

On September 26th 2020, friends and supporters of the Ecumenical Youth Services (EYS) met in Leipzig to found a non-profit support association. The work of the association is directly linked to the EYS offers for international youth exchanges.

Every year, about 90-100 young people take part in the EYS work camps. The participants come from many different countries and work together for a few weeks on several projects of regional German camp partners. 4 years ago the EYS celebrated its 60th anniversary. Many former participants have remained connected to the EYS and its goals over the decades. The idea of founding a support association developed from the anniversary: "Where so many people have such good experiences, at some point participants simply become supporters. Following the wish to continue to accompany and support the EYS, the foundation of a supporters' association was quite obvious. [Stephanie] The newly founded association will give alumni and friends of the EYS a platform to continue their commitment to the EYS through public relations, fundraising and alumni work. "In these times, it is clear to all of us how important contacts are for our life together. This not only applies to our everyday contacts, but even more so to international youth exchanges". [Johannes Ulbricht] Through the exchange of young people from different countries the participants get to know foreign cultures. This gives them the chance to understand, respect and appreciate the other. This is an important contribution to living together in a globalised and culturally diverse world and promotes the participants' personal development in the long term. "Anyone who has experienced a work camp, who has spent two weeks working together on a project with people from many different countries, has had an experience that has shaped their lives" [Martin Simon Härtel]. Young people experience the

ecumenical work camps as places where they can experience in a completely self-organised way how to tackle challenges in their projects together. Through this practically experienced educational activity, the EYS promotes the assumption of social and global responsibility and ecumenical learning - learning to see oneself through the eyes of others.

On November 27th this year the idea of the work camps will celebrate its 100th anniversary in a ceremony in Berlin. In the future, the Association for Ecumenical Youth Services will make its contribution to the work camps.

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