

## ECNAIS Debate Event:

# Rulebook

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Training partner:



In collaboration with:



This rulebook presents the procedures that will govern the ECNAIS Debate European Event. The event will take place in April 2023.

Because some schools are creating their debate events, this rulebook offers some notes and suggestions that may be helpful for other events.

For any doubts or suggestions  
[debate@ecnais.org](mailto:debate@ecnais.org)

For more information  
<https://www.ecnais.org/>




**Notes & suggestions  
for other events**


## Preamble

Debate is critical for decisions concerning the common good and our shared future. However, despite present-day information and communication possibilities, meaningful debate must be enhanced, learned, and practiced.

The project “*ECNAIS Debate Event: Promoting Democracy and civic engagement*” was born for these reasons. It assumed the mission “*To promote debate as an educational tool for the development of students` empathy, critical and creative thinking, to empower them as active citizens, thus contributing to democracy and tolerance.*”

In the scope of the project and inspired by its mission, the present regulation was written.

 Write a simple regulation coherent with specific contextual needs and goals.


 Identifying the needs and objectives may help the school community to value debate and engage in the project.


## 1. Object

This regulation governs the ECNAIS Debate European Event.

The event is a debate tournament between teams of upper secondary students from different European countries.

This regulation may be used as a baseline for other debate events.

 Choose a name for the event.


 School tournaments may be governed by their own rules.

## 2. Coordination

ECNAIS will appoint an Event Coordination Team with three to five persons.

This Coordination Team is responsible for:

- (a) Developing the program (opening session, debate rounds, and closing session)
- (b) Assigning and training Chairpersons, Timekeepers, and Judges
- (c) Preparing debates materials and information
- (d) Choosing the process to select the motions, following the process, and approving the final selection
- (e) Assuring the random distribution of the motions, teams, and their positions
- (f) Deciding on any doubts, issues, or questions.

 Identify a coordination team with different educators or teachers.



### 3. Motions

Motions are the ideas, topics, propositions, or suggestions to be debated by the teams.

The motions for the event are proposed by ECNAIS member associations, discussed by a panel of educators, and approved by the Coordination Team.

The Coordination Team will ensure the random distribution of the motions.

All the motions will be published one month before the event.

In the first rounds, teams know the motions they will debate but not their position (proposition or opposition), which will be decided at the beginning of the debate.

In the semi-final and final, teams will know the motion and the position (proposition or opposition) one hour before the debate.

### 4. Teams

Teams are registered by ECNAIS member associations.

Teams must have at least one previous participation in structured debates.

Teams include three upper secondary students and a teacher.

All students will participate as speakers (first, second, and third or rebuttal speakers).

If a student, for justified reasons, cannot participate in the debate at the last minute, one of the team members may assume the colleague's role.

The Coordination Team must approve this and other exceptional decisions.

### 5. Organization

The event includes three rounds of debate with all the teams, followed by a semi-final and final round of debates.

The debates in each round will take place simultaneously.

Each debate is conducted by a table that includes a Chairperson and a Timekeeper.

When possible, teachers will participate as chairperson and timekeeper in debates where their teams are not debating.

Identify the process to create and select the motions.

Students, teachers, and parents' suggestions may be helpful.

Do we want to have a theme for our debates?

The previous knowledge of the motion and position may help students to be more prepared.

Decide which students, how they apply, and the number of students per team.

Teams with four students integrate more students and allow substitution.

Students may apply voluntarily in teams; in some schools, all secondary students participate in debate activities.

Discuss the best event structure to maximize teams' opportunities to debate.

While some events use ladder competitions, others use scoring systems.

Which structure reinforces feedback to enhance improvement?



At the end of the debate, each judge will assess both teams using specific criteria and scores. At the end of each round, the Coordination Team receives judges' scores and updates teams' general scores.

The four teams with the highest score enter the semi-final round; the two winning teams debate in the final round. The team that wins the final is the winner of the tournament.

The closing session includes a ceremony to publish results and deliver awards, specific recognitions, and participation certificates.

## 6. Debate

The debate includes a proposition team that defends the motion and an opposition team that opposes the motion.

### 6.1 Preparation

In the first three rounds, teams already know the motions.

In the semi-final and final, although teams know the set of motions that will be debated, the specific motion and teams' position are disclosed one hour before the debate.

Five minutes before the debate hour, each team must present itself to the Chairperson.

In the first three rounds, before the debate, the chairperson tosses a coin (head or tails) in the presence of the teams. The winning team assumes the proposition position.

### 6.2 The Debate

The chairperson opens the debate by presenting the teams and the motion.

During the debate, the speakers of both teams can not have or use electronic devices.

The proposition team makes the first intervention.

The constructive speeches, delivered by the first two speakers of each team, have a time limit of five minutes.

The summary or rebuttal speeches, delivered by the third speaker of each team, have a time limit of three minutes.

Between each intervention, there is a 1-minute break.

Interventions follow in the structure and using the time limits presented in the table below:

It is a challenge to be Chairperson or Timekeeper, but some students find that they are very good at it.

Besides the first places and the participation certificates, which other categories of recognition could enrich the event?

Taking into account your goals, discuss what can be the best debate format.

There are many formats for school debate with variations on the number of teams, students per team, number of speeches, and speeches length.

When teams know and can prepare their specific motion in advance, it may be interesting to start the debate by tossing a coin to decide each team position.

It is possible to adjust the time limits of the interventions.

1st Speakers	Proposition	5`	Motion definition Setting issues for debate
	Opposition	5`	To present the team's case
2nd Speakers	Proposition	5`	Handle definition if needed Answer other team arguments
	Opposition	5`	Continue to build the team's case
Summary speakers	Proposition	3`	Synthesize the team's case To refute the other team's arguments
	Opposition	3`	Close with the final idea

The Timekeeper tracks speakers' time using a desk bell to indicate the beginning and end of the speeches. A double ring of the desk bell will signal the beginning of the speech, a second ring will signal the beginning of the last minute, and a third and double ring will signal the end of the time, reinforced by another double ring after 10 seconds. The end of the 1-minute break will be marked with one ring.

Summary or rebuttal speakers cannot present new arguments.

At the end of the debate, each adjudicator has 4 minutes to write each team score (closed envelope) and 3 more minutes for a brief feedback comment.

The Chairperson closes the debate.

In the first three rounds, teams' scores are delivered to the Coordination Team that updates the scoring board. In the semi-final and final rounds, teams' scores are communicated at the end of the debate.

## 7. Adjudication


Adjudication is the process of assessing teams' participation in the debate.


In this event, teams are assessed by two judges using specific criteria and a score (0-20).


Judges are selected among ECNAIS' member associations.

The Coordination Team organizes a prep meeting at the beginning of the event for the adjudication team to enrich its readiness, equality, and fairness.

Each judge is responsible for rating both teams' performance using three criteria: (i) *Attitude* regarding the debate, including team engagement and contribution; (ii) *Content* or the compelling strength of each team case and arguments; (iii) *Delivery* meaning the ability to present their arguments persuasively and expressively.

 In some events, the adjudication team often presents a joint decision, disclosure by them at the end of the debate. This way, it is more evident for teams and the audience who won the debate.

 It is important to decide: Who will be the judges? What do we want (criteria) to value in the debates?

 Judges can be older students, other teachers, parents, community members. The organization must ensure impartiality and training.

The table below presents the three criteria, their value, and main indicators.

Attitude	0-8	Ability to listen and respond Team members support Respect for the other team Valuing the structure and rules of debate
Content	0-8	Argumentation relevance and strength Rebuttal pertinence and quality Overall compelling and consistent case
Delivery	0-4	Body language Vocal style Rhetoric techniques


See Appendix 1 - Adjudication tool for ecnaeis debate


Judges' punctuation is individual. However, the team punctuation is achieved in each debate by adding both judges' punctuation in a final score.

## 8. Code of conduct

During the event, all participants and other people present should:

- a) Value debate as an opportunity to develop empathy, critical and creative thinking
- b) Understand debate critical importance for the common good and shared future
- c) Acknowledge both team roles in deepening each motion
- d) Exercise active listening
- e) Show respect for each other at all times and in all roles
- f) Comply with the regulation
- g) Avoid any insulting or joking remarks that can be easily misinterpreted
- h) Contribute to a positive debate environment where everyone voices and ideas are heard

 To discuss the criteria related to specific needs or goals.

 To discuss which attitudes can help debate activity to be more rewarding.

## Appendix 1 - Adjudication tool for ecnais debate

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All arguments are relevant and supported with explanations and examples

Rebuttals clearly strengthen the case of the debater(s).

The overall case is very compelling and consistent: debaters do not only structure the debate but lead the debate with their line of argumentation.

8

Most arguments are relevant and supported by either an explanation or an example.

Debaters rebut most opposing arguments; the rebuttals are compelling.

The overall case is compelling and consistent: debaters structure the debate, and there is one clear line in their argumentation.

6

Argumentation seems relevant but lacks strength: arguments are not always supported with explanations or examples

Debaters rebut some opposing arguments, and the quality of the rebuttals is average.

The overall case is of average quality: argumentation is consistent but not always compelling (or vice versa).

Debaters try to structure the debate but are not always successful.

4

Argumentation is irrelevant and/or very weak: what is being said are statements rather than arguments

Debaters do not rebut the arguments of their opponents.

The overall case is not compelling nor consistent: the debate lacks structure and is hard to follow

2

Debater(s) did not participate:

- Argumentation is non-existent
- There are no rebuttals or reactions
- There is no argumentative case due to the absence of argumentation

0

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Debaters show excellent ability to listen/respond: they repeat opposing arguments precisely and respond convincingly to their opponents.

Team members support each other successfully.

All the speakers are very respectful to their opponents.

The team promotes the debate structure and rules.

8

Debaters show a good ability to listen/respond: they repeat opposing arguments correctly and respond well to these.

Team members support each other.

All the speakers are respectful to their opponents.

The team values debate structure and rules.

6

Debaters show some ability to listen/respond: opposing arguments are not always repeated correctly and, thus, not always well responded to.

Team members try to support each other.

All the speakers are somewhat respectful to their opponents.

The team respects the debate structure and rules.

4

Debaters lack the ability to listen/respond: opposing arguments are not repeated and are only responded to in the form of loose statements.

Team members barely support each other.

Speakers ignore or are rude to their opponents.

There is some contempt regarding the debate structure and rules.

2

Debater(s) did not participate:

- Relevance, ability to listen/respond and relation to team/opponents cannot be addressed (due to absent contributions)

0

DELIVERY

Body language is excellent; debaters stand firmly and use fitting hand gestures to support the message. They *are* the argument.

The variation in vocal style (volume, pace, and intonation) elevates the message and makes it very convincing

Debaters use many rhetorical techniques to elevate the message and make it especially convincing.

4

Body language is good; debaters stand firmly and use some hand gestures to support the message.

The variation in vocal style (volume, pace, and intonation) supports the message and makes it convincing

Debaters use various rhetorical techniques to support the message and make it more convincing.

3

Body language is neutral; debaters try to stand firmly and use small hand gestures.

Variation in vocal style (volume, pace, and intonation) is present; it doesn't distract from the message but also does not support it.

Debaters try to use rhetorical techniques to support the message and make it convincing.

2

Body language is absent or distracts from the message; debaters move a lot or stand frozen in one place.

Variation in vocal style (volume, pace, and intonation) is barely present or distracts from the message.

Debaters barely use rhetorical techniques; they do not always support the message and make it convincing.

1

Debater(s) did not participate:

- Nor body language, vocal style, or rhetorical techniques can be adjudicated

0

**Observations:**

It is possible to give points between two categories (e.g., 7 or a 3.5).