

# Extracurricular Education





**Encounter**  
Common experience -  
learning with and from  
each other

**Argumentation**  
Represent positions,  
question opinions

**Discourse**  
Leaving echo chambers,  
experiencing impact

**Identity**  
Who am I and how  
am I perceived by  
others?

**Reflection**  
Thinking about politics,  
society and me

**Sustainability**  
How do we shape  
change?

**EUROPE**  
The future is in our  
hands!

**Mobility**  
Crossing borders,  
experiencing Europe

**Tolerance**  
Being respectful,  
showing attitude

**Responsibility**  
For me, my statements,  
the society

**Interculturality**  
Experience diversity as reality  
and incentive

**Openness**  
Being ready to experience  
something new

## The Europäische Akademie Otzenhausen gGmbH (EAO)

The European Academy is a non-profit, non-partisan, pro-European civic academy with a conference and convention center. We see ourselves as a political actor in civil society that stands for clearly defined values. Openness, tolerance, encounter, humanity, diversity, sustainability and democracy are not only the core of our educational programs, but also our self-image, which we position, promote and advocate as an academy.

Our vision is one of a vibrant European civil society in which citizens take responsibility for themselves and for the community beyond nation-state thinking, in a Europe that lives its values, is aware of its role as a model for peaceful coexistence of peoples and courageously fulfils its role as a global player.

Our core task is civic education based on the Beutelsbach Consensus. We inform, encourage reflection, confront, reflect and analyze current socio-political issues and debates - non-partisan, pro-European, professional.



The goals of our educational work are:

- To promote a peaceful and united Europe based on commonly defined values.
- To enable and encourage as many citizens as possible for participation.
- To initiate and support discourses on central controversies in society.
- To shape the political culture based on democracy and shared values.
- To shape a climate-friendly, sustainable, global society.



## Extracurricular civic education

Getting global, sustainable, active: becoming European!

Our youth civic seminars are part of our extracurricular educational work. Outside of classrooms, fixed teaching hours or curricula - with colorful groups, innovative methods, time and space, working intensively: unique, international, unforgettable. This is where education and fun come together.

We pursue the goal of promoting political and civil society awareness among the participants and encourage political participation. To achieve this, our educational work combines our own expertise in content and didactic methods with the professional competence of a large pool of external experts and institutional partner organizations.

The extracurricular education seminars are aimed at young adults from the age of 16.

### What is civic education at the EAO?

Civic education aims to support people on their way to becoming responsible members of society. At the EAO, it is non-partisan and non-denominational. Here, participants deal with current socio-political topics, recognize their own attitudes and values and learn to question them, critically and constructively deal with other perspectives, recognize ways and possibilities for action and are given tools to become involved in the societal discourse. We impart knowledge, train skills and promote attitudes - pluralistically, participatively, individually. The aim of this approach is to enable self-empowerment.

Our partner network consists of vocational and general education schools and civil society organizations in more than ten European countries.

## Methods of extracurricular education

- **Communication-based:** interaction, dialogue mediation  
For us, the exchange of opinions and experiences between the participants is essential, because only then do they develop an awareness of other perspectives and question their own views. At the same time, they learn to represent their own opinions with arguments, which is an important contribution to the capacity for democracy.
- **Action-oriented:** experience, practice, understanding  
Participants gain self-experience through simulations and role-plays in order to develop an emotional understanding of situations and how to react appropriately.
- **Socially oriented:** partnership, teamwork, networked work  
In seminars the (intercultural) contact between the participants is of great importance to us. For this reason, we attach great importance to managing group dynamics, organized leisure time and, if applicable, language mediation.
- **Self-directed:** creativity, discovery, responsibility  
The participants help shape the seminars themselves through their discussions, interests and ideas.
- **Participative:** taking part, trying out, developing  
The focus is on the learners and their development.

Our seminar offers can be divided into the following thematic and methodological focuses, which can be combined in various formats:

- European integration and democratic processes
- Global transformation and sustainable development
- Intercultural encounter
- Rhetorical communication
- Peer learning



*„Otzenhausen is a place that evokes positive emotions. First of all, the conversations with representatives from different countries have remained imprinted on my heart for a long time. Secondly, there were extremely interesting seminars, debates and discussions, where one could not only find answers to questions asked, but also delve into the content of problems discussed.“*  
Francesco, Italy



### European integration and democratic processes

Since the end of the Second World War, European integration has united states, which had been enemies and brought them together in the EU. Many young people are convinced of the idea of European integration, for them it is part of their everyday life. However, it is precisely this development that also brings a danger with itself. Due to the everyday nature of European integration and the EU, many people, especially young people, take their achievements for granted and feel that no further commitment is required.

Starting with the question of what participants associate with Europe and where they experience Europe in their everyday lives, there are many opportunities to experience and discuss European topics. Our events/seminars, as diverse as they are, have two things in common: They address current issues and debates and give participants access to day-to-day politics and the conflicts behind it. They strengthen their skills in dealing with political issues, the media and social discourse. On the other hand, they draw on the personal experiences of the participants and thus make the content accessible and directly relevant.

### Current political challenges in Europe

Migration and integration, Covid-19, populism, the future of the EU and the Weimar Triangle. The list of challenges in Europe is long and constantly changing. Achievements, historical development and everyday points of contact offer starting points for a debate on the future role and direction of the EU and for young ideas for a contemporary Europe.

### Participation and democratic togetherness

For decades, political interest and voter turnout in Europe had been declining. Instead, dissatisfaction with „the EU“, „the elite“, „politics“ and „the system“ has grown. Recently, this became evident in the rise of populist and left-wing and right-wing extremist parties. Facts, arguments and ideas were displaced by feelings, alternative facts and slogans. Digitization and social media play an important role, also in interpersonal interaction and social debate. This development is dangerous for our democratic coexistence. Our participants examine and analyze these trends and create transnational solutions for a participatory and inclusive social togetherness. We work with the Betzavta method for democracy building, among others.

### Common European values

Liberty, solidarity, tolerance: Independent of governments and political agendas, there are common values within Europe that unite us across borders. But many of these values are once again contested and are called into question in times of crisis. We want to raise awareness of these values, make people aware that values do not exist once and for all and that the understanding of values is also subject to change. We would like to discuss these with the participants and thus become part of the social discourse and strengthen „democracy education“.

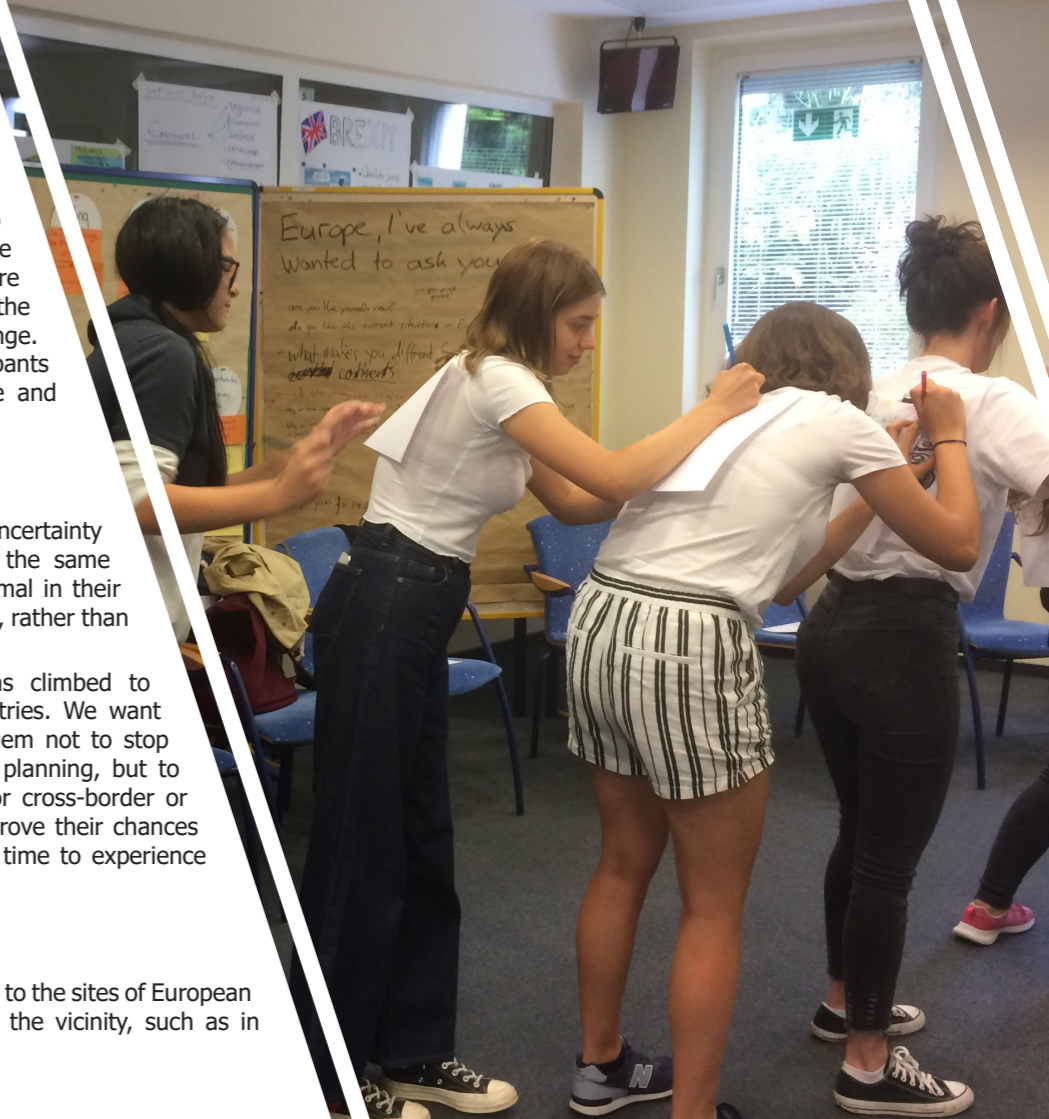
### (Pre-professional) Mobility in Europe

The young generation is characterized by uncertainty about their professional future. To stay with the same employer for a whole working life, as was normal in their grandparents' generation, is the exception today, rather than the rule.

At the same time, youth unemployment has climbed to unimaginable heights in many European countries. We want to show young adults possibilities and help them not to stop at national borders in their future and career planning, but to consciously take advantage of opportunities for cross-border or entirely international education in order to improve their chances on the European job market and at the same time to experience and live Europe.

### Experiencing Europe on site

European civic seminars often include excursions to the sites of European integration as well as European institutions in the vicinity, such as in Luxembourg, Strasbourg or Schengen.





Transformative learning is not only an integral part of the content, formats and methods of our measures, but we also see ourselves as an independent agent in a global transformation. To this end, we network regionally, for example to strengthen regional economic cycles, and we work permanently with the help of an eco management system to act in an environmentally and socially responsible manner to the greatest possible extent.

In the seminars, participants deal with global interdependencies and issues concerning the Earth System, the various dimensions of sustainability, discuss climate change, sustainable agriculture and the EU Common Agricultural Policy, sustainable tourism, fashion and fast fashion, upcycling or sustainability in their own everyday lives. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and sustainability strategies are an important part of many seminars and help in discussions on sustainability policy.

### Global Transformation and Sustainable Development

The major challenges of our time, be it climate change, increasing weather extremes, loss of biodiversity or world population growth, require numerous changes in various areas of our lives. Turning individual set screws is not enough. The concept of global transformation demonstrates this clearly. Fundamental changes must be discussed.

At the EAO, we understand transformative learning as learning for political maturity: Participants should be able to form their own opinions and at the same time develop the courage and learn the tools to become active for their own goals and help shape the world.



*„Otzenhausen opened up new possibilities for me. I have changed my world view and priorities in life. Through the exchange with other interesting people I became more self-confident. I got to know the cultures of other countries, acquired the ability to express my thoughts. Through many conversations I have improved my knowledge of the English language. Otzenhausen left the warmest memories in my heart. The work on the project was unforgettable and incredibly interesting. Thank you for everything.“*  
Olga, Ukraine

## Intercultural encounter

"Come together to create Europe" is the motto and guiding principle of the EAO. We are convinced that a change of perspective, the ability to deal with conflict, tolerance of ambiguity and the ability to act are even more strongly demanded and promoted in an encounter than in individual learning. For this reason, we create encounters with other people and their values, beliefs and ideas for all participants. These people can be part of the seminar or be part of another event at the Academy.

In addition, many of our seminars focus on intercultural encounters and intercultural exchange. In a world that is growing ever closer together, internationality and cross-border thinking, whether in economic, political or



social matters, represent the new norm. In order to be able to move confidently in this sphere, not only language skills are required, but especially intercultural competence.

In our European encounter seminars, participants learn about the relevance of perception and interpretation, of stereotypes and prejudices, of cultural values and norms and how to consciously reflect on them. In our events, the participants take a joint look at European and global issues. They develop common perspectives and learn about and from differences and similarities between countries and cultures.

Participants come from at least two, but often more European countries.

Language plays a major role in the encounter. We believe that all people, regardless of language skills or talents, can communicate with each other. Some of our seminars are held in German or English, others in several of the participants' native languages. We rely on a highly qualified team of multilingual staff to support the participants, from language animation to overcome inhibitions, support in group work, to simultaneous interpretation.

We sometimes also conduct the encounter seminars in other countries, in cooperation with our local partner schools.



## Rhetorical Communication

Rhetoric in civic education combines rhetorical content with socio-political topics. Participants have the opportunity to work on the development and improvement of individual rhetorical skills and at the same time deal with a current topic from politics and society (including sustainable development and development policy, populism, hate speech and fake news, racism).

At the Institut für Rhetorik und Methodik (Institute for Rhetoric and Methodology - IRM) of the Europäische Akademie Otzenhausen, we work according to the concept of Rhetorical Communication according to Prof. Hellmut Geißner. According to this, rhetoric is not to be understood as a technique of nice but empty talking or clever persuasion. The subject of rhetorical communication is conversation and speech as interpersonal action in social, professional and political contexts. It should/aims to induce people to reach a consensus or compromise on goals and ways of doing things together.



*„What I liked most about this seminar was the personal feedback. I had the chance to work on my personal strengths and weaknesses in a special way. Of course, something like this is not possible at school. I am looking forward to applying the knowledge learned here in school.“*  
Annika, Germany



*„I would like to emphasize the individual accompaniment as especially positive. Each and every one of us was given the opportunity to apply the knowledge we had learned and to prove our rhetorical skills. [...] I personally would recommend the seminar to others and, in my opinion, many students should be offered the opportunity to participate in such a seminar. Learning rhetorical skills is time-consuming and is often neglected in everyday school life. Furthermore, I think it is important and necessary that young people deal with the topic of ‚sustainability‘. It is a central topic of the 21st century, but it receives far too little attention in our society, although we can all make our contribution to it.“*  
Julia, Germany

Among other things, it is therefore about triggering processes of thinking and acting along with others. In our seminars, young people are encouraged, empowered and enabled to develop their own points of view, to deal with the opinions of others and to stand up for their own convictions in order to find a democratic attitude and to help shape society.

Rhetoric in political education aims at critical maturity and thus at the ability to act in society. An important educational goal of rhetorical communication is to teach and practice these skills.

*„Especially the video recording and the individual feedback helped me to discover my own mistakes or uncertainties, which made me less nervous before the lecture and made me speak more confidently.“*  
Rebecca, Germany



„The seminars are a perfect opportunity to discover other cultures. Differences cause conflicts that can be resolved through individual encounters. Most young people would not have this enriching experience without the seminars at the EAO.“  
Daniel, France

**Peer learning**

People learn better at eye level, among peers. This principle of peer learning is also applied in our educational seminars. The seminar teams are mostly young and close to the participants, in terms of age. The relationship between team members and participants is not that of teachers and learners, but consciously seeks eye level and critical discourse with one another. In addition, our participants take what they have experienced with us into society, to their families, friends and classmates all over Europe.

We support this with targeted projects and workshops. The participants of our multiplier trainings experience an intercultural encounter themselves, deepen their knowledge of the respective seminar topics, learn about the latest methods in the field of project-based European education and intercultural communication and can apply and reflect on them. They are also trained in project pedagogy.

For certain current topics we offer workshops for school classes together with their participants after the multiplier training.

**Examples for multiplier projects**

**Overcoming borders, experiencing Europe (since 2015)**

Within the framework of these training courses, about 10 to 15 young interested people from Saarland, Lorraine and the Upper Rhine region are trained each year in non-formal teaching and learning methods, group management and aspects of cross-border mobility and European integration. With this knowledge, they then lead up to 20 interactive workshops a year in school classes in the border regions of Saarland/Lorraine and the Upper Rhine in order to sensitize students for a stay abroad and to critically and constructively discuss the opportunities and advantages of a stay abroad, but also about obstacles and fears. We coordinate the workshops with the schools, the implementation is in the hands of the multipliers

The participants of the workshops deal with topics of cross-border mobility and learn from the experiences of their classmates, but also from the multipliers.







### Our seminars

The main areas of work described can be combined in a variety of ways to create a unique educational offering.

Civic education is the core of all seminars and always deals with a topic from the field of sustainability/transformation or European integration. The seminars can have a rhetorical focus, where the focus is on working on individual rhetorical and communication skills. However, the focus can also be on intercultural encounters in order to get to know different European perspectives and to experience Europe for oneself.

There is also the possibility of conducting seminars with only one group. Here, as well as in intercultural encounters, there is the possibility to integrate rhetorical elements such as argumentation, conversation and speech into the seminar.

Depending on your interests, the format and the time and financial budget, seminars between 2 days and 8 days are conceivable. Intercultural encounter seminars tend to be somewhat longer than purely national seminars, due to long journeys from abroad and the increased complexity caused by language barriers and interculturality.

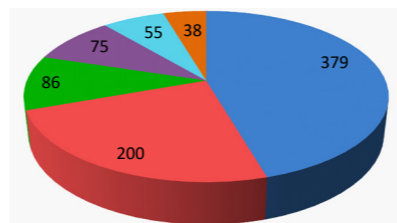
Our extracurricular education seminars are aimed at young adults from 16 years of age and older from all over Europe. The size of your participant group depends on the format and its financing. We are extremely flexible, from small groups of about 10 to 15 people for encounter seminars to whole school classes for rhetorical seminars.

To finance the seminars, we apply for funding from public authorities and private sponsors. This enables us to offer the seminars at conference fees that are appropriate for young people, and often also to reimburse travel expenses proportionately for encounter seminars. We also explicitly address disadvantaged young people with our educational offer and will gladly support you in making the seminar affordable for everyone. The exact costs depend on the format, duration and many other parameters. We would be happy to discuss this with you, personally.

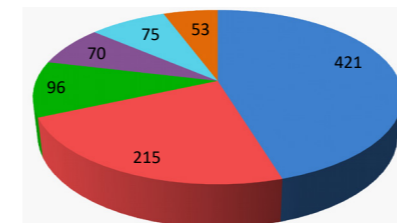
## Our partners in schools and civil society come from the following countries *(as of October 2020)*

### Our intercultural encounter seminars in numbers:

**2018**  
22 events with  
838 participants



**2019**  
24 events with  
954 participants



Countries of origin of participants

Germany

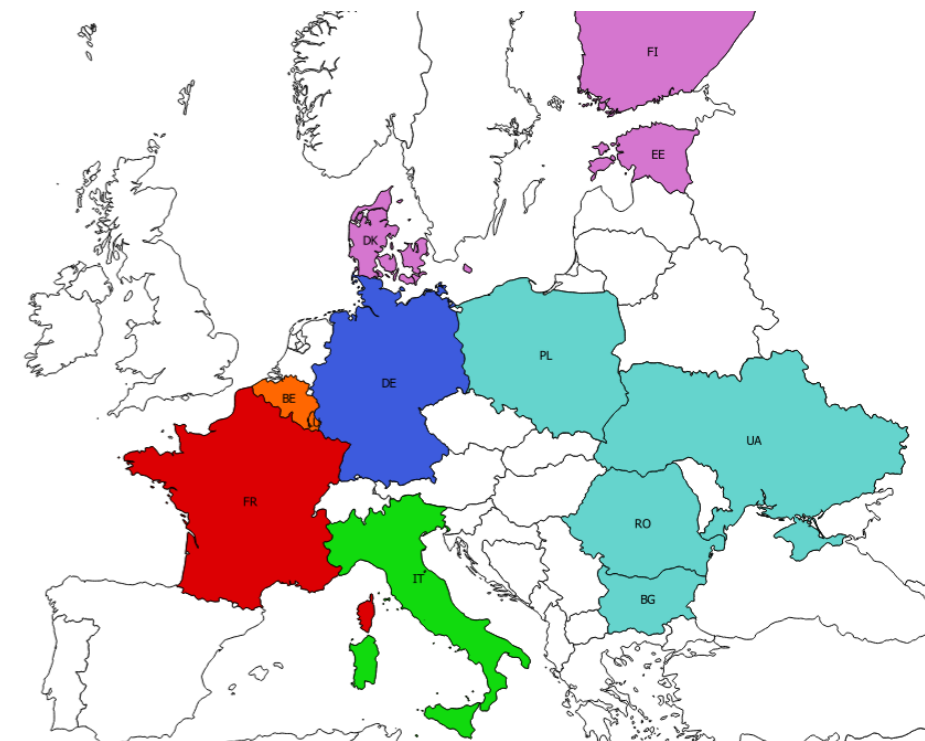
France

Italy

Northeastern Europe  
(Denmark, Finland, Estonia)

Central Eastern Europe  
(PL, UA, RU, RO, BG)

other countries  
(Luxembourg, Belgium, Western Balkans, Algeria)



## Funding agencies (selection)

### Transnational:

- French-German Youth Office (FGYO), Paris (France), Berlin/Saarbrücken (Germany)
- German-Polish Youth Office (GPYO), Warsaw (Poland), Potsdam (Germany)
- EURES, Saarbrücken (Germany)
- „Jugend für Europa“ National Agency for the EU Program Erasmus+, Bonn (Germany)

### Federal:

- Federal Foreign Office, Berlin (Germany)
- Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ), Berlin (Germany)
- Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Bonn (Germany)
- Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb), Bonn (Germany)
- Federal Employment Agency, RD Rhineland-palatinate-Saarland, Saarbrücken (Germany)

### State:

- State Agency for Civic Education Rhineland-Palatinate, Mainz (Germany)
- Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Women and Family of Saarland, Saarbrücken (Germany)

## We also cooperate with the following institutions and organizations

- ASKO Europa-Stiftung Foundation, Saarbrücken (Germany)
- European Movement Germany, Berlin (Germany)
- Europe Direct, Saarbrücken (Germany)
- Forum für Verantwortung Foundation, Seeheim-Jugenheim (Germany)
- RENN.west (Germany)
- State capital Saarbrücken (Germany)
- State Parliament of Saarland, Saarbrücken (Germany)
- Stiftung europäische Kultur und Bildung Foundation, Otzenhausen (Germany)
- Young European Federalists Saarland, Saarbrücken (Germany)



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**If you are not sure which of us is responsible for your inquiry,  
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