



# NEWSLETTER

April 2025

European IFYE Alumni



## Content of the Newsletter

- Greetings from the President
  - "Cut the Christmas tree" meeting in Hämeenlinna, Finland
  - Jasmin's IFYE exchange report to Austria
  - The Finnish IFYE Association's 60th Anniversary
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## Greetings from the President

Dear IFYEs,

I can still remember last summer in Germany really clearly – it honestly feels like it was just yesterday. But somehow, eight months have already flown by, and now we're deep into planning the 2025 conference in the Cumbria region of England.



At the end of March, we had our Midterm Meeting, and we got to check out the venue for the 2025 conference. The accommodation is a castle (yep, a real castle!) right on the riverbank where the river flows into the Atlantic. We've got a sandy beach just outside and an amazing view of the sea. But it wasn't all sightseeing – we also got quite a bit of work done.



During the meeting, we went over topics from the last conference and discussed issues that have come up since the last AGM. We also bounced around a bunch of ideas for how to keep developing IFYE. The organizing team from England joined us, and we got a solid look at how far along they are with preparations – and wow, they're well ahead. Not too surprising though, since they already did most of the planning back in 2020... then COVID hit. Hopefully, nothing like that will get in our way this time!



We also heard that the next World Conference is likely to happen in New Zealand in January 2028. It's not officially confirmed yet, but that's what the rumors are saying – so if you're interested, it might be a good idea to pencil it in and start spreading the word conference experience that summer at the European Conference in Sweden.

This year's AGM will also include elections for the European Board. If you're thinking about getting involved, you're more than welcome to put your name forward. It's definitely not something to take for granted – it's been a real honor for me to serve on the European Board since 2015. Not everything always goes perfectly, and yeah, sometimes you try something new, and it doesn't work out for everyone. But if you're not willing to change things up now and then, you'll never grow – and that goes for global organizations too. It's important to evolve and rethink things from time to time instead of just sticking to the same old ways. Reinventing the whole thing isn't necessary, but refining and adjusting things to fit the times definitely is. Just because we've been doing something the same way for over 60 years doesn't mean it's still the best way – but that also doesn't mean we have to throw everything out and start fresh.

Anyway, I've had a lot on my mind lately, and after talking things through in our meetings, it's become pretty clear: it's time for a proper update to our rulebook – the Blue Booklet. That doesn't mean rewriting all the rules, but it definitely needs to be made easier to understand, easier to read, and more clear in how it's interpreted. Over the years, we've tried to define and adjust a lot of things, but we also need to keep up with today's world.

Take this for example: according to the current rules, any change in the Blue Booklet has to be approved at the AGM. Right now, we've got an issue – our bank details have changed, and we need to publish the new info. But we can't do that until the AGM approves it. So for now, the old (and wrong) bank info is still in the Blue Booklet until the update gets officially accepted at this year's AGM. Stuff like that should be easier to fix without needing an AGM vote. Of course, bigger changes should still go through the AGM process.

So, the Board is planning to put forward a proposal at this year's AGM that would allow us to revise the rulebook. My idea is to have a working group do the job. Since the association is based in Switzerland, someone who knows Swiss association law should lead the team. And the group should include one representative from each region – one from Scandinavia, the Baltics, Central & Southern Europe, and the European islands.

The group would be coordinated by the 1st Vice President. There shouldn't be any need to travel – everything can be done online via MS Teams or Zoom. Then, we can still meet up and talk in person at the annual conference.

The idea is to take about two years and have a solid proposal ready by 2027. We'd present it at the conference in Switzerland and vote on it at the 2027 AGM.

So yeah... just some of my (kind of boring) thoughts on how we can keep moving forward.

Spring is already doing its thing, bringing us those long, warm evenings to enjoy with family and friends. I hope you're all having a great start to the



season, and I'm really looking forward to seeing you all this summer in England at this year's conference. There are still a few spots left, so if you haven't signed up yet – now's the time! It's going to be an awesome event at a truly special location with an amazing program.

With that, I wish you all a Happy Easter and a beautiful spring. See you in the next newsletter – or this summer in England!

So, I think the next conference can come, I or we are ready for it.

Look forward to a great time with lots of fun and variety.

...have a beautiful spring & see you soon



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## **"Cut the Christmas tree" meeting in Hämeenlinna, Finland**

*written by Hanna Taala IFYE to Switzerland 2008*



Traditionally, the Finnish IFYEs skipped their Christmas party and organized "Cut the Christmas tree" meeting in January. The meeting was held 19th January 2025 in beautiful Hämeenlinna, located about an hour's drive north from Helsinki. It was truly wonderful to spend time with IFYE friends from six different decades! We also got to sing a Happy Birthday song for our 81-year old IFYE.



Our tiny, plastic Christmas tree was knocked down on the table while having lunch in a mexican restaurant, and on our way to the next destination we had some Christmas tree beverages, too. We got to enjoy an amazing concert "Disco Inferno – Hits from under the Disco ball" by The Conscript Band of the Finnish Defence Forces and the Reservists of the Conscript Band. The concert featured some of the biggest disco hits played by over 50 musicians. When Disco Inferno and "Burn, baby burn" was played, the audience was just dancing. What an experience!



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# **Jasmin's IFYE Exchange report**

## **to Austria**

*written by Jasmin Kangas IFYE to Austria 2024*

This is how the long-awaited and experience-rich 4H-exchange in Austria started. So my trip in Austria lasted a total of three weeks, and during this time I stayed with three different families. I arrived at the airport of Vienna, the capital of Austria, on July 1st, 2024, and the two-day Incoming seminar with other exchange students who came to Austria immediately began. I stayed at the hotel as a roommate with Ifye, who came from Sweden. During the incoming seminar, we received useful instructions from the country's coordinators, e.g. for treating problem situations in exchange families. We also got to know the local sights of Vienna and each other together with the exchange group. For example, we went to the Parliament House in Vienna to visit inside, and in the evening we had dinner in a nice restaurant.

The next day it was time to go to the first host family, which was located in Sankt Pölten, near Vienna. The apartment was a modern apartment building, and considering the circumstances, this particular family became my favorite during the entire exchange. So I had already told the Finnish coordinator before my exchange that I would prefer to join city families instead of farms, and this wish came true, because only my last exchange family had a farm. So this arrangement suited me better, because I have already seen and got to know the work of the farm at home on the farm, so I wanted to see something different in exchange. So in this first family, I got to see a lot of all kinds of sights and experience different sights, because we traveled to Vienna almost every day by train. For example, we went on a river cruise, to an amusement park, to the high Donauturm observation tower, from which I went down a slide while admiring the scenery, and to a music museum, where you could walk down the steps of a piano keyboard while playing tunes. It was a great experience for me, because I play the piano.





My next family was on a completely different side of Austria, in Gschwandt in Upper Austria, which was a smaller municipality. There I lived in a two-story apartment building, which nevertheless had its own large yard and terrace. While I was there, I unfortunately got sick for a few days, so I didn't get to experience everything as much, but definitely the best memories from there were the trip to Salzburg and Hallstatt. We also went to the Alps one day, as that was one of my goals to experience. Five Fingers is definitely one place that everyone should see! It was also special to visit the church one day for the service, because my exchange family had a musical performance there. Even though I didn't understand anything about the service as it was in German, it was still interesting to watch it and sing hymns in German!



My third, or last, family was located near Villach in a really small village in Feld am See in Southern Austria on a farm. Another changer from Taiwan also joined the family at the same time as me. At first, for the first time in my family during the entire exchange, I had a little culture shock, because the house was big and old up on a big mountain, there were a lot of people there and it was on a farm, so naturally there were also a lot of bugs etc. However, we got through that too and halfway through the week I had really settled into the family. Even though you could/had to work on the farm a few times in the barn, the field and the cheese factory, there was also a lot more. We went to visit a nearby town, I got to make cheese myself, and we participated twice in the local Landjugend's game night and dance rehearsals! On the last night, everything was crowned by a great and big concert we attended. Even though I couldn't understand the lyrics of this band's songs because of German, it was still a great experience because the band was very famous in Austria and they also sang a few international songs that I recognized.

All in all, the exchange went very well, and I will definitely remember this three-week experience even as an old man in a rocking chair! It was great that I got to see so much of Austria, because all my families were located in different parts of Austria. My biggest goal for myself from the exchange was also fulfilled, i.e. that I made lifelong friends, but most importantly that my English language skills developed extremely much. So you shouldn't be afraid to go on an exchange if your language skills are bad. I didn't get through the English matriculation exams until the second year of high school, so I've always considered my English to be bad, but in two weeks it suddenly went like water! The exchange is also a great way to practice different languages. I can warmly recommend the exchange to everyone who has even thought about it a little!

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# The Finnish IFYE Association's 60th

## Anniversary

*written by Heli Aaltonen IFYE to Hungary 1996*

The Finnish IFYEs Association celebrated their 60th Anniversary in the beautiful Mänttä Club on 5th October 2024. We were happy to have IFYEs from the early 1970s until 2024, celebrating with a theme "IFYE – Our door to the World for 60 years". The anniversary celebration started with a toast. We had delicious food and good music, Casio Kvartetti-choir and Urho Tuhkanen and Unehtumattumat band performed. During the evening, we heard reminiscences of IFYEs from different decades about IFYE- activities.

We had true history about our Association to see: for example the first account book, song books from the Mikkeli conference and a copy of a Guinness World Record Book page. Yes, IFYEs have done a lot in the world, also a Guinness World Record that happened in Ilmajoki conference: "Triangle playing. On 20th July 1988, 145 players from 14 different countries played triangle at the Kaustinen Folk Music Festival. The triangle players were former IFYE exchange members." One of our IFYEs found himself from the triangle players on a video that was shown on the anniversary.

The Finnish IFYEs Association had organized European IFYE Conferences six times:

-2022 Korpilahti

-2011 Rautavaara

-2000 Mustiala

-1988 Ilmajoki

-1978 Mikkeli

-1966 Lepaa



The Finnish IFYEs Association arranges programs for the members and friends around a year. After Christmas we celebrate Christmas tree felling. During the spring time we have our annual meeting, and in the summer we have our summer meeting. Last summer some of us gathered together in Sirkku Mennala's farm. Sirkku heated up an excellent smoke sauna and we also got to experience the farm's brand new escape shed! In the autumn we have our Homecoming meeting. Over the years we have for example gathered and spent a night in the tropical greenhouse, wandered in Tiilikajärvi national park, spent a night in lumberjack's cabin, shaped glass birds in Nuutajärvi Glass Village and had a dinner in a middle age style restaurant. One of our annual meetings was held on a ferry from Helsinki to Tallinn, where we spent a fun weekend. As IFYEs are known to be very competitive, we have competed for example by carrying a bucket of water in one hand and a button in the other hand: the winning team was the one that managed to carry the most water. And, of course we have our own Finnish IFYEs sauna club!

The Finnish IFYEs are grateful for the past decades and look forward to the following ones. Once an IFYE, always an IFYE!



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Deadline next issue: 30th June 2025

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**European IFYE Alumni Association**

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