daring to try new things, and becoming more independent. I love exploring the city and have even visited Graz and Slovenia. One of my fondest memories was discovering Lake Almsee during the mid-term training and dancing the waltz at the Diversity Ball. I've also organised activities for other volunteers—a long walk through Vienna to discover street art, and soon, a treasure hunt. Being quite shy and having a poor sense of direction, leading these activities has been a big challenge and achievement for me.

I'm also improving my English little by little. Communication is really the key—talking openly with colleagues about needs, staying organised, and prioritising tasks. This experience is helping me grow and confirming my professional goals for the future. It's also broadening my horizons and helping me think about where I might want to live and work later on.

My advice to other young people who want to volunteer abroad: Be bold, follow your dreams, ask for support when you need it, and enjoy every moment—time flies, and it truly is a unique experience that can change your life.

Our work on DEI in 2024-25

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) in the ICYE Federation

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are at the heart of ICYE's mission to build intercultural understanding and solidarity. As a global Federation, we recognise that addressing systemic inequalities and fostering inclusive practices is essential to ensuring that all young people, regardless of their background or identity, can participate fully and thrive in our exchange programmes.

During the programme year 2024-25, the DEI Sub-Committee worked steadily to strengthen inclusion, equity, and anti-racism practices across the ICYE Federation. Meeting monthly, the Sub-Committee created a consistent space for reflection, collaboration, and collective action with our members.

A major achievement this year was the **development and launch of the DEI Planning and Evaluation Tool**, designed to help members to assess their practices and set goals for greater inclusivity. The tool was shared at the online dissemination event *"Working Together to Make our Organisation More Inclusive"* in March 2025, where members provided valuable feedback that now informs our next steps.

To mark the **International Day Against Racism on 21 March**, the Sub-Committee coordinated an online awareness-raising campaign. Our members from Costa Rica, the Philippines, and the UK, as well as the ICYE Youth Engagement Committee



(YEC) contributed content, highlighting progress made and steps taken toward anti-racism, ensuring that the campaign avoided performative gestures and instead fostered meaningful engagement.

In April 2025, the Sub-Committee released the first [Federation-wide DEI Report](#), which outlined key challenges, obstacles to inclusion, and opportunities for advancing equity within ICYE. This report has provided an evidence base for further action and a shared framework to build upon.

Another cornerstone of this year's work was the **launch of the DEI Community of Practice**. These interactive online sessions created a space for members and volunteers to reflect and learn together. The first Community of Practice call focused on Decolonial Communications, with follow-up sessions on Diverse Testimonials and Language and Responsibility scheduled for the second half of 2025.

Through these initiatives, the Sub-Committee has not only delivered resources and tools but also created spaces for dialogue, learning, and accountability. Together, we are taking meaningful steps toward a Federation that truly reflects and embodies our values of solidarity, intercultural understanding, and justice.

DEI at the national level:

ICYE NCs have also promoted DEI through their own endeavors. A few examples from 2024-25 include:

ICYE Austria strives to make all programmes accessible and welcoming for people with disabilities, with chronic diseases and with fewer opportunities. It starts with their barrier-free website, as well as their promotional materials. They work with local and international organisations that support the volunteering of people with disabilities. Training materials that they have developed help organisations achieve this as well.

ICYE Austria also has their own funding to support volunteers from disadvantaged backgrounds (e.g. economic or social). Through cooperation with local networks, funding for people with disabilities is provided. By participating in ICYE Austria's ESC or ICYE programmes, people with disabilities, marginalised groups and those with fewer opportunities can raise their voices on the issues that matter to them, represent themselves and show others that this is possible.

ICYE Tanzania ensures youth with disabilities are equally represented in the implementation of their volunteering programme by working with the *Erick Memorial Foundation for Education and Rehabilitation for the Disabled* ([EMFERD](#)) and Mehayo Centre for Disabled Youth which both promote inclusion for people with disabilities.

ICYE Finland applies rules on creating a safe space for all their events. Additionally, equality issues are addressed and evaluated throughout their work. They also conducted a survey among active co-workers to gather their experiences regarding equality in our activities.

Both ICYE Kenya and ICYE Peru facilitate sessions on social inclusion during orientation, mid-term, and end-term camps. ICYE Germany has a dedicated contact person for racism and discrimination, as well as a dedicated contact person for sexual violence. They also lead sessions on the empowerment for queer people and people who experience racism.



Reporting our policies

Safer Together

In 2024-25, the ICYE Federation has continued to implement the commitments from our Policy Safer Together - addressing sexual violence in international volunteering:

- 153 staff have been trained to date on the prevention and response to sexual violence. Several members offer regular training sessions on the topic for staff, co-workers, volunteers, host families and host project staff.
- 24 members submitted their action plans to implement the commitments from the policy.
- 36 members identified focal persons who participated in calls to exchange experiences and learn from each other.
- The staff of 34 members signed the code of conduct with clear responsibilities and commitments regarding the Safer Together Policy.
- An advisory committee was set up to support members with difficult cases.
- ICYE carried out a social media campaign on Instagram and Facebook during the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence to highlight our commitment to address sexual violence in all its forms.

Despite continued efforts made by feminist activists and human rights defenders, the root cause behind sexual violence – gender inequality and norms on the acceptability of violence against women – remain prevalent worldwide.

In the programme year 2024-25, 26 cases of sexual violence

were reported to our members directly and of six cases they became aware through other means. A total of 34 persons were involved in the cases. Three of these cases involved sexual abuse, and two involved incidents of rape. Except for one male volunteer, all survivors were women – the majority of them female volunteers. Overall, 79% of reported cases concerned sexual harassment, including one incidence of online sexual harassment.

All the perpetrators were male, with more than half of them being people not associated with the programme. Two of the male perpetrators were minors and there is a very high chance that at least one of them is also a victim of sexual violence. The ICYE member therefore approached a social worker to discuss the best way forward.

Only one case was reported to the authorities, and in another, a volunteer acted as a witness when a young immigrant was sexually harassed by a foreign national in a public setting.

#16DaysICYE

A world of action. At ICYE, our volunteers and staff work to prevent sexual violence and close gender gaps



Sexual violence affects millions globally, yet every voice counts in the fight for change. Over the next 16 days, we'll share stories, knowledge, and ways to take action against this kind of violence.

#16DaysICYE #NoExcuse



ICYE

While most survivors were encouraged to file reports, many chose not to—either due to personal reasons, fear of repercussions, or lack of trust in the legal system. In some countries, sexual harassment is still not recognized as a criminal offense, making formal reporting ineffective or impossible.



To report cases of violence against children or cases of sexual violence, ICYE has set up an email where volunteers, staff and others can report: reporting-cases@icye.org

Care to Engage

In 2024-25, ICYE continued to be committed to safeguarding children in its work:

- ICYE finalised a flyer on why ICYE is phasing out of volunteering spaces in orphanages and developed guidance on how to address corporal punishment with host families and host projects.
- We carried out a social media campaign to promote the Care to Engage Policy.
- ICYE Nepal shared that the local governments in their communities have been offering more trainings for staff in schools and have introduced a new syllabus for children to raise awareness on violence and what to do.

In 2024-25, two members received four reports on violence against children. In one of the cases a volunteer witnessed corporal punishment happening in a school by the teachers. The member addressed this with the directors of the school. Another volunteer shared that children in a project had suffered abuse from their parents, relatives or neighbours. This case was reported to the authorities.

Greener Together

Implementing the commitments from the Greener Together Policy for a sustainable and regenerative future, members reported the following activities to promote a green office culture in 2024-25:

- Reduce paper usage, use refillable stationery, reduce plastic.
- Reduce the consumption of energy and water and implement energy-saving practices like encouraging the use of natural light.
- Use organic materials, environmentally friendly or eco-certified office materials and other products. Use refurbished computers and mobile phones.
- Reduce waste through recycling and reuse and proper disposal of e-waste.
- Many staff work from home and don't have to commute, other promote the use of public transport.
- During meetings, vegetarian or vegan food is served; food sharing is practiced.
- Raised awareness among staff and organised online dialogues on climate change and its impact.
- Have indoor plants in the office, "which makes our office happy and healthy".

ICYE Costa Rica coordinated with the municipality in San José to have recycling waste collected on their street, as it was not done previously.

In their work with the volunteers, members highlighted that they discuss with volunteers what eco-friendly volunteering looks like and encourage them to reduce their carbon foot-

print, promoting carbon offsetting. In many of the camps for the volunteers, members offer only vegetarian or vegan food. Other activities included:

- ICYE New Zealand offers leftover food from the camps to local food charities.
- ICYE Türkiye organises local workshops for young people to raise awareness on environmental issues.
- ICYE Ecuador, ICYE India, ICYE Nigeria, ICYE Philippines, ICYE Thailand and ICYE Vietnam engage their volunteers in cleaning protected areas or organised community clean-up activities as well as in reforestation and tree-planting initiatives with communities and local schools.
- ICYE Nigeria has collaborated with host communities to set up small recycling or waste management initiatives as part of the volunteer's service work.
- ICYE Kenya and ICYE Mexico asked their participants to develop their own personal green project during their volunteering time.
- ICYE Finland together with Mental Health Finland organised a workshop for their coworkers and volunteers on climate anxiety.
- ICYE Nepal mobilises volunteers in their environmental projects.
- ICYE Bolivia promoted and prioritized volunteer projects that focus on environmental protection, such as reforestation, urban gardening, and waste reduction initiatives.

- Through the Kijani Plastic project that was funded by the Portuguese Embassy, ICYE Kenya was able to support the community members to collect over 1000 plastic bottles for recycling.
- Others use social media to raise awareness on environmental issues.

Greener Together Toolkit

In May 2025, ICYE Austria together with the ICYE International Office organised the *Greener Together* training workshop which combined theoretical knowledge on the intersection of climate change, gender, inequality and decolonisation with practical exercises like the climate negotiation game. The 20 workshop participants identified 10 learning outcomes and developed activities for the different stages during the volunteer cycle: pre-departure, on-arrival, mid-term and final evaluation workshops. The new Greener Together Toolkit will be piloted in 2025-26 and finalised at the end of 2026.



Our projects in 2024-25

LIVE EX

Nicolaus Novatus Mukasa
LIVE Ex Project Manager



In 2024, ICYE and nine partners launched the Erasmus+-funded [LIVE-Ex](#) (Exchange and Cooperation for a Living Earth) project, bringing together young people from across Sub-Saharan Africa to strengthen their skills in digital engagement, inter-cultural dialogue, and climate advocacy. The project is rooted in the urgency of the triple planetary crisis, climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, and seeks to equip young people to become active voices for justice and sustainability in their own communities and beyond. This project, funded by the Erasmus+ programme, is implemented through a collaborative effort between ICYE International Office, CCIVS, ASTOVOT (Togo), COFO (Malawi), ICYE Kenya, ICYE Mozambique, ICYE Nigeria, SAVWA (South Africa), ICYE Tanzania and ZWA (Zimbabwe).

After the project launch in March 2024, the local mentors who guide the youth through six-month virtual exchange programmes were trained in a physical meeting in South Africa from 13th – 17th October 2024. These mentors provide technical guidance to navigate virtual platforms but also help build the advocacy capacities of the young participants.



To support their work, the *Earth Mentorship Programme Handbook* for mentors and a *LIVE Ex Handbook for Youth* were developed. After the training, the skills of the local mentors were further strengthened through online meetings. To overcome barriers of access, participants were supported with data and digital tools where possible, allowing for equitable participation across countries.

In January 2025, the roll-out of the Earth Advocacy Programme was launched with the first virtual exchange. The aim is to empower youth to lead local actions in response to climate change and biodiversity loss. In the first cohort over 500 mentees participated: 120 in South Africa, 130 in Tanzania, 65 in Malawi, 11 in Kenya, 18 in Togo, 51 in Nigeria, 76 in Zimbabwe, and 30 in Mozambique. The young people were supported by the 16 mentors, who guided them through a structured

six-month programme using the newly developed Handbook and other youth resource materials. Over 80% of the participants in the first cohort shared in the final evaluation that they had gained new confidence in their advocacy work, learned how to collaborate across borders, and were inspired to take actions in their communities.

Alongside the mentorship programme, a series of online dialogues created space for shared reflection, engagement, exchange and creativity. The first dialogue explored climate change and culture, followed by a rich conversation on art as a mirror for climate change, which grew into a third dialogue on climate change and culture.

Looking back on the first year, LIVE-Ex has already begun to create meaningful impact. Young people have developed stronger advocacy skills, formed new regional and international connections, and started shaping projects that respond directly to the climate crisis in their communities.



I have learned to deal with uncertainties and to respond openly to change. My awareness of global interconnections has also been sharpened. Issues such as poverty, climate change, migration, or education are no longer abstract to me, but have become very tangible experiences. These impressions have strengthened my sense of responsibility and my commitment to global justice.

Volunteer evaluation 2024-25

Host Projects promoting Diversity, Equality and Inclusion

Wasmu, Ecuador:

Wasmu is a project based in Otavalo, a town in Ecuador's Andean region. The project focuses on women, arts, culture, and social business development. Its main goal is to improve the quality of life for vulnerable populations. These include women, who are survivors of gender-based violence, children, older adults, and other marginalized groups in both rural and urban communities of the Otavalo canton. Participants are engaged in capacity-building programmes that help them acquire practical skills and confidence, enabling them to participate actively in the local workforce and create a sustainable livelihood. A particular emphasis is placed on textiles and other traditional crafts, creating pathways for economic independence while preserving cultural heritage. *Wasmu* represents a holistic approach to community development, integrating cultural, educational, and economic strategies to empower women and other vulnerable groups, while preserving Otavalo's unique cultural identity.



Bosque Urbano, Argentina

Bosque Urbano (Urban Forest) is a “living laboratory”, close to the San Martín National University campus and one of ICYE Argentina’s host projects. This small reserve is cared for by students, teachers, neighbours, and volunteers who share an interest in ecology and the environment.

The Wiphala is the intercultural symbol that best embodies the spirit of Bosque Urbano. The Wiphala flag represents the Indigenous peoples of the Andean highlands and stands for plurality as a harmonious unity of diverse cultures. That’s why, when a volunteer arrives from another part of the world, it’s important to explain: “*Why do we use these colours and not others? Why do we make offerings to Pachamama, or celebrate the equinoxes and solstices? Why do we build with the cardinal points in mind?*” All of these questions open up spaces for storytelling and conversation between volunteers and community members while sowing seeds or repairing a biodigester.



"The ways we plant, our respect for the earth, the seeds we choose, or the properties of each plant — these are all forms of knowledge we value and want to pass on. They're forms of wisdom that aren't always validated by academia, yet through hands-on practice, this kind of learning becomes even more powerful."



Flavia who works at the project points out another challenge: *"Telling the story of what existed before the arrival of the colonizers — what was Argentina before it became Argentina?"* This is a big challenge because many people who lead projects or work in organisations need to go through a process of unlearning the official history — the one taught in schools — in order to reconnect with the histories that came before colonization.



Her Initiative, Tanzania

Her Initiative was founded in 2012 as the Teen Girls' Supportive Initiative (TGSi) in response to the growing challenges faced by adolescent schoolgirls in Tanzanian communities. Issues such as early pregnancy, child marriage, gender-based violence, and school dropout were increasingly limiting young girls' ability to complete their education and pursue purposeful livelihoods. TGSi began as a grassroots effort led by a small group of passionate young women determined to create a safe space where adolescent girls could access mentorship, guidance, and life skills training to make informed decisions about their futures.

Later, this initiative evolved into a formally registered, young women-led non-profit organisation – Her Initiative. This transition marked a strategic shift from a volunteer-driven initiative to a structured institution capable of implementing broader development programmes. The organisation's vision deepened to reshape perceptions of girls' value and to challenge societal norms that perpetuate cycles of poverty and inequality. Its leadership recognized that sustainable change is only possible when girls and young women are empowered as agents of transformation, rather than passive recipients of aid. The organisation's overarching goal is to advance gender equality



and foster inclusive economic growth within communities by enabling girls and young women to achieve financial independence.

Currently, Her Initiative implements four flagship programmes:

- **Panda Digital:** An online platform that equips girls with entrepreneurship skills and provides access to capital to start and grow their businesses.
- **Mshiko Club:** A school-based outreach platform that empowers girls with financial literacy, fostering positive financial behaviours and effective money management skills.
- **Stawi Lab:** A programme designed to support groups of young women entrepreneurs with business development skills and start-up capital, enabling them to establish and expand their enterprises.
- **Youth Employability bootcamp:** A career readiness programme that bridges the gap between theory and practice for young graduates. Through training, mentorship, and placements, it equips participants with technical and soft skills, enhancing their employability. A core focus is to increase women's leadership and participation in the corporate space.



New Trends in IVS

In early February 2025, the European Youth Centre in Budapest became a space of reflection, anticipation, and collaboration. For five days, from 3-7 February, thirty young people from around the world gathered not only to learn, but to question, challenge, and reimagine the future of International Voluntary Service (IVS).

The Study Session, titled “*New Trends in International Voluntary Service*”, was organised by CCIVS together with its sister networks ICYE, Alliance, Service Civil International (SCI) and the Network for Voluntary Development in Asia (NVDA), in cooperation with the Council of Europe. ICYE participants included representatives of the Youth Engagement Committee (YEC), the International Office (IO), and three European members. To guide our discussions, we worked with the *Toolkit for Tomorrow: Anticipating Civil Society Futures*—a resource that supported exploration of trends, critical thinking, and the imagining of different possible futures.



Among the multitude of trends identified, decolonisation, artificial intelligence, individualism, mis- and disinformation were all discussed. The networks chose to focus on the intersecting trends of **climate injustice** and **voluntourism demands**, as both have a direct impact on the credibility, sustainability, and ethical responsibility of IVS. These trends are reshaping the contexts in which young people volunteer and are challenging organisations to re-examine their role in creating meaningful, just, and future-oriented exchanges.

Based on the trends identified, participants discussed proactive ideas how to shape the future in our favour, such as partnering with educational institutions and humanitarian organisations, learning from grassroots social movements, embracing social entrepreneurship, and decentralising structures. ICYE, together with the IVS sister networks that were part of organising the session, concluded that being more active inside of advocacy and decision-making spaces related to the identified trends can support the implementation of the networks' strategic planning and shape the future of IVS.



Our Finances

In the programme year 2024-25, the Federation generated a surplus of 10.550,36 €. Compared to 2023-24, our income decreased by 90.681,95 € to a total income of 484.977,31 €. This decline in the income was mostly generated through less incoming volunteer fees and an EU payment timeline for the grant funded project LIVE-Ex that did not include any payments in 2024-25 despite ongoing project expenses. The next instalment is expected in February 2026. This led to a lower grant income, which could only partly be balanced by generating additional income through smaller funding applications. On the expense side, the costs decreased in 2024-25 by 79.500,14 € from 553.927,09 € in 2023-24 to 474.426,95 €.

Volunteer numbers have fluctuated significantly over the past five years. Following the near-complete halt caused by the pandemic in 2020, participation gradually increased through 2021, 2022, and 2023 but remained below pre-pandemic levels. In 2024, growth stagnated, and in 2025 numbers declined again. These ongoing fluctuations have made budgeting and long-term planning increasingly complex. To strengthen the Federation's financial sustainability, efforts will have to be made in the coming years to modernize the fee system.

Through the allocation of 23.143,48 € and a depletion of a total of 12.593,12 € to and from the reserve funds, we close the year with an increase in the reserve fund budget to 196.270,40 € (previous programme year: 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 the Free Reserves Fund. Starting in 2024-25, we have initiated a Green Fund.

In August 2025, the external auditor from BerKon GmbH confirmed in their audit report that the audit has not led to any reservations.

THE ICYE FEDERATION

Balance Sheet

	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Assets			
Cash in Bank or Hand	549.667,85 €	543.412,87 €	673.491,06 €
Federation's Credits (Member Organisations)	13.782,56 €	63.432,25 €	63.368,02 €
Other Assets	17.698,02 €	37.146,91 €	26.027,96 €
Total assets	581.148,43 €	643.992,03 €	762.887,04 €
Liabilities and funds			
Federation's Debts (Member Organisations)	400.991,11 €	367.956,82 €	492.755,83 €
Liabilities Erasmus+ Projects	0,00 €	65.041,85 €	52.830,40 €
Other Debts	16.169,45 €	25.273,32 €	21.030,41 €
Restricted Funds	71.565,22 €	84.811,32 €	103.452,37 €
Unrestricted Funds	92.422,65 €	100.908,72 €	92.818,03 €
Total liabilities and Funds	581.148,43 €	643.992,03 €	762.887,04 €

THE ICYE FEDERATION

Financial Overview

	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Income			
Fees and Contributions by members	206.780,65 €	205.199,88 €	202.920,41 €
Income for volunteers' insurances	95.367,33 €	88.970,02 €	72.728,61 €
EC Grants	113.712,92 €	242.209,61 €	150.178,02 €
Other Income/ Grants	13.257,89 €	36.586,98 €	56.426,06 €
Interests	318,82 €	2.692,77 €	2.724,21 €
Total Income	429.437,61 €	575.659,26 €	484.977,31 €
Expenses			
Overall Federational Costs	75.786,51 €	48.392,84 €	39.214,21 €
Insurance Costs	93.221,24 €	86.277,82 €	73.022,94 €
Grants Project Expenses and Sub-Committee expenses	45.960,35 €	176.551,21 €	113.103,70 €
Staff Costs	163.606,94 €	185.294,88 €	200.775,75 €
Office and Communication, IT Costs	24.764,93 €	26.487,43 €	22.593,90 €
Bank and Audit Costs	5.912,77 €	9.676,91 €	7.390,79 €
Other Expenses	15.480,21 €	21.246,00 €	18.325,66 €
Total Expenses	424.732,95 €	553.927,09 €	474.426,95 €
Program year result	4.704,66 €	21.732,17 €	10.550,36 €
Depletion of/Allocation to reserve funds	4.704,66 €	21.732,17 €	10.550,36 €

Outlook

Participation in ICYE's programmes has not followed a steady pattern in recent years. After the near standstill caused by the pandemic, the number of young people taking part in exchanges gradually increased but has yet to return to pre-2020 levels. More recently, growth has slowed and, in some regions, participation has declined again. These fluctuations continue to affect members' financial stability and long-term planning. At the same time, they have inspired creativity and collaboration, with members developing new ways to make international volunteering accessible — including co-funding initiatives, participation in grant-funded projects, and innovative approaches to International Voluntary Service. Many of the challenges that members are facing will be discussed during the upcoming 34th General Assembly from 22 to 26 November in Lima, Peru.

To address the identified challenges, the Federation has additionally developed the ICYE Strategic Plan for 2026-2030 that aims to strengthen the positioning, impact and financial sustainability of the ICYE Federation and the collaboration among its members. The work for the next five years is organised around four strategic objectives:

- Effectively position the ICYE intercultural exchange programmes and highlight their impact at volunteer and community level.

- Ensure the optimal numbers of participants in the ICYE exchange programme and the quality of their experience.
- Ensure the financial sustainability of the ICYE Federation, including the level of co-funding.
- Enable more mutually supporting, efficient and effective ways of working together among members considering their diversity.

Moreover, ICYE is revising its membership concept with the aim to broaden its membership base and strengthening co-operations with other networks and organisations outside of the IVS movement. The financial model is under scrutiny as well as power relations among members. In the programme year 2025-26, ICYE will continue to implement its three policies, promote the decolonisation of international volunteering and strengthen the work around diversity, equality and inclusion. We are hoping to launch our revised icye.org website with the new branding developed in 2024.

A special focus will be given to the joint advocacy work with Alliance, CCIVS and SCI regarding the upcoming European Union's long-term budget 2028-2034 (Multiannual Financial Framework, MFF). Together the IVS movement advocates for a more inclusive, just, and participatory MFF that empowers youth and civil society actors across all regions.



I learned to communicate better, respect diverse perspectives, and adapt to new ways of thinking. This experience helped me grow more independent, empathetic, and confident in intercultural settings."

Volunteer evaluation 2024-25

Our Partnerships



CCIVS: In 2024-25 the International Office has continued to actively engage in the *Coordinating Committee on International Volunteer Service* (CCIVS) alongside the other major International Voluntary Service networks (Alliance, Service Civil International, the Network for Voluntary Development in Asia, Network of African Voluntary Organisations). Since the CCIVS General Assembly in November 2023, ICYE has a permanent seat at the Executive Committee with Luz Gutierrez, director of ICYE Ecuador as EC member until the upcoming General Assembly of CCIVS in November 2025 when the new EC will be elected.



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



QUEST: Since the beginning of 2025, ICYE is a member of the Brussels-based European network *Quality Education in Europe for Sustainable Social Transformation* (QUEST). Their aim is to bring together NGOs, institutions, schools and universities advocating for change in education and the promotion of lifelong learning.



CIVICUS: ICYE is an associate member of the CIVICUS, a global alliance of civil society organisations and activists working to strengthen citizen action and civil society throughout the world.

Acknowledgements

The ICYE Board of Managers thanks all the ICYE members for their outstanding engagement in facilitating meaningful and impactful intercultural voluntary services to curious and eager volunteers. We thank you for always looking for individual, customised solutions that work for everyone involved in the programmes. You make sure that around the world understanding and appreciation between people with different cultural and social backgrounds enhances. We are convinced that your daily efforts make a difference and have an impact, one volunteer, one community at a time.

The ICYE Board of Managers would also like to acknowledge the great contributions by the team of the International Office to the ICYE Federation. They have coordinated the work and meetings with the Youth Engagement Committee, fundraised for operational and programmatic resources and strengthened the cooperation with all the members and with our sister networks, additionally making sure to push forward the implementation of various projects, like LIVE-Ex.

We are grateful for the financial and technical support from our donors in 2024-25: the Erasmus + programme, the EYF - Council of Europe, the Mekriba Foundation and the UNESCO Participation Programme.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the EACEA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Published in 2025. Text © ICYE.
All photos © ICYE (except if stated otherwise)
ICYE has obtained permission and necessary consent
to publish the photos contained herein.

Design/layout: [Oskar Design](#)



icye.org

ICYE International Office

Große Hamburger Straße 30
D-10115 Berlin
Germany



+49-30-28 39 05 51



icye@icye.org



facebook.com/icyeio



instagram.com/icye.federation