



Dear debate organization,

We are excited you're interested in joining the IDEA network and expanding access to debate education worldwide!

What does IDEA stand for?

IDEA - the International Debate Education Association - is an international network of debate organizations supporting civic dialogue and open discussion. Our mission is focused on five key areas:

1. **Promoting debate-based learning** as a tool for empowering young people to think critically, live and work more successfully, highlighting the importance of democratic educational process and participative learning;
2. **Supporting youth participation and fostering democratic practices** through empowering young people for civic engagement and advancing the dialogue between decision-makers and citizens;
3. **Strengthening Global citizen identities** through supporting young people in shaping their future and becoming informed and active global citizens;
4. **Promoting human rights through inclusion and anti-discrimination** programs, giving voice to youth with fewer opportunities;
5. **Advocating for and improving citizenship education with a particular focus on tackling threats to democratic governance** through direct citizenship education programs supported by IDEA and carried out by our members.

We are working on growing IDEA into:

- A **debate training center** providing training opportunities and resources for coaches and debaters to expand their skills;
- A **fundraising platform and capacity builder**, supporting our member organizations in securing the funds they need to run and develop their programs through approaching private and institutional donors;
- An **international debate think tank and advocacy hub** engaged in organizing conferences for debate educators and academics and facilitating debate-focused publishing.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic alone, we have secured over 1,000,000€ to support debate programs run by our member organizations in 21 countries. As we transition back into in-person events, we hope to create even more opportunities for our community to grow and for debate to become the go-to method for developing critical thinking and information literacy skills, encouraging civilized discussion, learning to disagree and to agree, and for thinking and speaking about the most important issues we face today.



The Structure of IDEA

Voting members are debate organizations or national debate programs which meet certain criteria, as detailed in the IDEA [Statutes](#) and later in this document. Together, they form the General Assembly (GA) of IDEA, its principal governing body. The GA is tasked with voting on the organization's strategic plans, mission, and goals, electing members of our Board of Directors, and more. IDEA members are also invited and subsidized to participate in international events. Please visit our [website](#) for more information on IDEA's current voting members.

Non-voting members of IDEA are debate organizations or similar entities that are actively involved in the field of debate methodology but do not have voting rights within IDEA. These organizations are recognized and affiliated with IDEA, contributing to the promotion and advancement of debate education and practice. While non-voting members do not participate in the decision-making processes of IDEA's General Assembly, they still benefit from the network and resources provided by the organization. They can engage with other like-minded organizations and individuals, collaborate on projects, and exchange best practices in the field of debate methodology. Non-voting members may also receive invitations and subsidies to participate in international events organized or supported by IDEA.

The **Board of Directors** of IDEA is a governing body elected by the General Assembly (GA). Composed of individuals with diverse backgrounds and expertise, the Board plays a vital role in supporting the growth and development of the organization. The primary responsibility of the Board is to provide strategic guidance and oversight to IDEA. The Board works closely with the executive office and other stakeholders to establish and implement the organization's strategic plans, mission, and goals. The Board ensures that IDEA remains aligned with its core values and objectives while adapting to the evolving needs of the debate community.

The executive office is a vital component of IDEA, responsible for managing the day-to-day operations and supporting the overall functioning of the organization. Comprising a dedicated team of professionals, the executive office serves as the administrative body that facilitates IDEA's activities and initiatives.

Beyond these formal categories, **IDEA is a network**, broader than just our membership. IDEA offers the opportunity to partner with other like-minded organizations and individuals, to collaborate on projects supporting the development of new applications for debate methodology. We also work as a network to secure resources our members need to create change using debate methodology, whether working with general society or with elementary, secondary, and higher education students. Please read more about our goals in IDEA's program documents on our [website](#).

Which types of organizations can become IDEA members?

IDEA's membership currently includes different types of organizations, ranging from **debate organizations** or other entities who do not necessarily work with large numbers of debate clubs but are working on implementing debate methodology and whose work aligns with IDEA's values to large **network debate organizations** and **national debate program coordinators** which, as umbrella organisations, work with many debate clubs/schools in their countries/regions.

IDEA has a two-tiered membership system and recognizes **voting** and **non-voting members**. All organizations accepted into IDEA membership are at first assigned non-voting status for two years, no matter their size.

As per the IDEA Statutes, **voting membership** is open to organisations:

1. Which are public benefit organizations or other non-governmental, not-for-profit organizations established under the Act of the country concerned, anywhere in the world; and
2. Who have a stable debate programme within their organization with at least two hundred (200) stable beneficiaries (members of debate clubs or similar) at national, regional or international level; and
3. That are democratically run-which for this purpose is defined to mean that the leadership of the organization is elected in a fair manner with an anonymous vote, and/or that they have an independent body that oversees the work of the board (such as a supervisory board); and
4. That have been in existence for three (3) years or more or have resulted from a merger of organizations, each of which existed for at least three years before the merger came about; and
5. Whose annual income is five thousand euros (€5,000.00) or more; and
6. Who have been non-voting members for at least one year and who have personally attended at least one General Assembly attended before they became voting members, except if they already were members with voting rights on August 27th, 2014.

Voting members name a member of their organization to be their representative to IDEA and participate at yearly General Assembly meetings. Voting members must pay membership fees established by the Board of Directors.

Non-voting membership is open to any legal entity or individual that fulfils the following conditions:

- Supports the goals and objectives of IDEA, and
- Wishes to help IDEA pursue its goals and objectives.

To change an organization's status from that of a non-voting to a voting member, non-voting members must fulfill all statutory criteria if they want to apply for voting membership. After fulfilling all statutory criteria and applying for voting membership, in line with the IDEA Statutes, the decision on changing an organization's membership status from non-voting to voting is made by the Board of Directors by a majority vote and in line with the criteria set out in the IDEA Statutes, and after consulting the voting members of the IDEA General Assembly.



How to Apply?

The membership application procedure consists of clearly defined steps explained in detail below.

These guidelines are for first-time applicants. Any organizations re-applying for membership should contact IDEA directly via email.

We invite all interested organizations to send emails expressing interest in IDEA membership. An expression of interest will only be considered a formal application and registered as such when IDEA receives all the required documentation for the membership status for which you are applying. This must be sent by email to the Executive Director of IDEA, Bojan Marjanović, at bojan@idebate.net.

Once the documents have been received, you will be sent confirmation of receipt. If this confirmation is not forthcoming, please contact us via follow-up emails.

What to apply for?

We encourage all potential applicants to think and explore what they want to achieve from working within the IDEA network and how they want to develop as a debate organization. Here we provide two scenarios and types of organizations that already covered by the IDEA network to help inform your decision and choices. We encourage you to reach out to us even if you do not conform with any of the ideal types provided here.

National or regional non-profit Network Debate Organization

This type of membership is for non-profit organizations that are focused on debate expansion in a country or a region or are already managing large debate networks. They are likely to have a mission that aligns with IDEA's goals and objectives and will be actively working towards meeting criteria that will allow them to become a full-fledged member. As a member, they can participate in the organization's decision-making process and have a vote in shaping its policies and direction.

Non-profit Debate Organizations and Other Entities

This type of membership is also for non-profit debate organizations and other entities that may have similar goals and objectives as the non-profit network debate organizations, but they may not be interested in expansive network of debate clubs and instead wish to engage in debate activities through another way. As a member, they have the opportunity to participate in the organization's decision-making process through working groups or participation at the General Assembly. They may have access to the organization's resources, services, and events. This type of membership is suitable for organizations that want to benefit from the organization's offerings and be a part of the IDEA community without being or working towards becoming an umbrella debate organization.

Overview of required documents

Application process for national or regional non-profit Network Debate Organizations

If you are applying as a national or regional non-governmental youth debate network organization that acts as an umbrella organization for debate clubs, the following information must be submitted in English (non-notarized translations are accepted):

1. Statutes or any other legal document governing how your organization functions in your native language and in the English language;
2. Rules of Procedure/ Standing Orders/ By-laws or any other document governing how your organization functions;
3. A written statement that your organization fully accepts the statutes and aims of the IDEA (free form);
4. A copy of your accounts for the last financial year (if available) and a version of the document in € if the national currency is not €;
5. A list of your Bureau/Board and staff with their positions and age;
6. [Filled out application form](#);
7. A max 700-word summary of your current short-term (24 months) and long-term (5y) work plan on a maximum of two A4 pages;
8. Any further information or clarification that you think will assist the Board of IDEA on Membership Applications in ascertaining the extent to which your organization fulfils the criteria for IDEA membership;
9. List of debate clubs/schools in the organization's debate program.

Application process for non-profit Debate Organizations and Other Entities

If you are applying as a non-governmental debate organization, the following information must be submitted in English (non-notarized translations are accepted):

1. Statutes or any other legal document governing how your organization functions in your native language and in the English language;
2. A written statement that your organization fully accepts the statutes and aims of the IDEA (free form);
3. A copy of your accounts for the last financial year (if available) and a version of the document in € if the national currency is not €;
4. [Filled out application form](#);
5. A max 700-word summary of your current short-term (24 months) and long-term (5y) work plan on a maximum of two A4 pages;
6. Any further information or clarification that you think will assist the Board of IDEA on Membership Applications in ascertaining the extent to which your organisation fulfils the criteria for IDEA membership.

Who oversees the application process?

Decisions concerning the admission of new voting members shall be taken by the Board of Directors, in accordance with such procedures as the Board may enact in the Internal Regulations and with other relevant provisions of these Statutes. A majority vote of the Board of Directors shall take the aforesaid decisions. The Board shall not be required to provide any reason for its membership decisions, which shall be final, unless overturned by a majority vote of the General Assembly, in which case the legal entities approved by the Board of Directors for membership shall not participate in the vote in the General Assembly on decisions involving their own admission.

Please visit our [website](#) for more information on the current members of the IDEA Board of Directors.

What happens once the application is complete and has been received by IDEA?

Once IDEA has received your application, the Executive Director is responsible for forwarding the application within 15 days to the President of the Board of Directors with a copy to the other Board members of IDEA.

The Board will examine the documents submitted for the application, e.g. membership statistics and statutes. In examining your application, the Board may request either further documentation or a deeper analysis of the membership of the applicant organisation may be conducted by the board including asking follow-up questions in written form.

Based on the information in its possession, the Board writes up a report and brings this as a resolution to the next Board meeting. The Board of Directors of IDEA will vote on the new member. The Board has no fixed deadline to confirm membership; however, the applicant will be informed about the steps taken.

What happens once the Board has approved an application?

Once the Board of Directors has approved and voted on the member, the latter informs the applicant of their decision and later informs all IDEA members about the new member. In some cases, the applicant will be invited to present themselves at the next available GA.

How long does this all take?

Please note that there are no statutory deadlines for the application procedure. Based on previous experience, it takes around one to three months to process an application. Certain cases may require more or less time.