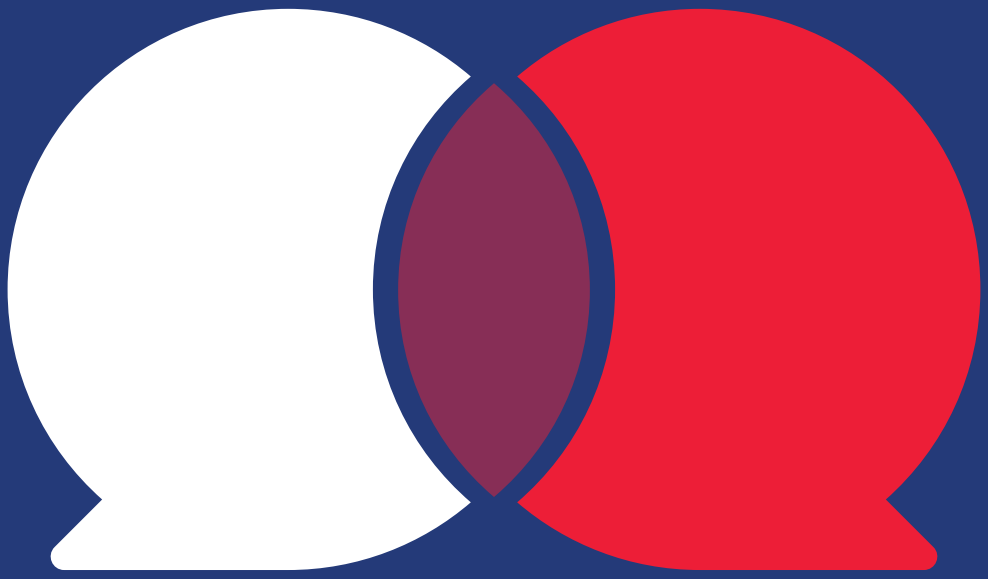
IEN 1951—2026

# IEN Transatlantic Debate Competition

## Research and Debate

9—11 April 2026



In collaboration with

Freedom 250

Comissió Europea

cei International affairs escuela diplomática de Barcelona

UOC Universitat Oberta de Catalunya

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Also, thanks to the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya and CEI International Affairs for their involvement, as well as to the Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (IBEI), IES Abroad and Institute for American Universities (IAU) for their collaboration.

# Contents


1. A word of welcome from the IEN Foundation — 4
2. Welcome to the IEN Transatlantic Debate Competition — 5
3. Transatlantic Dialogue Diploma Certificate Course — 6
4. Pointers and research development — 7
6. Debate Schedule — 8
7. Judges — 9
8. The IEN Team — 11
9. IEN Debate Organising Team — 11
10. IEN Transatlantic Debate Competition Teams — 12
11. Awards — 15

# 1. A Word of Welcome from the IEN Foundation

Founded in 1951, the Institute of North American Studies (IEN) has been a space for connection, learning, and dialogue between Catalonia and the United States for more than seven decades. Its mission has always been to promote the study, research, and dissemination of U.S. culture, history, and politics, while fostering mutual understanding and transatlantic cooperation through education, debate, and culture.

Today, the IEN stands as a renewed institution, guided by three main pillars: research and debate, the building of bridges between Europeans and Americans, and cultural activities, especially in music — a universal language that has long been part of our identity. Through its programs, such as the American Politics and International Security course at IBEI, the U.S.–EU Barcelona Meeting, and now the IEN Transatlantic Debate Competition, the Institute continues to expand its role as a meeting point between academic, civic, and institutional spheres on both sides of the Atlantic.

The U.S.–EU Barcelona Meeting, now in its fifth edition, has become one of the IEN's flagship initiatives. Each year, it gathers diplomats, academics, and professionals from both sides of the Atlantic to engage in open dialogue on shared global challenges — from security and democracy to technology and sustainability. More than a conference, the Meeting is a living exercise in diplomacy, reflection, and cooperation, which directly inspires the educational programs that follow it, including this year's Transatlantic Debate Competition.

Our foundation also maintains a strong cultural and educational commitment through initiatives like EducationUSA, which supports students in accessing U.S. universities, and Gent (People), a long-standing interview series that explores the many facets of American society. Meanwhile, the IEN's music programs — from jazz concerts to classical series — reflect our belief that culture is one of the most powerful tools for dialogue and connection.

Barcelona, our home, has always been a gateway city of diplomacy and exchange. Dating back to the Consulates of the Crown of Aragon, among the first examples of organized diplomacy in Europe, the city has been a reference point for global cooperation and negotiation. This historical legacy continues to inspire the IEN's mission today — to be a space where ideas, perspectives, and people from different backgrounds come together to learn, share, and collaborate.

This year, as we celebrate our 75th aniversary, we reaffirm our commitment to dialogue, reflection, and education as the foundations of transatlantic understanding. We thank all our collaborators and partners for helping us keep this spirit alive — because the IEN's greatest strength has always been its people, united by the belief that knowledge and conversation can build a more open and cooperative world.

**Juan F Corona Ramón**
President of the IEN Foundation

**Mercè Segura i Badia**
Director of the IEN Foundation

# 2. Welcome to the IEN Transatlantic Debate Competition

Dear participants,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to the IEN Transatlantic Debate Competition 2026, an initiative that embodies the values and mission of the Institute of North American Studies (IEN) — dialogue, understanding, and the exchange of ideas across cultures.

In an age marked by complexity, uncertainty, and global interdependence, the ability to listen, reason, and engage constructively has never been more essential. Debate, when practiced with respect and intellectual honesty, is one of the most powerful tools we have to cultivate critical thinking, empathy, and

democratic dialogue. It allows us not only to defend ideas but to understand them in relation to others — to see disagreement not as division, but as an opportunity to build common ground.

The IEN Transatlantic Debate was created precisely with this spirit in mind: to bring together students from Catalonia and the United States in a space of collaboration and learning. Through this program, participants take on the role of policy advocates, representing either the U.S. Administration or the European Commission, and work in binational teams to address issues of real political and diplomatic relevance. The goal is not to "win" a discussion, but to practice the art of diplomacy — to learn how to communicate, negotiate, and build consensus even when perspectives differ.

This initiative also reflects the IEN's long-standing commitment to education as a bridge between societies. Since its founding in 1951, the Institute has been dedicated to fostering understanding between Europe and the United States through culture, research, and debate. The Transatlantic Debate carries this legacy forward, empowering a new generation of globally minded students to think critically, engage responsibly, and lead with curiosity and compassion.

I want to thank each of you for being part of this experience — for your courage to participate, your openness to dialogue, and your commitment to learning from one another. As you debate, remember that what matters most is not the conclusion, but the process: the questions you ask, the perspectives you gain, and the connections you build.

Welcome to the debate, and to a community that believes in the transformative power of ideas, collaboration, and respect.

Warm regards,

**Xesco Reverter**
Journalist and Member of the IEN Board of Trustees

# 3. Transatlantic Dialogue Diploma Certificate Course

## What is it?

The IEN Transatlantic Debate Competition is an international academic program organized by the Institute of North American Studies (IEN) in Barcelona, bringing together university students from Catalonia and the United States to debate in English on key global and diplomatic issues. Participants work in binational teams, representing either the U.S. Administration or the European Commission, and take part in a month-long preparatory course that includes workshops and institutional visits before the final debate rounds in April. The initiative aims to promote critical thinking, intercultural dialogue, and diplomacy, offering students a unique opportunity to learn, connect, and earn the Transatlantic Dialogue Diploma Certificate.

## What it means for students?

The IEN Transatlantic Debate Competition is a chance to go far beyond the classroom — it's an opportunity to experience diplomacy in action, strengthen communication and leadership skills, and gain a deeper understanding of global affairs. By working in binational teams with peers from different cultural and academic backgrounds, participants learn to think critically, collaborate across perspectives, and engage respectfully in complex international discussions. It's also a way to build meaningful connections, discover Barcelona through its key institutions, and add a unique, internationally recognized experience — the Transatlantic Dialogue Diploma Certificate — to their academic and professional profile.

## How has the debate developed?

The IEN Transatlantic Debate Competition unfolded in two main phases. First, during the Transatlantic Dialogue Diploma Certificate Course in March, participants were prepared through academic sessions, workshops, and institutional visits — including the Parliament of Catalonia, the U.S. Consulate General, and the European Commission — which provided them with direct exposure to real diplomatic environments. During this phase, students met their peers and engaged in team-building activities that led to the formation of binational teams based on compatibility and shared interests. The second phase took place on April 9–11, 2026, when the debate competition was held in Barcelona over three days. Teams represented either the U.S. Administration or the European Commission, debating in English on issues of transatlantic relevance before a panel of judges, culminating in the final round and award ceremony.

# 4. Pointers and research development

## Question to debate:

**In the context of the Digital Service Act, should governments have the authority to regulate digital platforms to protect public discourse or does such regulation constitute a threat to free expression?**

## How students prepared for the debate?

To prepare for the IEN Transatlantic Debate Competition, participants engaged in a rigorous process of research and reflection on current international affairs, particularly issues related to U.S.–EU relations, diplomacy, and global governance. Throughout the Transatlantic Dialogue Diploma Certificate Course, they received guidance through institutional visits, expert-led sessions, and structured workshops designed to strengthen their public speaking, argumentation, and critical thinking skills. Students collaborated closely with their teammates, conducted joint research, and practiced how to structure and deliver clear, persuasive arguments in English. Above all, they approached the experience with openness and intellectual curiosity, embracing the opportunity for growth, teamwork, and constructive engagement across different perspectives.

## How does a debate work?

In the IEN Transatlantic Debate Competition, each debate simulates a diplomatic dialogue between two institutions — the U.S. Administration and the European Commission — rather than a traditional "win-or-lose" format. Teams are composed of one Catalan and one American student, who work together to research, prepare, and defend their assigned institution's position on a key transatlantic issue.

Each debate follows a structured format in English lasting about 36 minutes:

Opening Statements (3 minutes each) – Both sides present their institution's position, outlining key arguments and policy priorities.

Rebuttals (4 minutes each, twice per team) – Each side responds to the other's ideas, not by attacking, but by building on them to find common ground, reflecting the true spirit of diplomacy.

Closing Statements (2 minutes each) – Each team summarizes their stance, highlighting the main points of convergence and lessons learned.

Finally, the judges deliberate and give feedback focused on clarity, teamwork, and diplomatic reasoning.

Rather than aiming to defeat the opposing team, participants are encouraged to collaborate, listen, and negotiate, developing arguments that move the discussion forward — just like in real international diplomacy.

# 6. Debate Schedule

| Thursday | |
|---|---|
| **18.00 - 18.30** | Arrival and Registry |
| **18.30 - 19.00** | Presentation, logistics and guidelines |
| **19.00 - 19.30** | Presentation: US Consulate General and EU Commission |
| **19.30 - 19.45** | Draw of team numbers and Thank you notes |
| **19.45** | Presentation Cocktail |

| Friday | |
|---|---|
| **9.00 - 9.30** | Arrival and Registry |
| **9.30 - 10.30** | Round 1: Team 1 vs team 2 |
| **10.30 -11.30** | Round 2: team 3 vs team 4 |
| **11.30 - 12.30** | Round 3: team 5 vs team 6 |
| **12.30 - 13.30** | Round 4: team 1 vs team 6 |
| **13.30 - 14.30** | Lunch Break |
| **14.30 - 15.30** | Round 5: team 2 vs team 4 |
| **15.30 - 16.30** | Round 6: team 5 vs team 3 |
| **16.30 - 17.30** | Round 7: team 4 vs team 6 |

| Saturday | |
|---|---|
| **10.00 - 11.00** | Round 8: team 2 vs team 5 |
| **11.00 - 12.00** | Round 9: team 1 vs team 3 |
| **12.00 - 12.30** | Group Fase Results |
| **12.30 - 13.30** | Final Debate |
| **13.30 - 14.00** | Results and awards |
| **14.00** | Final lunch |

# 7. Judges



## Dr. Juan Corona

Juan Corona Ramón is a Spanish economist and senior academic specializing in public economics, fiscal policy, and public finance. His research has focused on taxation systems, fiscal decentralization, and the relationship between institutional structures and economic development, contributing to debates on territorial financing and public governance in Spain. In addition to his academic career, he has held responsibilities linked to the European Court of Auditors, the European Union institution responsible for auditing EU finances and ensuring accountability in the management of the Union's budget, underscoring his involvement at the European level in matters of public financial oversight.

He served as Rector of the Universitat Abat Oliba CEU, where he led the university's academic strategy, research development, and institutional representation. He has also held multiple governance responsibilities within university councils and advisory bodies, and he serves as President of the Institut d'Estudis Nord-americans, promoting transatlantic academic exchange and research collaboration.



## Xesco Reverter

Xesco Reverter Baquer is a Catalan journalist specialized in international affairs, widely recognized for his work as a foreign correspondent for TV3. Throughout his career, he has reported from key global capitals, including Washington, and covered major geopolitical events, bringing complex international issues closer to the public with clarity and depth.

With extensive experience in political analysis and on-the-ground reporting, he combines journalistic rigor with a deep understanding of global dynamics. His expertise in communicating international politics and evaluating arguments in high-stakes contexts makes him an excellent judge for academic debate, particularly in topics related to geopolitics and transatlantic relations. He also is also a Patron of the Foundation Institute for North American Studies.

## 7. Judges



### Dr. Adrià Reyes

Adrià Reyes is a professor of Public International Law at the Centro de Estudios Internacionales (CEI International Affairs) in Barcelona, where he also serves as the Executive Coordinator of the Master's Degree in Diplomacy and International Organisations (MUDOI) and supervises final-degree projects.

A lawyer and political scientist with a PhD in international law, Reyes specializes in the legal dimensions of nationality, statelessness, and refugee law. He has conducted research at the Centre for Global Governance Studies in Leuven and has taught at institutions including the Universitat Pompeu Fabra and the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. His academic expertise and practical experience in international legal and political issues make him a valuable judge for scholarly debate.



### Dr. Lluc Vidal

Lluc Vidal López is a Professor at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC) and Director of its Bachelor's Degree in International Relations. He also serves as co-Principal Investigator of the research group on International Relations and International Law (GERD), contributing actively to the study of global political dynamics and governance.

His research focuses on international security, cooperation and conflict in the Asia-Pacific region, with particular expertise on Japan's foreign policy and China's regional influence. With a strong academic background and an international outlook, he brings analytical depth and strategic perspective to his role as a judge in academic debate.

# 8. The IEN Team



**Mercè Segura i Badia**

Director of the IEN Foundation



**Cathy Cadaval**

Corporate Communications Manager

# 9. IEN Debate Organising Team



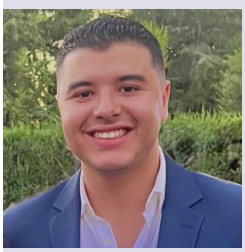
**Bego Grau**

Debate Coordination



**Claudia Tierra**

Organising Team



**Yassine Azirar**

Organising Team

# 10. IEN Transatlantic Debate Competition Teams



**Sara Geis,** Economics, Environmental Studies

Passionate about the intersection of environmental sustainability and economic systems, I am studying Economics and Environmental Studies at Wofford College. I have experience in fisheries research, GIS and data analysis, and international studies. I'm interested in how companies can promote sustainability practices that are economically viable and also responsible resource management. I'm especially drawn to work that bridges policy, markets, meaningful environmental impact, and improving people's daily lives.



**Maria Chanivet Jacas,** International Relations

I am a curious learner that believes in dialogue and the power of a reasoned argument. Currently studying at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, I am deeply interested in current affairs and diplomacy. I see the T´ransatlantic Debate as an amazing opportunity both academically and personally, and I look forward to participating in it!



**Devin Krok,** Master's in International Relations

Devin is currently a student at the Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (IBEI) working towards his Master's Degree in International Relations. Originally from California, he previously served in the military as an infantry officer. A strong belief in the value of the transatlantic alliance led him to study abroad in order to learn more about US-European relations first-hand. He aspires to work on public policy and his academic interests include political economy, American foreign policy, European studies and democratic backsliding.



**Mario Lafuente Rodríguez,** Naval Engineering

Mario is a Naval Engineering student at the Faculty of Nautical Studies of Barcelona (FNB), with a strong interest in international affairs, transatlantic relations, and European policy. He combines a technical academic background with active participation in debate and public speaking initiatives, particularly in discussions related to governance, security, and economic development. He is especially interested in the intersection between geopolitics, infrastructure, and global mobility. He aims to pursue an international career connected to transport, strategic industries, and public policy.



**Camiyah King,** Political Science

A third year Political Science major on the pre-law track attending Spelman College located in Atlanta, Georgia. My ambition is to become an Intellectual Property attorney concentrated on music.



**Luis Gutiérrez Garrido,** Mathematics / Engineering Physics

I am a Mathematics and Engineering Physics student at UPC. Passionate about international relations and the possibilities for change that they open, I have experience in international cooperation, having done projects in Cameroun and Sierra Leone working in hospital management systems. I also have debate experience, being the best individual speaker and also member of the winning team in my university's Debate League from last year.



**John Rappoccio,** International Studies/Economics

I'm an International Studies and Economics student who loves learning about the world and connecting with different cultures. I'm passionate about travel, leadership, and making a positive impact wherever I go.



**Àlex Atanes Llera,** International Relations

I am an International Relations undergraduate at UAB with a keen interest in European Affairs and Eastern Europe, an Editor at the European Relations Association think tank, and an active participant in local politics and pro-European movements.

## 10. IEN Transatlantic Debate Competition Teams



**Matthias Grenon,** Masters in International Security

Matthias is a former startup founder and operator across cybersecurity and agtech. Most recently as Special Operations Manager at OutThink, an AI-powered cybersecurity human risk management scale-up, he opened and staffed hubs in Barcelona, Cluj, and Bangalore, built the people program, and supported growth initiatives spanning sales, marketing, and thought leadership. Matthias is currently pursuing a Master's in International Security at IBEI and holds an MBA from ESADE and a BA in Philosophy from Boston University.



**Ariadna Larisa Teixidó Ponsa,** Law and Politic Science

I'm 20 years old, from Barcelona and currently studying double degree of law and politics



**John Dowd,** Political Science and Economics

I am from Washington D.C. in the international relations and political science program at the IES school in Barcelona. In the states, I am a third year student at Haverford College majoring in political science and a member of the varsity men's soccer team. Some of my interests include international security and US diplomacy.



**Eva Torres Castelló,** Law

I'm in my second year of Law Studies at Universitat CEU Abat Oliba, I love speaking and debating about all topics and have participated in plenty of debates as a representative of my university. I would love to become Prosecutor one day!

# 11. Awards

Outstanding participants will receive special recognition:

**Winning Team**

Certificate of Excellence

Academic prize:

- A course within the Online Master in International Affairs and Diplomacy (UOC – UNITAR)*
  To choose one among these four:
  - B2.516 - International Diplomacy - Theory and Practice
  - B2.517 - Conflict Resolution and Crisis Management
  - B2.518 - Overcoming Negotiation Deadlocks
  - B2.519 - Public Diplomacy in a Multipolar World

**Runner-Up Team**

Certificate of Achievement.

**Best Speaker Award: For outstanding rhetorical and diplomatic performance.**

Certificate of Achievement.

* A program which is designed for diplomats and government officials involved in international affairs, as well as those persons involved in international relations or seeking a career in this field.

