

International Studies Program





The Europäische Akademie Otzenhausen gGmbH

Who We Are

The **Europäische Akademie Otzenhausen** (EAO) is an independent, non-partisan, non-denominational civic academy. It is located in rural Saarland in Southwest Germany, locally referred to as the "Heart of Europe". The EAO is dedicated to the principles of non-formal civic education. It is our goal to create as many opportunities for the exchange of information, views and ideas as possible, centering around the most pressing topics of European and global interest.

The European Union is often considered a successful model for regional integration, ensuring peace, prosperity and freedom for its citizens. Our international educational programs offer the chance to experience the inner workings of this unique actor first-hand.

International Studies Program

Our network of European institutions, universities, NGOs, companies and foundations allows our international programs, implemented by our highly professional academic staff, to provide everything from theoretical academic discussions with scientific and political experts, to in-depth views into the day-to-day workings of local, national and international practitioners.

The International Studies Programs were established and have been successively expanded by the EAO and the ASKO Europa-Stiftung since 2002 and have become a focal point of the EAO's educational work.

International Encounter Programs

"Come together to create Europe" – We believe that experiencing other cultures and perspectives allows us to be stronger together. It is through mutual learning, discussion and experience that our participants gain deep insights into the most pressing international topics of our times.

Our encounter programs generally last 8-12 days and include discussion rounds with European and international experts, innovative workshops, site visits, excursions and leisure activities, all in an intercultural setting.



An „ideal“ EAO program involves at least two partner institutions from different countries, allowing for a truly intercultural experience.

We want our participants to

- fully “experience” Europe and its multifaceted political, economic, social and cultural dimensions
- deepen their knowledge of Europe, its role in the world and its international perception
- actively support the creation of personal networks
- help further promote intercultural understanding
- be informed about and get involved in socio-politically relevant topics

Online Portfolio

We are expanding our portfolio by online formats to provide further opportunities for international learning and exchange.

Working with a professional suite of Zoom products, we offer virtual study abroad programs, international panel discussions and full-fledged seminars on our topics of expertise making use of our wide, international network of specialists from academia, politics, business and civil society.

Through these online programs, we strive to incorporate as much interaction, knowledge, exchange, and expertise into the online environment as possible, making our remote learning experience as rich as its academic quality is high.



"I enjoyed hearing other people's and cultures' perspectives."

Topics

While we are a European academy, our thematic portfolio is much larger, based on our internal expertise and our external partners from around the world.

To all topics, we take an interdisciplinary approach, bringing our own backgrounds in humanities, social and natural sciences.

Our programs focus on the main topics of current European and global interest including:

- **European integration**

Since the end of the Second World War, European integration has united states, which had been enemies, and brought them together in the EU. We analyze European integration history, common values, structures, processes and contents – from European, national and international perspectives.

We take a critically constructive approach towards debating European identity as well as future visions for the EU and applying best practices of European integration to other world regions.

- **International affairs & global challenges**

Although we are a European academy, many of the issues and challenges are universal: security, digitization, trade, the future of multilateralism – we offer area studies towards selected world regions, usually with a link to the European Union and its external relations.

Focusing on the work of international organizations, such as the UN, helps us to understand and tackle some of the biggest problems of our times.

- **Sustainable development**

One selected global challenge that we focus on is sustainable development. Starting from the Agenda 2030 and the UN SDGs, we focus on resource scarcity, biodiversity, environmental justice, sustainable business & innovation, Global North vs. South, migration, globalization and justice.

We take a systemic approach, understanding the world and sustainability as a complex system that needs complex answers – and we support our participants in identifying some of them.

- **Democracy and the future of democratic togetherness**

“Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others.” (Winston S. Churchill). Our approach is that democracy is much more than just a form of government, rather a way of societal interaction and togetherness.

Our seminars focus on providing opportunity for exchange and debate, breaking down political barriers, leaving echo chambers and gaining perspectives. We analyze current problems and challenges such as populism and extremism, the role of the media and social media, hate speech, fake news and conspiracy theories.

We debate Human Rights in our societies and promote public discourse – for understanding, compromise and democratic togetherness.

“It was fun and interactive with the other students!”



- **Rhetorical Communication**

Rhetorical communication is communication that aims at joint action through comprehensible information and convincing argumentation in conversation and speech. It is thus needed by all people in order to actively participate as responsible citizens within democratic processes.

Diversity of opinion, controversy, compromise and dissent are components of democratic discourse/debates and can be reflected, experienced and practiced. We promote essential communicative skills in a variety of exercise settings: To clarify questions together with others and to work out solutions with arguments (argumentation and debating), to represent opinions convincingly and to present facts in an informative, clear and appropriate way. Communication as a "soft skill" therefore enables successful listening, speaking and presentation skills.

"Thanks for being friendly, chilled and always approachable as seminar leader."



Further topics:

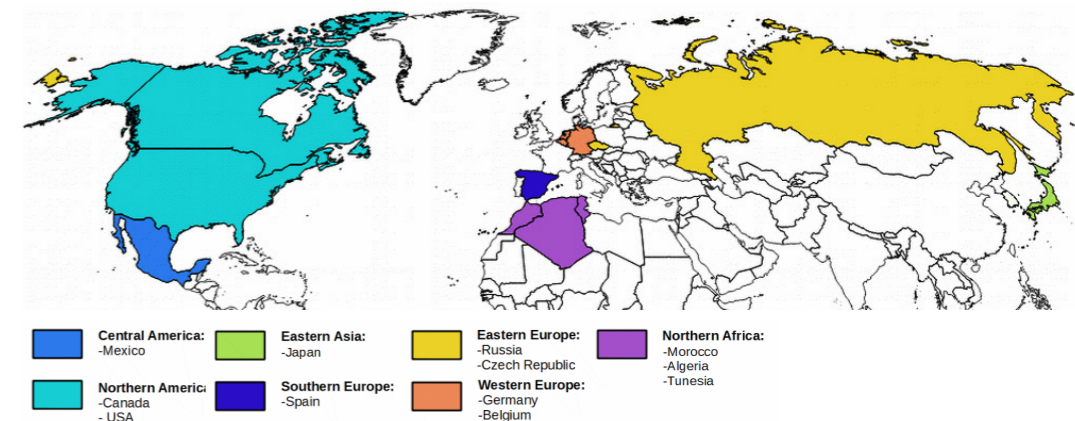
Intercultural communication requires understanding and knowledge of (one's own) cultural background, communicative processes and actions. Knowledge of communicative theories additionally enables an analytical and attentive individual language action.

Speech science lays the foundation for methodically reflecting on, consolidating and expanding individual communicative skills.

Our seminars always approach topics from an interdisciplinary perspective, providing insights and learning opportunities for people from all academic backgrounds.

Our Network

Our international network of partner institutions allows us to bring people together from around the globe to share knowledge, experiences and perspectives, strengthening our ties and broadening our horizons.



We also cooperate with the following German institutions and organizations

- ASKO Europa-Stiftung, Saarbrücken
- Centre International de Formation Européenne (Cife), Berlin/Nizza
- Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Berlin
- Institut für Europäische Politik, Berlin
- Deutsch-Amerikanisches Institut Saarland, Saarbrücken
- Europa-Institut, Saarbrücken



Our Approach

Encounter lies at the heart of our educational programs. We believe that the best way to learn about other cultures and perspectives is through the exchange of opinions and ideas. Our international studies programs allow our participants to experience this in a relatively remote setting, away from the distractions of the day-to-day.

We focus mainly on civic education but also draw from a variety of educational approaches including democracy, transformative education as well as Education for Sustainable Development, experiential and Global Learning. We aim to support people on their way to becoming responsible members of society and enable them to be open to change.

At the EAO, 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 social discourse.

*"Engaging, fun,
interesting – loved the
atmosphere."*

We impart knowledge, train skills and promote attitudes - pluralistically, participatively and individually. The primary goal of these approaches is to enable self-empowerment.

Our programs aim to promote the understanding of the interrelations between people across the globe. They provide a critical analysis of and an engagement with complex, interdependent global systems and legacies (natural, physical, social, cultural, economic and political) and their implications for people's lives and the earth's sustainability.

We promote action competences and help our participants find ways to apply their knowledge, express their opinions and to act as change agents for a more sustainable future.

We apply a variety of innovative educational methods including workshops, simulations, the Betzavta method of conflict management for democracy education, expert discussion panels, and excursions and many more.

*"I found it interesting how
professors and lecturers are so open
about their political views during
discussions."*



Excursions

Excursions are a vital part of our programs. They offer behind the scenes, hands-on experiences, deepening our participants' understanding of the topics discussed in the classroom.

Being situated near the European capitals of Luxembourg, Strasbourg and Brussels allows us to offer one or two-day field trips to the most important European institutions, including the European Parliament, the European Commission, the European Court of Justice or the European Investment Bank. We offer excursions to local cultural centers such as Trier, Germany's oldest city, among many others. Freiburg's sustainable Vauban district is just one of the many highlights we offer as a destination. As we are located in the border region to Luxembourg, France and Belgium, the open-border policy of the Schengen area is tangible when crossing national frontiers.

Some possible excursion destinations include:

- **Strasbourg (FR)**
- **Luxembourg (LU)**
- **Brussels (BE)**
- **Schengen (LU)**
- **Bonn (DE)**
- **Frankfurt (DE)**
- **Metz (FR)**
- **Freiburg (DE)**
- **Trier (DE)**



"The visits of the European Institutions have been very interesting."

Free Time

No encounter program would be complete without the opportunity to relax together at the end of the day over a cold drink or a game of cards.

Our on-campus pub, leisure and fitness rooms allow you to let off some steam, have a dance party, play some games and get to know each other on a deeper level.

As we are located right at the edge of the local national park, we also have access to some of the most beautiful hiking trails in the area.

"EAO - A great place for cultural exchange!"

"I loved being here. I really feel that I enjoyed it and learnt a lot. Thanks for everything."





Our Team

The in-house expertise of our International Study Programs team is comprised of various fields of academic, professional and target group-oriented experience, which encompass and cover the above-mentioned topics and focal points:

"It was such a wonderful and intense week! Thank you for your work. I wish I could have someone like you as a teacher!"

Nicola Speer holds a degree in Speech Science and Phonetics, with a focus on rhetorical communication. With 20 years of professional expertise as a trainer for various aspects of oral communication and rhetoric, speech coaching and voice training for numerous companies and institutions, she has also held several university teaching positions. She is also a certified Betzavta* facilitator.

**Betzavta ("Together" in Hebrew): a method of education for democracy.*

Jana Stehlíková's primary area of professional interest lies in EU affairs, digital technologies' impact on international relations, surveillance studies and personal data protection. She holds a Master's Degree in International Relations. Before joining the academy, she gained numerous professional experiences in the academic sector as a researcher focused on the future development of the EU and transatlantic relations, models of EU Council Presidencies and participatory democracy. Furthermore, she worked for four years as a university lecturer and international programmes coordinator.

Stephan Lutzenberger is a political scientist with a focus on the European Union and European studies. Before joining the EAO he has researched the implementation of EU legislation, taught seminars on the political system of the EU and worked as a non-formal educator. He is interested in institutional aspects of the EU, Franco-German relations and political participation and youth involvement. Furthermore, he has a certificate as group interpreter for Franco-German youth encounters.

The close cooperation of the team enables us to guarantee a diversity and depth in terms of both content and methodology, which makes each of our seminars unique while maintaining a continuity of professionalism.

Furthermore, we work very closely with our colleagues from the rest of the education department in order to be able to tailor our experience to your needs.

Our external network of professional experts, academics, politicians, contemporary witnesses etc. supplements our own expertise, providing a well-rounded foundation for learning, experience and exchange.



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