



Annual Report

2025-26



ICYE



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Preface

The programme year 2025-26 was shaped by strategic discussions, advocacy work and improvements in our quality assurance. Right to the start of the International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development in 2026, ICYE started implementing its new strategic plan 2026-2030 that had been approved at the 34th General Assembly (GA) in Lima in November 2025. In the next five years, the members are aiming to strengthen the positioning, impact and financial sustainability of the ICYE Federation with commitments on quality assurance, youth engagement, collaboration, impact and financial sustainability.

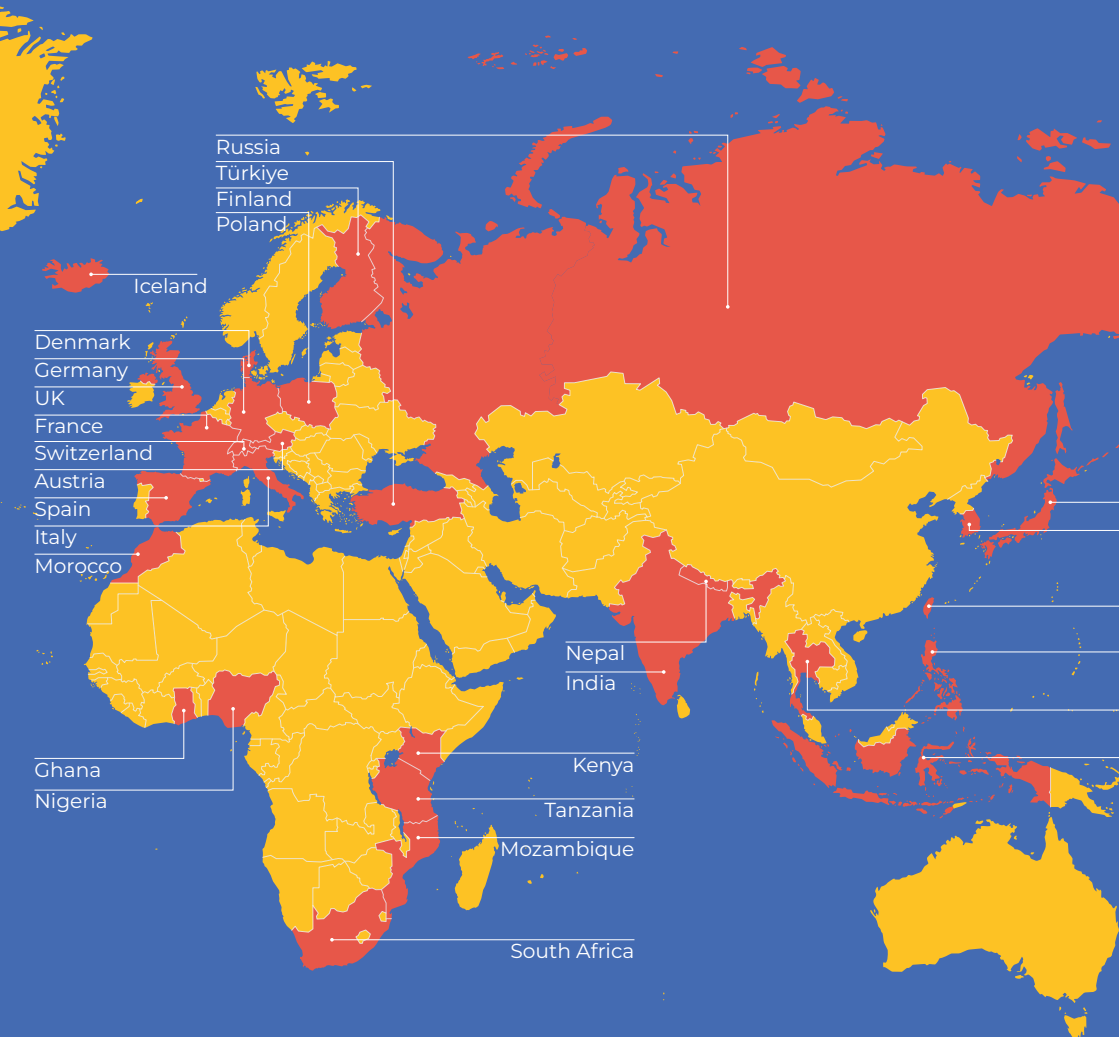
As an important step to strengthen the voices of young people in ICYE, the members approved the Youth Engagement Committee (YEC) to become a permanent structure in our governance structures. Young people also engaged in our advocacy work, focusing specifically on the proposal from the European Commission on Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) as outlined in the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028-2034. They highlighted the need for an increase in the Erasmus+ funding to enable the engagement of more young people, to safeguard the youth chapter through an earmarked budget for youth organisations, to strengthen solidarity and active citizenship as key elements of the programme and to maintain the ESC as a separate programme. They stressed the importance to enhance the inclusion of young people from outside of Europe by decolonising funding structures.

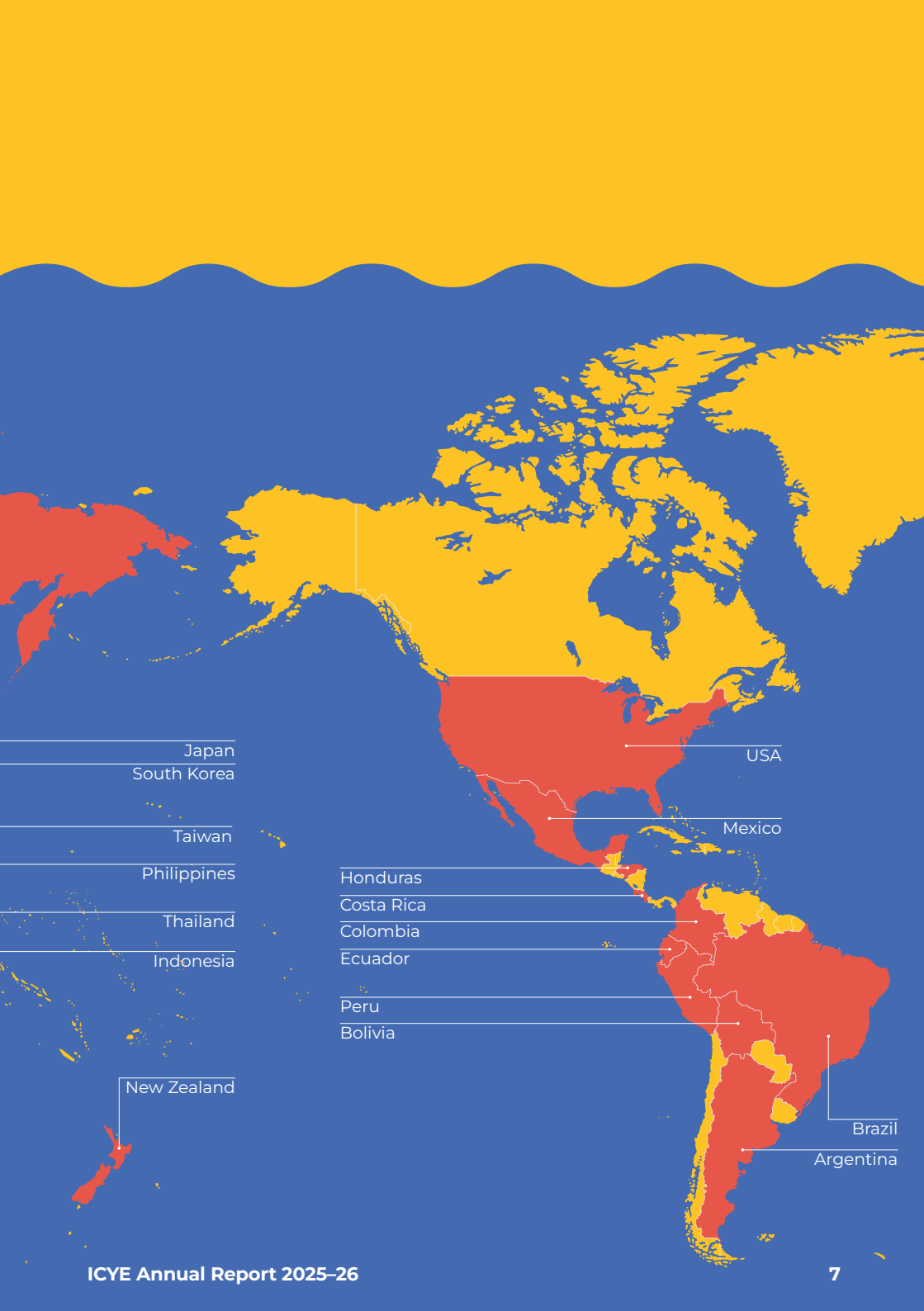
At the GA, our new ICYE Board of Managers (BoM) was elected with Stephan Langenberg (ICJA/ ICYE Germany) as Chair, Adéolú Ònàmádé (ICYE Nigeria) continuing as Treasurer and the new members Andrea Catalina Marín Moreno (ICYE Colombia) and Michael Lechner (ICYE Austria). A strong focus of their discussions in the first months has been on addressing the challenges of declining volunteer numbers and the financial implications for our members.

While the ICYE Federation operates in a challenging global context, marked by uneven recovery in youth mobility, financial uncertainty, and ongoing socio-political instability, our members continued to demonstrate adaptability and commitment to the Federation's core mission of fostering peace, solidarity, and intercultural understanding through youth exchange. Even though we saw a slight increase in volunteer numbers in 2025-26, volunteers' access, openness, and preferences are changing which makes budget predictions less reliable than in pre-pandemic times. The uncertainty among a generation facing economic, political, and health-related insecurity, shows us that we cannot plan ahead in the ways we were accustomed to.



ICYE in 2025-26





Japan
South Korea

Taiwan
Philippines

Thailand
Indonesia

New Zealand

Honduras
Costa Rica
Colombia
Ecuador

Peru
Bolivia

USA

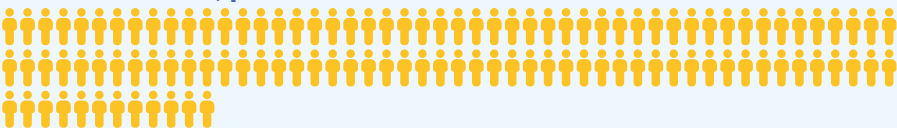
Mexico

Brazil
Argentina

In 2025-26, the ICYE Federation consisted of 32 full members and 7 associate members, with VIVOL/ ICYE Peru and VSA/ ICYE Thailand being confirmed as full members during the General Assembly in Peru. Unfortunately, in 2025 our long-term member VPV/ ICYE Vietnam left the Federation. They have been a committed and valued partner for more than 15 years, and ICYE extends its sincere gratitude for their meaningful contributions

Staff situation in ICYE member organisations in 2025-26

62 Full time, paid staff



67 Part time, paid staff



326 Co-workers supporting the office



34 Interns/ trainees



to our common vision and mission, as well as to the work with young people and communities.

Our ICYE members remain connected with other IVS organisations and networks: 9 of them are also members in CCIVS, 4 in Alliance, 1 in SCI, 2 in NVDA and 2 in NAVO. Three members are active in national networks.

Our volunteer numbers in 2025-26

477 ICYE international volunteers



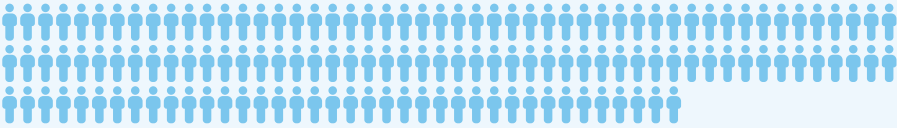
5 South-South exchanges



95 National volunteers



138 virtual volunteers

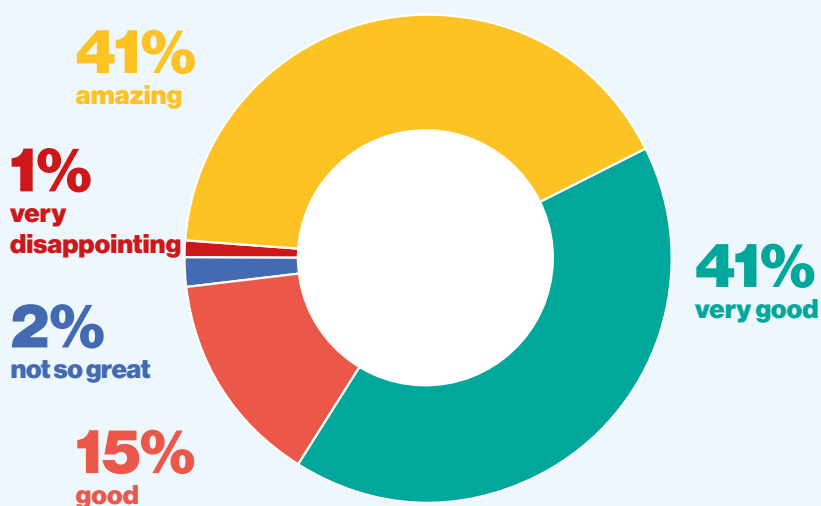


In the programme year 2025-26, ICYE members offered volunteering opportunities to 477 young people – a slight increase to 2024-25, but still not reaching the numbers from 2022-23 with 558 volunteers. 138 volunteers engaged in virtual volunteering – a decline compared to 2024-25, when members engaged 226 young people. This decrease is due, among other reasons, to two grants for virtual volunteering that were not extended. Five volunteers participated in a South – South exchange, 50% less from the previous programme year. ICYE members exchanged 37 young people with fewer opportunities.

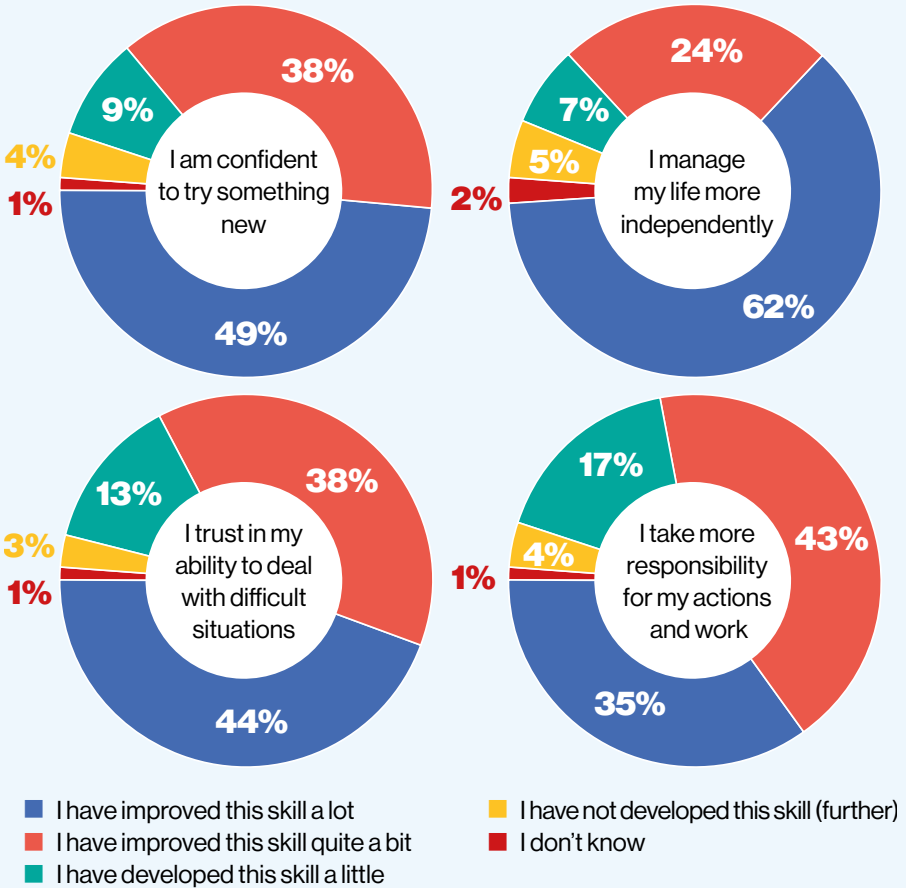
Volunteers were also exchanged outside of the ICYE program:

- 766 through the European Solidarity Corps programme (including the ESC Humanitarian programme)
- 355 through other government funded programmes and
- 371 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.

Volunteers' overall satisfaction with their exchange



Strengthening confidence and self esteem



During the programme year, 38 young people were denied visas and therefore unable to take up their volunteering assignments. In most cases, applications were rejected without justification; in one case, insufficient funds were cited as the reason. The high cost of obtaining visas is becoming a major barrier for our members seeking to send volunteers abroad and is contributing to a growing imbalance in the exchange programme. In Colombia, a change in the financial requirements to be submitted to the

immigration office resulted in an increase of approximately 15% in the amount that ICYE Colombia must hold in its account in order to receive international volunteers. In Kenya, the government and civil society organisations are developing a National Volunteering Policy and Framework, which will impact many areas related to volunteering, including the visa situation. In the United States, regulations for several types of visas have become more restrictive, including travel suspensions and limitations affecting foreign nationals from multiple designated countries for so-called public safety and national security reasons.

In 2025-26, the ICYE Federation had 452 active host projects – of which

- 40% were in the educational field
- 15% of the host projects worked on climate justice and environmental topics
- 13% targeted care-work and health
- 11% worked on diversity, gender equality and inclusion

The remaining projects were distributed among the areas ‘office and communication work’ (7%), ‘recreational and community projects’ (7%), ‘arts and culture’ (4%), and others (3%).

Challenges in 2025-26

Members reported that finding sufficient candidates for outgoing programmes is placing a significant strain on their finances, while at the same time incoming volunteers are finding it harder to integrate into local communities. More volunteers are experiencing mental health challenges, showing less respect for local communities, and demonstrating less commitment to their day-to-day tasks. An increasing number is cancelling their exchanges halfway through. Other members reported that it is becoming increasingly difficult to find host families willing to welcome young people into their homes.

Our members in the Philippines and Thailand were affected by natural disasters that impacted many of their partner communities. Both organisations provided emergency support in these communities and engaged in disaster relief operations..

Achievements in 2025-26

In 2025–26, 41 young people under 30 years were engaged in the governance structures of 14 member organisations. Maailmanvaihto/ ICYE Finland reported the highest number, with seven young people, followed by Danks ICYE and Grenzenlos/ ICYE Austria with six each, and ICYE Honduras and ICYE Tanzania with four each.

ICYE members have been successful in finding ways to restore organisational and financial stability, for example by diversifying their funding sources, recruiting more volunteers, enhancing their visibility through a stronger social media presence, and entering new partnerships with universities and public institutions to promote the volunteering exchange programme. Some members are piloting new formats, such as group exchanges, or have invested in renovating buildings to expand their educational activities.

Others shared that they supported volunteers experiencing psychological challenges, recruited new host projects, and maintained the high quality of their work despite external difficulties. Members in Africa and the Asia-Pacific region strengthened their regional cooperation through joint projects, while others started to involve volunteers in South–South exchanges. In 2025, 70% of the ESC volunteers Maailmanvaihto/ ICYE Finland hosted were young people with fewer opportunities.

United Planet/ ICYE USA brought together 151 participants from the United States, Iraq and Syria to develop social enterprise proposals and receive feedback from experts in international business and nonprofit management.

VSA/ ICYE Thailand's president served on the KhokMuang Credit Union Cooperative's Loan Committee, overseeing ethical credit services and thereby bridging international volunteering with local economic sustainability. They also participated in the Global Youth Summit 2025 in Mangalore, India, the MadEx-Training in Madagascar on conservation and climate resilience and organised the Global South Alliance Virtual Round Table 2025 in Thailand. In the webinar 'Rethinking Gender (In)Equality in Global Volunteering,' VSA Director Jarinya Krittikarn served as a speaker, sharing insights on gender dynamics within international volunteering service.

Diversity, Equality and Inclusion

Members continued to be committed to strengthen their commitment with diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI). Several of them are sending and/ or hosting volunteers with disabilities, while others are offering host projects that promote the inclusion of marginalised groups. Some members reported that they are strengthening gender equality by training staff and volunteers on the topic and through alliances with like-minded organisations.

Since 2024 Dansk ICYE has been implementing a comprehensive well-being policy focusing on a healthy work environment. This includes three to four annual well-being assessments, along with evaluation meetings and direct follow-up actions. In addition, since April 2025, they participated in a national co-worker survey focusing on well-being among co-workers and on how to improve conditions for everyone, regardless of their life situation.



We are having more open conversations with families and host projects about hosting volunteers who are part of the LGBTQ+ community.

ICYE Kenya

VASE/ ICYE Ecuador is promoting gender equality initiatives, including equal pay and leadership opportunities. Moreover, they promote an inclusive work environment that is responsive to employees' health and well-being needs. ICYE UK has a DEI policy and follows its principles to ensure an equitable and inclusive environment. United Planet/ ICYE USA is an equal opportunity employer. In addition, two interns are working to improve the accessibility of their documents, presentations and trainings.

Grant funded projects

Our members reported coordinating or participating in 44 EU funded projects and in 10 projects financed by other donors. The ICYE International Office is coordinating the EU funded 'LIVE EX' project on climate justice and youth empowerment and participates in the CCIVS coordinated and EU funded 'C-IVS Skills' project on recognising and certifying competences.

Our European members were able to secure EU funding for the following projects:

- 'DIVA – Diversity and Inclusion in Volunteering' is developing new tools and working methods to assess and improve the quality of inclusion and the impact of international and local volunteer activities (Grenzenlos/ ICYE Austria),
- 'Future Me' supports young people to navigate the uncertainty of an ever-changing world (Joint/ ICYE Italy),
- The project 'Dialogue and Conflict Transformation' trains youth from Berlin, Tel Aviv und Kyjiw in conflict transformation, dialogue and mediation (ICJA/ ICYE Germany),
- 'Mediterranean Youth for Creative Impact' works on strengthening young people's civic participation and adaptation to new business areas by developing their digital, creative and analytical skills (PIYA/ ICYE Türkiye).

UP/ ICYE USA implemented the funded Youth2Youth and Global Citizen Leader Internship programmes.

VSA/ ICYE Thailand is participating in the PRELAB project (2024-2028), funded by the EU Horizon-MSCA programme that brings together a global network of 18 partners led by the University of Latvia and University College Dublin. As part of this research exchange, VSA sent two secondees to Latvia and hosted six secondees from Iceland, Nigeria, Moldova, and the University of Latvia. This collaboration bridges grassroots volunteerism with international academic research to address labour informality by measuring and tackling the disproportionate impact of informal employment in emerging economies.

Campaigns

In 2025-26, many members again engaged in ICYE's social media campaigns, e.g. on anti-racism and on climate justice. Other campaigns from our members included:

- Dejavato/ ICYE Indonesia together with students from the Nuswantoro University campaigned on gender equality and women's emancipation.
- Maailmanvaihto/ ICYE Finland participated in the Helsinki Pride parade.
- ICYE Nigeria took part in the Clean Up Lagos campaign.
- GIED/ ICYE Philippines contributed to the Campaign of the Philippine National Volunteer Service Coordinating Agency during National Volunteerism Month which included nationwide Volunteerism Expos, a Forum on Volunteering for Development, International Volunteer Day Celebration, National and International Awards and Recognition Ceremony. They also engaged in the World Bamboo Day and World Environment Day Celebrations.
- UP/ ICYE Tanzania supported the Youth Peace Campaign as a member of the Tanzania Youth Peace Coalition.

Partnerships

ICYE members have engaged in 2025-26 with partners at different levels:

- SES/ ICYE Argentina has been strengthening their partnership with SCI and formalised an alliance with FAICA, an organisation that works for the rights of blind people.
- ICYE Colombia has a new partnership with IDIPRON – the District Institute for the Care of Children and Youth.
- ICDE/ ICYE India has entered a partnership with Akasa Airline who sponsored volunteers from Christ University in their corporate social responsibility efforts.
- ICYE Nigeria has entered a partnership with AFS.
- GIED/ ICYE Philippines has been able to engage several local partner institutions as host projects (e.g. Negros Oriental State University or the local government of Cordova, Cebu), international partners for their sending programme (Hospitalstiftung, Friends of Waldorf Education, GBA Ships Inc) and is partnering with Natures Spring Foundation Inc for corporate volunteering.
- VSA/ ICYE Thailand has formalised partnerships with Mae Hong Son College, Wachiralai School and Rajaprajanugroh (RPK) 33 Lopburi School to enhance educational exchanges and launched a strategic partnership with Khao Rup Chang Town Municipality to allow volunteers to engage directly in public service and on urban development. VSA also started the Diploma in International Volunteering programme with NOCN, a UK-regulated awarding body to validate the skills and experiences gained through international volunteering.



Building Bridges, Shaping Futures

Camila Manique and Marcella Fallas

As the 2024–2026 Youth Engagement Committee (YEC) period comes to an end, we reflect on two transformative years dedicated to elevating youth voices, fostering international solidarity, and strengthening intercultural exchange across our global network.

The YEC was created to strengthen the meaningful participation of young people within ICYE and ensure that their voices



I joined the YEC because I believe young people should not only be participants in ICYE, but also active contributors to shaping its future.

Marcella Fallas, ICYE Costa Rica

are reflected in the Federation's development and future. As young people are at the heart of ICYE's international volunteering programmes, we believe they should not only participate in opportunities offered by the organisation but also have an active role in shaping them.

Since our official launch in April 2024, the YEC set out to bridge the gap between young participants, host communities, and ICYE member organisations. Our work focused on three key pillars: amplifying youth perspectives, refining advocacy strategies, and promoting inclusivity.

From shaping our global action plan to presenting key motions and representing youth interests at the General Assembly, our committee has worked to ensure that young people are not just beneficiaries of exchange programmes, but active co-creators of their policies. We engaged in conversations around accessible visa processes, decolonising international volunteering narratives, and recognising local solutions to global challenges.

During the development of the ICYE 2026-2030 strategy, the YEC contributed recommendations on digital communication, inclusion, global citizenship, anti-racism, volunteer engagement, and strengthening connections between volunteers and host projects. A key milestone was the ICYE General Assembly in Lima, Peru, in 2025, when the YEC was formally established as a standing committee of the ICYE Federation. This recognition strengthened our commitment to ensuring that young people have a meaningful and continuous space within the Federation.



Being part of the YEC gives me the opportunity to connect experiences from my region with perspectives from young people around the world and transform these different voices into ideas for change.

Camila Manique, ICYE Brazil

“Youth engagement” is not a buzzword: it is a necessity for sustainable global progress. Young people are often the first to feel the impact of global crises, yet they hold the creativity, resilience, and drive needed to address them. Meaningful youth participation ensures that programmes reflect their realities, transforms participants into agents of social change, and builds cross-cultural empathy, dismantling systemic barriers and fostering long-term international peace.

Serving on the YEC for the 2024–2026 term has been an empowering journey. Some of us are continuing this work, some colleagues are leaving, but we pass the torch to the next cohort with pride in what we have collectively built and trust that the future of youth-led international exchange is brighter and more resilient than ever.

Ultimately, we believe in the power of young people to contribute to positive change. The YEC is our space to turn that belief into action and help build a more inclusive, connected, and youth-responsive ICYE Federation.





Voices from our volunteers

How on earth did I end up here?

Alessio Spiganti

Finding myself in a house in La Paz, Bolivia, on a Saturday evening, with other people from the city and from other countries, listening to classical music records. “How on earth did I end up here?!” That was my thought the first time I found myself in this situation. But this situation – or rather, this moment of sharing music – has a name: “Las Flaviadas”.

It has been taking place every Saturday since 1938, in a house in the Sopocachi neighbourhood of La Paz. But this isn’t just any old house where people listen to music. It is the home of the “Flavio Machicado Viscarra” Foundation, the organisation with which I carried out my project for ICYE Bolivia. So, what does this project involve?

Let’s go back in time, to the First World War to be precise, when Flavio Machicado had the opportunity to go and study in the United States, where one day he came across a rather unusual object. It had a handle, and when he turned it, music poured out of a large brass horn. Flavio was utterly captivated and decided to buy one. One evening, whilst playing his gramophone at home, he noticed that, once the tune had finished, people were applauding from beneath his window. This was the 1920s, and music wasn’t as readily available as it is today. That was the moment that changed his life – and that of the city of La Paz – forever. Music should be for everyone. He returned to Bolivia and began hosting these free classical music listening sessions at his home every Saturday. Word of the event spread

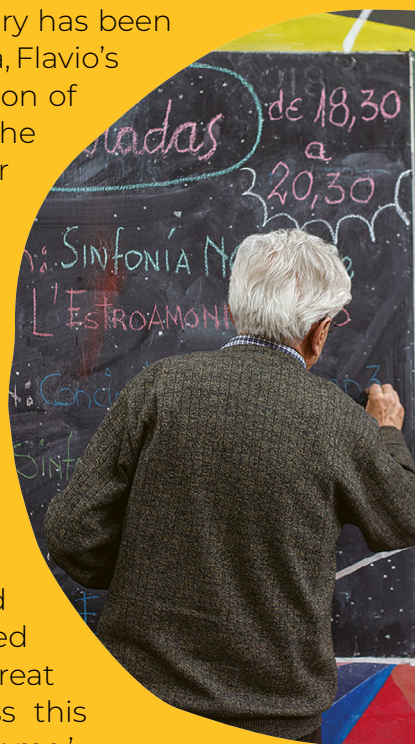
throughout the city, and a journalist, needing to give a name to what he was witnessing, called it 'Las Flaviadas'.

The event has continued every week since 1938; today, the conductor is Flavio's son, Eduardo. Every Saturday, he plays some of the records from the collection, dims the lights and lights the fire, creating a meditative atmosphere during the listening sessions. So, what exactly does the project involve?!

On the ground floor of the house, a library has been set up for several years now, run by Cristina, Flavio's niece, which boasts an extensive collection of Bolivian literature; books can be read on the spot or borrowed free of charge. Another room, meanwhile, has been converted into an archive, housing a collection of Bolivian newspapers and magazines dating back to the late 1800s.

I haven't yet answered the initial question, though: 'How on earth did I end up here?!' The decision that brought me here was a slow and carefully considered one. Tired of my work routine and eager to travel, I began to look around and try to understand what the world had to offer me. Having always been intrigued by this part of the world and being a great lover of literature, when I came across this project I said to myself, 'This is the one for me.'

And so it was. My first impression of the city wasn't easy, because it's literally another world; the altitude and the traffic don't make it easy, but the view more than makes up for it, making La Paz a truly unique city. My experience with the people, on the other hand, was much simpler – both with ICYE, who gave me a wonderful welcome, and with the other volunteers, with whom I got on brilliantly the whole time.



And of course, there was the Machicado Viscarra family, who welcomed me into their home straight away as one of their own, not just to carry out my work duties, but also to share in their daily routines. The 6 o'clock tea was an unmissable part of the day.

As far as I'm concerned, it was all very straightforward for me; I realised straight away that the project had been tailor-made for me, and of course I learnt a great deal – about managing and cataloguing books and newspapers, and about how people work and live in a library, which is what I'd like to do in the future. But beyond that, the constant opportunity to rummage through old newspapers and look at and read books of Bolivian literature was literally a dream come true for me; every day I had the chance to discover new things.

But this is, shall we say, the more practical side of the project, then there was also a more introspective side to it. During the Saturday listening sessions, for example, after perhaps an initial strange feeling of 'how did I end up here?', I soon got into the right frame of mind and said to myself, 'How lovely, though, to share a moment like this, even with people so different from me' – listening to Mozart next to an elderly gentleman from La Paz who was a regular at the event, something I certainly would never have done in Italy.

That said, Bolivia is a country that leaves a lasting impression, where brightly coloured buildings provide a backdrop to scenes of poverty; it's a country that can sometimes be painful, because you see things that leave a mark, like a child polishing shoes for 2 Bolivianos. If you have a bit of empathy, you sometimes find yourself strolling through the city, reflecting on how



much life has given you, simply because you were born in a different place. “Luck is a matter of geography,” sang Bandabardò, and so it is. Having the opportunity to travel and understand how the world works is an incredible stroke of luck, which is why I’d recommend an experience like this to everyone – it allows us not only to experience and see stunning places, but also to lift that veil that sometimes obscures certain truths and details, invisible to the eyes of a tourist.

These are the little details you only notice when you live amongst such diverse peoples and cultures; you then reflect on them when you return home in the evening and, from a distance, look at your own home, with your family and friends, through different eyes, knowing full well that when you return, you’ll still be you, but with something extra.

Time went by too fast

Philipp Tradel

I arrived in Tainan, a beautiful city in southern Taiwan, in September 2025 to begin my 12-month project at Anping Junior High School. But let’s start from my first day... When I arrived, I was immediately struck by the intense heat and humidity. The atmosphere was not comparable to my hometown in Austria. The city smelled different, and everything felt crowded and noisy. I was amazed by the crazy number of scooters - getting used to the traffic was an adventure in itself. And still, I was immediately embraced by the incredibly warm and kind attitude of everyone I met, from the ICYE coordinators to my host family and colleagues.



Getting used to daily life in Taiwan was not a big issue if you'd ask me. Of course, there are the obvious challenges like speaking Chinese - most people don't speak English very well in Taiwan - and communicating with others, but in general I would say that you get used to everything quite fast. Everyone is happy to help if you have questions or you are trying to understand something. Though I had to get rid of some mannerisms that I used to have from Austria due to the differences in culture.

I worked as an assistant teacher for English at Anping Junior High School, which is located in Anping district - the first capital city of Taiwan. I was responsible for joining some of the English classes of one of my colleagues to help the students pronounce, read and write basic English words. I also had a German club every Monday afternoon, where I would teach basic German to the students. Additionally, I was also responsible for organising several language events that would encourage the students to speak English. I really enjoyed this part of my work as I was able to build a close connection with many of the students and I got to see the differences to the system that I was used to in Austria.

Overall, I consider myself extremely lucky to have had this experience. I got to know so many new friends and people, I learned a lot about myself, my limits, what I like and also what I don't like, and I learned so many valuable life skills you couldn't learn somewhere else. I had great experiences, so many that it's impossible to even put all of them in this article. My time in Taiwan is not over yet - as I liked it so much, I decided to continue my studies at a local university in Taiwan.

So let's see what the future brings...



What Volunteering Rebuilds

María Belén Zumárraga

International volunteering is anything but a linear journey. Arriving in Germany at 23 meant starting life over from scratch: navigating registrations, banking, and phone plans in a place with no friends and a language that felt entirely alien. It was the challenge of carving out my own existence in a land shaped by centuries of history, battles, and wars. In that context, this experience stops being just social work and turns into a profound personal transformation.

My true immersion began while working with toddlers aged one to three; in a way, I felt like I grew up alongside them. They taught me to lose my fear of making mistakes and to dare to speak, even when my sentences were clumsily put together. This daily routine trained my adaptability and moulded my identity according to my surroundings: I discovered that in German, I am more reserved; that English is my international comfort zone; and that in Spanish, my native tongue, I am a total chatterbox.

When you face absolute uncertainty, you have no choice but to trust, push forward, and create your own formula to make a space your own.

I came from Ecuador—the closest country to the sun, a land of eternal spring—only to adapt to a winter with barely two hours of direct sunlight. I had to learn to be forward-thinking: taking vitamin D starting in November, bundling up properly,



and finding joy in self-care and the creativity of my nail art. By training both my body and mind to endure the cold and resist the winter bugs, I was able to truly enjoy the Christmas markets and play in the snow with other volunteers.

I applied that same resilience to walking at least three hours a day through Frankfurt, trying to understand what that mini-metropolis meant to me. Through those walks, and while traveling solo across Europe, I met people from countless backgrounds: wealthy individuals, refugees, and nomads. That stark contrast of realities inspired me to define what I want for my future. Today, I have so much more clarity on which areas I want to apply my professional career to—and which ones I definitely do not.



On a personal level, the journey taught me to be realistic, to set boundaries without fear, and to move forward by asking, “Alright, what’s next?” I understood that things can go wrong, but at the end of the day, I have myself, and I am strong. Now that I am back in my hometown, watching everyone move toward their own goals, I have learned to choose environments that align with who I am today. I’ve learned to be kind, even when clashing with others, because everyone carries their own story. Ultimately, volunteering transforms you into someone capable of looking at the world with empathy, leaving one final question: How will you choose to see and understand others from now on?

Reporting our policies

Safer Together

In 2025-26, the ICYE Federation has continued to implement the commitments from *Safer Together - Addressing Sexual Violence in International Volunteering*:

- 226 staff have been trained to date on the prevention and response to sexual violence. Several members offer regular and often also repeated training or induction sessions on the topic for staff, co-workers, volunteers, host families and host project staff.
- 24 of the 39 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.

Despite continued efforts by human rights defenders and feminist activists, the root causes of sexual violence – gender inequality and social norms that accept violence against women – remain prevalent worldwide. In the 2025–26 programme year, 11 cases of sexual violence were reported to members. Five of these were cases of sexual harassment, five were sexual assaults, and one was rape. While all perpetrators were men, all victims, except in one case, were female volunteers. The case in which a teacher raped a female volunteer was reported to the authorities.

Members not only responded to cases of sexual violence but engaged in its prevention. The majority of the members discuss the topic of sexual violence in sessions and trainings with their volunteers. Many have trained or engaged co-workers, host families and staff from partner organisations. ICJA/ ICYE Germany adopted a workplace agreement on the prevention of sexual violence and all forms of discrimination which is applicable to all permanent staff. Their next General Assembly will focus on the topic of critical masculinities.



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

Care to Engage

In 2025-26, ICYE continued to be committed to safeguarding children in its work. Six cases of violence against children were reported. In two of the cases, the children experienced psychological and emotional abuse, the NCs are still investigating. In the other cases, volunteers reported about corporal punishment at a school which the NC followed up on.

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 2025-26:

- reducing paper consumption and encouraging digital documentation
- recycling waste whenever possible
- minimizing the use of single-use plastics

- reducing utility use (water and energy)
- internal promotion of the use of public transportation and alternative modes of transportation
- working from home to minimise mobilities
- replacing disposable cups and cutlery with reusable cups and spoons in the breakroom
- donating left over food to local charities

Together with national and international volunteers VASE/ ICYE Ecuador planted 700 trees while Dejavato/ ICYE Indonesia planted green plants around the office to reduce the use of air-conditioning. ICYE Nepal set up an environmentally friendly office with plants around the office area, preserving rainwater for use and saving water.

Members reported the following actions targeting their volunteers:

- raising awareness about energy consumption
- encouraging volunteers to adopt sustainable habits in their daily activities
- promoting the development of personal projects through which volunteers can positively influence the projects they are working on to improve their environmental performance, e.g. by teaching children to recycle plastic bottles
- providing volunteers with a budget for bicycles or offering incentives to use public transport
- serving vegetarian food at all training workshops and discussing environmental issues such as climate anxiety, upcycling, permaculture and waste reduction

In 2025-26, ICYE Ghana has been recruiting more projects on environmental and climate justice and has engaged different

host projects to adopt methods to address the environmental crisis within their activities. SIIJUVE/ ICYE Mexico also recruited two new host projects that support communities in becoming self-sustainable. ICDE India organised an environmental exhibition with schoolchildren, while Joint/ ICYE Italy set up a learning centre in a small village with a range of environmental learning activities. GIED/ ICYE Philippines collaborated with local partner institutions on waste management.

In August 2025, the [Working Group on the Greener Together Policy](#) finalised the [Greener Together toolkit](#) which is now available for members to train their volunteers.



Our projects in 2025-26

DIVA

Grenzenlos/ ICYE Austria started in November 2025 to implement with three partners (Lunaria Italy, Inex SDA from Czech Republic and YRS from Serbia) the project DIVA – Diversity and Inclusion in Volunteering Activities – with funds from the Erasmus+ programme. The Goal is to support organisations to assess and improve the quality and the impact of inclusion in international and local volunteering activities. DIVA will develop new methodologies and tools to a) engage more young people from marginalised groups and b) to support local organisations to become more accessible and inclusive.

These tools include:

- a self-assessment tool with guiding questions in terms of accessibility and minimum quality standards
- a manual containing eight modules each for the assessment and four modules to deepen the knowledge on the needs of the target groups
- an online platform for dissemination

The project activities include desk research, activities to pilot the tools, international and local mobility action, training courses and multiplier events.



FutureMe

FutureMe is an Erasmus+ funded project that brings together four organisations from Germany, Italy, Spain and Romania to strengthen the capacity of youth workers, educators and teachers. The aim is to support young Europeans in acquiring the transversal competences that, according to the World Economic Forum, will be essential to navigate a labour market that is increasingly shaped by automation, artificial intelligence and digital transformation. By offering a certified, accessible and transferable training model, the project raises professional standards in youth work, fills gaps in training availability across Europe, and contributes to the greater recognition of youth work as a field.

At the heart of the project lies the conviction that youth work must evolve to meet the challenges young people face: from digital disruption to economic insecurity and anxiety about the

future. FutureMe has therefore been developing a comprehensive, standardised training offer for youth workers that is structured around 13 modules covering competences such as critical and creative thinking, emotional intelligence, resilience and stress management, technological literacy, interpersonal effectiveness, leadership and civic engagement. The [FutureMe Handbook](#) includes 29 non-formal education methodologies, created or adapted in the framework of the project. The partners have already organised various local events and workshops to disseminate the project and the methodologies.

FutureMe is designed to reach young people directly through the trained youth workers, with particular attention to those from underrepresented backgrounds or at risk of marginalisation. Through workshops and pilot activities embedded in their usual educational settings, young people aged 14–25 develop competences that support both their integration into the labour market and their personal growth as active citizens. The project's emphasis on initiative-taking, civic engagement and social leadership encourages young people to become protagonists of their own futures, planning volunteer projects, participating in local decision-making and contributing to 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



LIVE Ex

Nicolaus Novatus Mukasa
LIVE Ex Project Manager

The LIVE Ex (Living Earth Exchange) project continued to empower young people in Sub-Saharan Africa to act for climate justice and environmental regeneration through digital learning, advocacy, and community action. Co-funded by the European Union and implemented by ICYE together with partners in Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania, Malawi, South Africa, Togo, and Zimbabwe, the project combines virtual exchange, mentorship, and local action to increase opportunities for young people with fewer opportunities.



Following the successful launch of the first mentorship cohort in early 2025, LIVE Ex expanded its impact throughout the programme year. The second and third cohorts were launched in July 2025 and January 2026. Supported by trained mentors, participants explored climate justice issues, developed advocacy skills, and designed community-based initiatives addressing local environmental challenges. Across the first two cohorts, the project reached more than 1,000 young people with fewer opportunities, with participants reporting significant improvements in leadership, advocacy, and collaboration skills. Participants took part in online learning sessions, mentorship circles, climate action planning workshops, and intercultural virtual exchanges with the focus on climate justice, environmental sustainability, advocacy, leadership, project management, and community mobilization.

The mentorship model enabled participants to develop practical solutions to environmental challenges affecting their communities. Young people also showed increased confidence in public speaking, climate advocacy, project design, and digital engagement, while mentors provided continuous support to ensure that ideas developed during the exchanges translated into concrete local action.

Examples of local activities from the ICYE partners included:

- In **Tanzania**, youth-led volunteers organised the popular Sunset Beach Clean-Up initiative at Coco Beach in Dar es Salaam, mobilising communities around marine conservation and responsible waste management. The movement inspired similar environmental actions in other parts of the country. An innovation competition in Morogoro engaged 108 students and 72 persons with disabilities, promoting inclusive participation in climate action. Inspired by the mentorship programme, Vedasto Mganga implemented a project focused on transforming waste materials into useful products. Participants also



implemented Eco Briquettes Tanzania (promoting alternative cooking energy solutions), Trash to Treasure (encouraging eco-entrepreneurship through upcycling), and Turning Waste into Responsibility (helping students convert discarded plastic bottles into school and community dustbins).

- In **Kenya**, participants used photography and storytelling to document environmental degradation and advocate for greater environmental justice. Through discussions on mining, deforestation, and climate change, young people demonstrated how storytelling can influence environmental awareness and action. The mentee Reinhard Babere launched Mazingira Yetu, a climate communication initiative that simplified climate information and disseminated environmental awareness messages through social media and community platforms. The projects Safe Water for Schools in Nairobi focused on improving water safety through testing, environmental education, and community awareness activities.
- In **Mozambique**, young people designed creative recycling challenges that encouraged households to

reduce waste, increase reuse, and promote community responsibility for environmental protection. Additionally, the Solid Waste Management project at Ingrid Chawner Basic School promoted responsible waste disposal and environmental education among students.

- In **Nigeria**, the Clean Up Lagos initiative mobilised young people, schools, and communities around waste management, recycling, composting, and environmental awareness campaigns, contributing to cleaner urban environments and positive behavioural change. Youth participants also launched Plastic Recycling, Keeping Lagos Clean and the Recycling Programme in Secondary Schools, both aimed at reducing plastic pollution, promoting recycling practices, and encouraging environmental responsibility among young people.

A key component of LIVE-Ex remained the organisation of intercontinental virtual exchanges connecting young people across multiple countries. Participants engaged in various online dialogues and discussions on climate justice, wetlands conservation, nutrition and climate change, cultural dimensions of climate action, environmental storytelling, community resilience, participation of differently abled persons in Climate Action, Green Energy, Wildlife Conservation, and Youth Participation in Climate Change. These exchanges provided a platform for intercultural learning, peer-to-peer engagement, and the sharing of innovative environmental solutions across borders.

LIVE-Ex maintained strong visibility through newsletters, social media campaigns, online publications, and dissemination events. Stories from participants, mentors, and partner organisations highlighted successful community initiatives and amplified youth voices on climate action. Digital communication helped connect project participants across countries while increasing public awareness of environmental challenges and locally driven solutions.

Host Projects

Denmark - Hertha Bofællesskab

This host project, situated in the village of Herskind in central Jutland/ Denmark, is a Camphill-inspired intentional community where adults with and without special needs live, work, and share their daily lives. The core aim of Hertha is to cultivate a meaningful and inclusive environment where every individual can contribute and find a sense of belonging within a shared purpose. While the community draws inspiration from anthroposophical traditions that shape certain aspects of daily life and activities, volunteers are not required to adhere to any specific philosophy. Instead, openness and respect are valued, particularly during shared routines like morning assemblies.



Approximately 140 people reside in Hertha, comprising residents with developmental disabilities, co-workers, families, and volunteers. The community's life revolves around collaborative work, creative endeavours, and mutual respect.

Residents and co-workers actively participate in the village's daily rhythm, which encompasses a diverse range of workshops and communal activities, including a bakery, dairy, farm, gardens, weaving workshop, kitchen, and café.

Volunteers support this project by taking part in both work as well as social and cultural community activities. This includes e.g. baking bread, gardening, working in the café, organising concerts or supporting residents in their daily routines like cooking, cleaning, and shared meals.

Nepal - Organic Farming

Nepal is a largely agricultural country with around 66% of the population still engaging in farming as their main income source. Organic agriculture combines tradition, innovation, and science to benefit the shared environment and to promote fair relationships and a decent quality of life as well as to reduce poverty. The host project is located in Dhunkharka and sustains the health of both the ecosystem and the community it serves. It promotes biodiversity and adaptation to local conditions, rather than the use of chemicals/ pesticides. In this host project volunteers learn local farming techniques (e.g. ploughing the field with oxen) and about medicinal plants. Their tasks include cultivating and harvesting the crops, tending to the animal, support with awareness programme targeting the community and school children and participate in environmental and women empowerment programmes.



Argentina - A whole world in Monte Chingolo

Soledad Arce

We find joy in welcoming volunteers, witnessing their first encounters with the children and the community, and seeing them gradually adapt to new routines and ways of doing things. We see them open their hearts, share their affection and curiosity, and discover the richness of culture, foods and traditions. And, little by little, bonds grow stronger and friendships emerge — connections that often remain in people's hearts long after the experience has ended.

My name is Soledad Arce, and I am the coordinator of La Sartén por el Mango, a programme run by Fundación Arché in Monte Chingolo, in the district of Lanús, in the southern part of Greater Buenos Aires. La Sartén began in late 2013. Together with an interdisciplinary team, we have developed a programme for children aged 6 to 12 who face different forms of vulnerability. We offer a combination of emotional and educational support, healthy meals, and creative, artistic and sports activities — creating a safe and caring space where children can learn, play, express themselves and simply be themselves.



From the very beginning, Fundación SES, through its Subir al Sur programme, has supported us by connecting us with young people from different parts of the world who come to volunteer in our community. Volunteers have become an important part of our everyday life. They help prepare meals, organise the dining and play areas, tend the vegetable garden and look after our centre. Most importantly, they take part in activities with the children, sharing games, movement, creativity and countless everyday moments.

These experiences have a profound impact on everyone involved and have helped us to strengthen bonds, encourage personal growth, foster solidarity and create meaningful opportunities for intercultural exchange. The children gain new opportunities to learn, connect and discover different ways of seeing the world. At the same time, volunteers are invited to step outside their familiar surroundings, challenge their own assumptions and develop a more inclusive perspective. For the Monte Chingolo community, this kind of support is essential. It is not only about providing practical help; it is about creating opportunities, strengthening relationships and contributing, together, to a future built on dignity and greater possibilities.

And perhaps this is what stays with us the most. The friendships that grow between volunteers and the children, the affection that crosses languages and borders, and the memories that remain long after the volunteers have returned home. For many of them, this experience becomes a way of discovering the world — but also of discovering themselves and their capacity to connect with others.

At La Sartén, we believe that these human connections matter. They remind us that a better world is not something distant or abstract. It can begin with something as simple and powerful as sharing a meal, playing together, listening to one another and opening our hearts to people whose lives may be very different from our own.

Our Finances

For the programme year 2025–26, the Federation achieved a surplus amounting to 4.649,26 €. When evaluated against the 2024–25 period, there was a substantial rise in both income and expenditure levels. Total income grew by 95.722,10 € to reach an aggregate of 580.699,41 €, a development largely driven by the grant funding schedule associated with the LIVE-Ex project. While income derived from membership contributions remains consistent, these figures have yet to recover to the levels observed prior to the pandemic. Concurrently, expenditure for the 2025–26 cycle rose by 101.623,20 €, resulting in total costs of 576.050,15 €.

The Federation continues to face challenges regarding the fluctuation of volunteer participation, as these numbers remain below pre-pandemic benchmarks. In an effort to strengthen the Federation's financial sustainability, a Sub-Committee has been established with the mandate to develop a modernised fee structure. Additional fiscal modifications ratified during the General Assembly in November 2025 include the creation of a Crisis Response Fund which will replace the former Insurance Fund from 2026-27 on. Its aim is to offer financial assistance to the members of the Federation during emergencies or crises that occur outside of their own influence. Furthermore, the Federation has renovated its Debtor's Policy and is collecting contributions to the Green Fund on a voluntary basis.

The generated surplus has been allocated to the Training and Programme Development Fund (TPDF), the Green Fund, the

new Crisis Fund, and the Free Reserve Fund. Due to the fact that our total depletion of the funds has exceeded our total allocation to the funds, we are closing the financial year with a slight reduction in the total reserve fund budget to 182.382,34 € (compared to the previous programme year, which stood at 196.270,40 €). In addition to the aforementioned funds, the reserve funds also include the Fund for the General Assembly as well as the Operating and Salary Reserve Fund.

In September 2026, 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

	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Assets			
Cash in Bank or Hand	543.412,87 €	673.491,06 €	601.108,92 €
Federation's Credits (Member Organisations)	63.432,25 €	63.368,02 €	65.160,78 €
Other Assets	37.146,91 €	26.027,96 €	11.596,47 €
Total assets	643.992,03 €	762.887,04 €	677.866,17 €
Liabilities and Funds			
Federation's Debts (Member Organisations)	367.956,82 €	492.755,83 €	410.653,38 €
Liabilities Erasmus+ Projects	65.041,85 €	52.830,40 €	60.461,93 €
Other Debts	25.273,32 €	21.030,41 €	24.368,52 €
Restricted Funds	84.811,32 €	103.452,37 €	87.199,38 €
Unrestricted Funds	100.908,72 €	92.818,03 €	95.182,96 €
Total Liabilities and Funds	643.992,03 €	762.887,04 €	677.866,17 €

THE ICYE FEDERATION

Financial Overview

	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Income			
Fees and Contributions by members	205.199,88 €	202.920,41 €	206.432,31 €
Income for volunteers' insurances	88.970,02 €	72.728,61 €	59.331,18 €
EC Grants	242.209,61 €	150.178,02 €	241.605,32 €
Other Income/ Grants/ Depletion of Funds	36.586,98 €	56.426,06 €	70.586,77 €
Interests	2.692,77 €	2.724,21 €	2.743,83 €
Total Income	575.659,26 €	484.977,31 €	580.699,41 €
Expenses			
Overall Federational Costs	48.392,84 €	39.214,21 €	74.252,25 €
Insurance Costs	86.277,82 €	73.022,94 €	62.136,94 €
Grants Project Expenses and Sub-Committee expenses	176.551,21 €	113.103,70 €	179.956,30 €
Staff Costs	185.294,88 €	200.775,75 €	205.045,52 €
Office and Communication, IT Costs	26.487,43 €	22.593,90 €	25.085,44 €
Bank and Audit Costs	9.676,91 €	7.390,79 €	7.840,01 €
Other Expenses/ Allocation to Funds	21.246,00 €	18.325,66 €	21.733,69 €
Total Expenses	553.927,09 €	474.426,95 €	576.050,15 €
Program year result	21.732,17 €	10.550,36 €	4.649,26 €

Outlook

The political situation in many parts of the world remains unstable and uncertain. There is a sense of tension in the air, with many people wondering what the future will bring. At the same time, the impacts of human-made climate change are becoming increasingly visible, and in some regions, they are affecting communities in dramatic ways. These developments are likely among the key factors behind the stagnation of participation numbers in international volunteering programs. Yet they also remind us why our work matters. In a world shaped by conflict, inequality, and environmental crises, ICYE's commitment to justice, peace, intercultural understanding, and environmental regeneration is more relevant than ever.

This context helps explain why, after a significant decline of around 20% in our long-term exchange programme during 2024–25, with volunteer numbers dropping from 558 volunteers in 2022–23 to 451, we were able to stabilise the situation and achieve a modest growth of 5% in the current programme year 2025–26, reaching 477 volunteers. While this development is encouraging, it is not yet where we want, or need, to be. Sustainable programmes require participation levels that allow our member organisations to remain financially and operationally strong.

Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that the most important discussions at the General Assembly in Peru in November 2025 centred on two closely connected questions: What is our role and identity in a rapidly changing world? And how can this understanding be translated into concrete programmes, activities, and opportunities, both existing and new?

In the coming programme year 2026-2027, ICYE will therefore work on strengthening our long-term exchange programmes, explore the potential of short-term formats, develop and pilot new approaches and partnerships, enhance regional co-operations as well as supporting members facing challenges, ensuring that solidarity remains at the heart of our Federation.

Looking at the work ahead, we would like to recognise the many Sub-Committees, working groups, and the Youth Engagement Committee who continuously strengthen and challenge our Federation through their expertise, commitment, and vision. Their work helps translate our values into concrete action and drives important developments across ICYE.

Developing a common way forward for a Federation that spans the globe is both inspiring and challenging. Our members work in very different realities and cultural and political contexts. Yet they are united by a shared belief that a better, more peaceful, and more just world is possible. It is this belief that enables ICYE not only to withstand uncertainty and change, but to learn, adapt, and continue evolving.

Our Partnerships



CCIVS: In 2025-26 the International Office has continued to 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 in the Executive Committee (EC). Luz Gutierrez, director of VASE/ ICYE Ecuador, is representing ICYE as EC member in CCIVS until November 2027.



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 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 would like to express its heartfelt gratitude to all ICYE members for the dedication, creativity, and perseverance they bring to our Federation every day. Across different countries, contexts, and huge challenges, you continue to create meaningful opportunities for young people to learn, contribute, and grow through transcultural volunteering. Your commitment to finding solutions, building bridges, and supporting volunteers, host projects and communities is at the heart of ICYE. Through your daily work, you foster understanding, solidarity and mutual respect across cultural and social boundaries. In doing so, you are truly working for peace on the ground.

We would also like to acknowledge the International Office team for their dedication and tireless work throughout the year. From welcoming, supporting, and enabling us, the ICYE Board of Managers, to function smoothly, and implement the decision and ideas of the ICYE members, to coordinating our many Sub Committees, to fundraising, project implementation, and strengthening relationships with members and partner networks, the IO team has played a central role in advancing our shared priorities. Their commitment has helped turn ideas into action and ensured that initiatives such as LIVE-Ex could continue to grow and thrive.

Finally, we are deeply grateful to the organisations and institutions that have supported our work through their financial and technical contributions during the programme year 2025–26. Our sincere thanks go to the Erasmus+ Programme and the

European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe. Their trust and support make it possible for us to strengthen international voluntary service, promote youth engagement, and work towards a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world.

Thank you to everyone who contributes to the ICYE journey. Together, we continue to demonstrate that transcultural exchange and solidarity is alive and life changing for peace, social and climate justice and awareness. In a world of growing conflicts and dramatic environmental changes, we believe this is more relevant than ever.



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