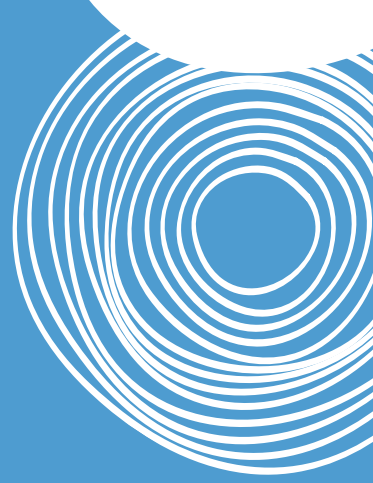




ANNUAL REPORT 2024

**Bridging Cultures.
Building Futures.**

To inspire active global citizenship and personal development through intercultural learning and travel.





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A MESSAGE FROM EIL/AFS IRELAND

Dear Friends and Supporters of
EIL/AFS Ireland,

Since our very first Irish exchange in 1964, your belief in our mission has made the movement for peace through intercultural experiences possible. For that, we offer our deepest gratitude. Take a bow - you are at the heart of this journey.

A key milestone in 2024 was the transition of leadership from our founding CEO to a new generation of leadership. We are profoundly grateful to our historic leadership for laying a strong base from which we could grow as a charity, and we hold full confidence in the future that lies ahead.



(L-R: Aileen O'Leary, Kate O'Brien, and Niamh Hill)

Our 2024 financial results reflect the continued strength of the organisation and the successful leadership transition, with a healthy surplus that ensures the sustainability of our mission and scholarships. We also remain committed to fortifying a strong culture and investing in our people, ensuring that our teams and volunteers have the support and resources to thrive.

Looking ahead, we are excited to implement our new five-year strategic plan while remaining deeply committed to our mission and to the strong support of our network. As a board, team, and community, we extend our sincere thanks to all of you for walking this path with us. The future is bright - and we are thrilled to step into it together.

With gratitude, The Board and Team of EIL / AFS Ireland

AIDEEN O'LEARY
CEO

KATE O'BRIEN
CHAIRPERSON 2025

NIAMH HILL
CHAIRPERSON 2024

OUR STORY SO FAR

Our Vision

A just world where all cultures thrive together in peace and understanding

Our Mission

Our mission is to provide intercultural learning experiences that enrich lives and inspire global citizenship.

Our Values

- **Diversity** – We embrace diversity in people, culture, and perspectives and nurture these differences to enrich our organisation
- **Curiosity** – We are always eager to learn, and we empower others to follow their curiosity about the world
- **Collaboration** – We are stronger together and build relationships that support our mission
- **Integrity** – We choose what is right and ethical over what is fast and convenient

What makes us distinctive?

We are **purpose driven**, not profit driven

We develop **global citizens**

We are part of an **international movement**

**EMPOWERING
PEOPLE
ENRICHING LIVES
FOR LEARNERS
FOR COMMUNITIES
FOR A WORLD THAT
THRIVES TOGETHER.**

Our Beliefs

- We are all global citizens, and our choices impact others
- Learning is a life-long process
- Everybody has the capacity to create positive change in the world

1,571

Participants on Cultural
Programmes in 2024

~1,550

Anticipated Participants
on Cultural Programmes
in 2025

8

Point improvement on our
Net Promoter Score (NPS)
in 2024

OVER 30

Years in partnership with
Road Scholar

CULTURAL GROUPS

Our Cultural Groups department facilitates short cultural programmes for groups of visitors who come to Ireland with the goal of learning about the rich culture and heritage of the island. We cover the whole island of Ireland and offer meaningful interactions whilst catering for groups that can include multiple generations of the same family. These unique programmes strongly align with our values and our belief in life-long learning.

The Cultural Groups Department experienced a highly successful year in 2024, welcoming 1,571 Road Scholars to Ireland, just 68 participants shy of our pre-pandemic 2019 numbers.

Programme Overview

Across seven consistently full programmes, 70 groups visited from April through to October, with itineraries ranging from 7 to 16 days in length.

Operational Highlights

Throughout 2024, we collaborated with over 350 suppliers: hotels, restaurants, attractions, guides, entertainers, venues, and transport providers, whose contributions were vital to our success.

Group Leaders

Our Group Leaders remained the cornerstone of delivery, with 20 leaders employed across the season. Their expertise ensured the smooth running of programmes and provided invaluable feedback to our office-based programme coordinators.

In-House Skills

Our office team operated with exceptional efficiency, managing the extensive documentation required for each programme and participant. Beyond administrative excellence, the team brought diverse skill sets- including graphic design, accountancy, and event management, enhancing the overall quality of our operations. Notably, two team members hold Fáilte Ireland guide certifications, enabling them to step in seamlessly when needed and gain valuable



on-the-road perspectives to strengthen collaboration with our Group Leaders and suppliers.

Training & Development

In 2024, we continued in-person Group Leader training, introducing scenario-based role-playing exercises drawn from real-world experiences. These sessions sparked lively discussions, fostered problem-solving strategies, and facilitated peer-to-peer knowledge sharing.

Performance Metrics

We are pleased to report a Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 74 points in 2024, marking an 8-point increase over the previous year.

Outlook 2025

Looking ahead, we are on track to welcome 1,542 participants through our partnership with Road Scholar in 2025, continuing our commitment to excellence in cultural travel experiences.

Terrific guides, lovely accommodations, variety of activities, just the right amount of 'busy'...cannot say enough good about this trip. I have been on several with Road Scholar, and this is the best! Special Kudos to our guide, Frank....always cheerful, tactful, and patient. It was a wonderful group that formed a special bond over a newfound appreciation of beautiful, sunny!! Ireland.

Countryside & Culture Ireland at a Slower Pace



Here is just a flavour of the many incredible hotels we partnered with this year. In addition to these, we continue to collaborate with a vast network of restaurants, historical sites, lecturers, local experts, and facilities to deliver exceptional experiences for our programme participants.



The week had an excellent variety of activities, balanced between rural/scenic and city, fun and outdoors and cultural. But the frosting on the cake was our tour leader Caroline O'Connor, who made everything very fun with songs, limericks, history, stories and advice on where to go and what to do, all while ensuring that the hotels, meals, buses, tickets and tours were all lined up and perfectly timed. She never lost her patience, either, as five groups went off in different directions at times to meet their interests. At the end, we all sat in the hotel lobby as a group and sang Molly Malone at the top of our lungs, 'perfect strangers recorded us ' We were having so much fun. The kids had fun, the adults had fun. We all felt we had made new friends.

Town & Country Family



2024

We learned about the turbulent history of Northern Ireland from both sides. It was a short trip but we were exposed to the bustling Belfast with the fantastic Titanic Museum (shipbuilding history) and the city's architecture. We then enjoyed the historic city of Derry/Londonderry. The capstone was the visit to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne.

The lecturers, as well as our coordinator, Peter O'Connor, were knowledgeable about the topics discussed. There was a bit of time where we could have had a final wrap-up of what we learned about the conflicts and the historical bases as well as outcomes. Fantastic trip. We had unbelievably beautiful weather.

The Best of Northern Ireland: Past, Present and Future



2024



2024

199

Inbound Participants

8

Outbound Participants

22

Partner Countries

5

New Communities

6

New School Partnerships

STUDY ABROAD

Fostering Global Connections Through Education

In 2024, EIL/AFS Ireland continued its mission of building intercultural understanding by welcoming 199 secondary school students from 22 partner countries to communities across Ireland. We were delighted to see a growing number of Irish students pursuing study abroad opportunities, as the year brought exciting new initiatives, expanded partnerships, and outstanding student achievements.

Inbound Programme Highlights

- Twenty-one global partners sent students from countries including Italy, Argentina, Japan, and the USA.
- Five new communities joined the network.
- Six new school partnerships and re-established links strengthened the academic experience.
- Arrival weekends and monthly Local Coordinator meetings fostered a strong sense of community.

Outbound Programme

- Eight Irish students studied abroad in 2024, with destinations including France and Germany. Programmes ranged from 3 months to full academic year exchanges.
- A greater focus on outbound and EIL/AFS Ireland's participation in the **Transition Year (TY) Fair** helped strengthen outreach efforts.
- Meanwhile, past participants supported arrivals and orientations as volunteers, highlighting the lasting impact of the study abroad experience.

Students achieved remarkable things this year, from playing for the Munster rugby team, winning essay competitions, starring in school musicals, to becoming a **Junk Kouture finalist** (a global fashion and sustainability competition for young people aged 12-19, where they design and create high-end couture outfits entirely from 100% recycled and upcycled materials).



Ondrej Vesjlick: A Last-Minute Arrival Who Became Family

"Ondrej Vesjlick from the Czech Republic arrived in Ireland on Sunday, and by Monday, he was off to school! He quickly fit in with our two other students at the time, Edoardo Pieraccino from Italy and Elliott Basett from France, and the three became fast friends. We're delighted to say we're still in touch with all of them today.

Ondrej's bond with our family has grown far beyond that first visit. He returned the following summer for nearly two months, even taking on a part-time job with my husband, David, which he thoroughly enjoyed. Most recently, he came back with his friend Karl for a hiking trip through Kerry and Clare, creating new memories before heading off to university.

As we are currently hosting Karl from Switzerland and Mateus from Brazil, it was wonderful to see them connect with Ondrej and hear about his experiences in Ireland. The friendship among them was instant."

~ Irene Hayes (Host mother)

"My Life-Changing Exchange Year in France: A Journey of Growth, Family, and Self-Discovery"

Hi, I'm Beril, and I spent 10 months in France with AFS in 2024 for my exchange year. I was placed in a small village about an hour and a half from Bordeaux, in the beautiful countryside of southwestern France. I had an incredible host sister, host mum, and host dad. I formed such special bonds with all of them that I truly consider them my second family. I am very grateful and proud of myself for having taken the opportunity to live abroad for a year.

During this experience, I learned how to adapt, suspend judgment, and, most importantly, be more patient. I believe an exchange year allows us to discover ourselves while pushing us outside our comfort zones. Knowing that I managed to adapt to a new school, new circumstances, and a lifestyle different from my own makes me feel like I can do anything.



From the very beginning, Ireland captured my heart. I was enchanted by its culture, its breathtaking landscapes, and above all, its warm and welcoming people. When my program ended, I knew this wasn't a goodbye but only the beginning of a lifelong connection. The following year, I returned, not only to revisit the places I had grown to love, but also to reunite with my host family, who had become like a second family to me.

This year, I came back once again, this time with the specific goal of exploring County Kerry, one of Ireland's most picturesque regions. Much of this connection is thanks to my host family. I consider myself incredibly lucky to have been welcomed by such kind and generous people who opened their home and hearts to me. Their warmth transformed my stay into something unforgettable, and without them, I might never have returned."

~ Ondrej



During his AFS cultural exchange in County Clare, Filippo Bosi from Italy had the exciting opportunity to train with the Munster Rugby team. Local coordinator Sandra Milsted shared: *“Filippo’s dedication to both rugby and his studies has been outstanding. Selected to play with the Munster Rugby team, he gives 100% to his training and matches while maintaining a mature and responsible attitude. Despite the demands of his sport, Filippo ensures he keeps up with his academic work, often using weekends to stay on top of his studies.*

His host family, Damien, Rebecca, and their children, rugby fans themselves, have been a tremendous source of support, always encouraging him on and off the field. As his local coordinator, I’m thrilled to see how Filippo’s EIL/AFS Ireland cultural exchange has been enriched by this opportunity to pursue his passion for rugby, a sport he has loved since the age of six. We are all incredibly proud of him.”

Filippo Bosi AFS Italy

“I’ve been playing rugby since I was six years old. Unlike many kids in Italy who often switch sports when they’re young, I never did, probably because my older brother also plays rugby, and my dad has always been passionate about the game. Back home in Italy, I play for what I’d call a big team, Parma.

When I came to Ireland, I had just recovered from a serious injury - ACL surgery on the same knee, twice. I only expected to join a local team that a friend of mine, who moved to Ireland four years ago, had recommended.

After a few weeks of training and matches, I felt I was performing pretty well considering my recent recovery. Then one Wednesday night, after training, the coach approached me and asked if I’d like to train and play some matches with Munster. Of course, I couldn’t say no!”



GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP



At the heart of EIL/AFS Ireland's mission lies Explore, our scholarship outbound programme designed to spark curiosity, challenge perspectives, and inspire action. By funding overseas learning adventures for Irish citizens and residents, Explore allows participants to immerse themselves in new cultures, volunteer in diverse communities, or advance their language skills, all while shaping their identities as global citizens.

In 2024, 25 passionate individuals were awarded the chance to embark on this journey, supported by a scholarship budget of over €130,000. The winners set off to destinations as varied as Belgium, Denmark, France, Japan, Mexico, the USA, and Vietnam. Each experience offered unique challenges and profound learning moments, equipping participants with fresh perspectives and a deeper understanding of the world and their place within it.

10

Individual counties represented

7

Third Level Institutes represented
- ATU, Maynooth University, MTU
Cork, TCD, UCC, UCD & University
of Galway

10

Secondary Schools represented

1

Group Leaders led young people
on their programmes

7

Different host countries

2000+

Hours given to volunteer projects
correlate with the United Nations
Sustainable Development Goals.



Exploring A world of wonders



"The Explore Award transformed how I see the world in more ways than one-teaching me the power of empathy in ways I never imagined. Through volunteering and understanding experiences other than my own, I've grown into such a better stronger person because of it! Cảm ơn (Thank you) EIL/AFS Ireland."

~ Lucy Lehane

(MTU Cork - Volunteer Abroad Programme Winner)



"My Explore journey was one of, if not the most authentic experience of my life. Everyone at EIL and my host organisation ensured my travel and volunteering were seamless and as rewarding as they could be. It's very different to just travelling as a tourist as it's set for you to integrate into the society you are visiting, thus you get to do more than just experience a different culture, you understand it and gain an appreciation for another group of people's way of life, which is truly just beautiful. I could not be more grateful."

~ Nokutenda Jeché

(Global Awareness Programme Winner)



Mort Murphy



Tea Falade



Grace Hackett

Volunteer Impact

In 2024, Explore scholarship participants travelled to seven different host countries, contributing more than 2,000 hours to volunteer projects aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Their work addressed a wide range of priorities, with particular focus on SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, and 16 - tackling issues from poverty reduction and quality education to climate action and sustainable communities.

All participants recorded a growth in:

- Personal Development
- Global Citizenship Education
- Active volunteering here in Ireland

OUR VOLUNTEERS: THE HEARTBEAT OF EIL/AFS IRELAND

Behind every programme, every event, and every participant experience at EIL/AFS Ireland stands a passionate community of volunteers who bring our mission to life. Their commitment goes far beyond giving time; it's about sharing talents, diverse perspectives, and a belief in the power of global connection.

Whether offering strategic insight at the Board level or welcoming participants at events across the country, our volunteers ensure that every interaction reflects the inclusive, global spirit that defines EIL/AFS Ireland.

In 2024, this commitment came to life in remarkable ways. Forty-nine volunteers played key roles in making the Explore programme possible, facilitating everything from the Readathon and Interview & Selection Day to Enrolment Day, Pre-Departure activities, and the Welcome Back events.

"We are passionate about raising the profile of the Explore programme, as it fully embodies our mission. The programme engages a diverse range of individuals in an intercultural learning experience that fosters personal development and empowers participants to become active global citizens. On returning to Ireland, they are inspired to take meaningful action within their local communities, sharing their learning and raising awareness of critical social and climate issues. Our biggest success is that the returned participants continue their learning journey as well as engage in local community initiatives."

Adam Peerbux
Head of Programmes

Others worked tirelessly behind the scenes, supporting administration and marketing efforts to ensure everything ran smoothly. The reach of our volunteer community extended far beyond Ireland's borders, too.

Three volunteers travelled to Poland to represent EIL/AFS Ireland at the AFS Volunteer Summer Summit, building connections with peers from across the global network. Meanwhile, two young volunteers stepped onto the international stage at the AFS Youth Assembly in New York, joining nearly 700 young leaders from over 80 countries to share ideas, shape conversations, and bring back insights to strengthen our work at home.

In total, 85 volunteers contributed to at least one EIL/AFS event in 2024, each leaving their mark on our programmes and the participants they touched. Together, they are not just supporting our work; they are shaping the future of global citizenship.



René with her host family in Mexico

Resilience is the keyword that emerges when I reminisce on my journey in Oaxaca, Mexico. Losing a parent and experiencing grief on my Explore journey was tough. I stayed in Oaxaca for a short while longer, but only because I had an incredible support system - my host family, who welcomed me with open arms and gave me a piece of their heart.

Once I spoke to EIL about my struggle, I was taken aback by the sheer compassion and support. I didn't want to let my community down, yet EIL erased that feeling and showed me what the Explore Programme means. In the face of adversity, the community provides that foundation of support to always remain resilient"

**~ René Meliá
(Access Winner)**

IMPACT AT A GLANCE



Income

€ 5,576,899



Grants

€37,218



Expenditure

€5,407,311

Participants



211

Study Abroad Students

Explore



25

Explore Scholarships

10

Countries visited

Study Abroad



10

Local
Communities

21

Inbound Partners

33

Irish Schools

19

Different
nationalities hosted

Cultural Groups

1,571

Participants

21

No of Groups

20

Group Leaders

74

Net Promoter Score (NPS)





FINANCES

Income & Expenditure Account

Financial Performance

In 2024, income grew by 15%, reflecting the continued strong performance of the team. The strong surplus achieved evidenced a concerted drive to increase operational efficiency. This is reflected in the increased investment directly into programmes and allowed a significant transfer into our scholarship fund which, is core to the mission. Overall, we had a healthy financial performance, and future trends are promising.

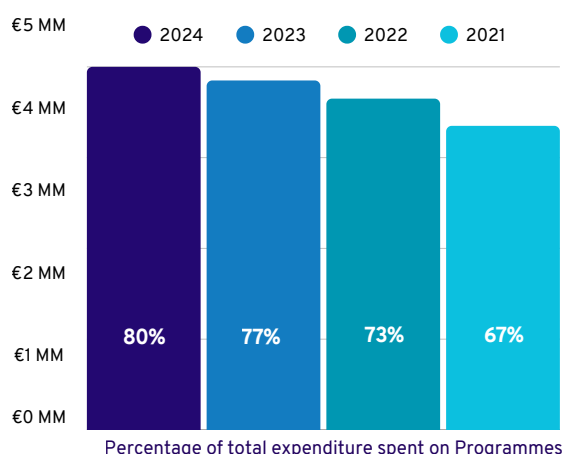
Reserves Policy

EIL/AFS Ireland maintains reserves to cover at least six months of core salaries (approximately €413K in 2024), ensuring continuity during income fluctuations or rising costs.

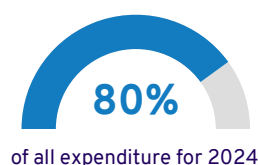
Income	2024	2023	% of Overall Income		YonY Change
			2024	2023	
Programme Income	5,489,209	4,767,621	98%	99%	15%
Grants	37,218	44,034	1%	1%	-15%
Co Funding	31,972	16,250	1%	0%	97%
Other Income	18,500	-	0%	0%	100%
Total Income	5,576,899	4,827,905	100%	100%	16%

Expenditure	2024	2023	% of Overall Expenditure		YonY Change
			2024	2023	
Programme Costs	4,308,609	3,758,681	80%	77%	15%
Wages	826,301	858,408	15%	18%	-4%
Overheads	268,544	251,289	5%	5%	7%
Interest	3,857	7,343	0%	0%	-47%
Total Expenditure	5,407,311	4,875,721	100%	100%	11%
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	169,588	(47,816)			

PROGRAMME COSTS (4 YEAR COMPARISON)



PROGRAMME COSTS



TOTAL INCOME

€ 5,576,899 ▲ 16%

Balance Sheet

Balance sheet as at 31 December 2024

Balance Sheet	Year 2024	Year 2023
Assets		
Fixed assets		
Tangible Assets	690,224	713,606
Current Assets		
Debtors	90,433	59,003
Cash at bank in hand	1,691,681	1,543,318
	1,782,114	1,602,321
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(735,211)	(748,388)
Net Current Assets	1,046,903	853,933
Total Assets less current liabilities	1,737,127	1,567,539
Reserves		
Unrestricted capital reserves	690,224	713,606
Unrestricted operational reserves	559,278	454,773
Designated funds (scholarship fund)	487,625	399,160
	1,737,127	1,567,539

Notes:

The financial statements were approved by the board of directors and authorised for issue on 29 June 2024 and are signed on its behalf by:

Andrew Ormsby
Director

Kate O'Brien
Director

EXPERIMENT IN INTERNATIONAL LIVING CLG COMPANY INFORMATION

BOARD

Chairperson

Niamh Hill

Vice Chairperson

Santo Leung

Chair of Governance & HR Committee

Vice Chairperson

Kate O'Brien

Chair of Audit & Risk Management

Gary Cooke

(Resigned 31 Dec 2024)

Aleksandra Ananica

(Resigned 31 Dec 2024)

Paul Conway

Andrew Ormsby

Aedin McAdams

Appointed 1st January 2024

Emma McNally Jacobs

Appointed 1st January 2024

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T/A EIL Intercultural Learning.

Charity Number

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Revenue Charity Number

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Registered Company Number

136044

MEMBER OF



european
federation for
intercultural
learning



National
Youth
Council
of Ireland



Stronger Charities.
Stronger Communities.

SUPPORTED BY



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Oige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY





“With every journey we facilitate, every learner we empower, and every culture we connect, we nurture a more just, tolerant - and globally united -tomorrow.”

Contact

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We thank you for your continued support in our efforts to contribute to the SDGs.

