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[College of the Atlantic of Europe : New College of Human Ecology in Germany](#)

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“Today, colleges and universities in Germany are facing enormous challenges, tasks, and overall structural changes,” say Wolfgang H. Serbser and Jadranka Mrzljak. Using [College of the Atlantic](#) in Bar Harbor, ME as the model, there is a proposal in the works and a call for action to create a [new college of Human Ecology in Germany](#) (read it [here](#) in German or as a [PDF here](#) (3 downloads)).



Why a new College of Human Ecology?

[Dr. Wolfgang H. Serbser](#) and [Dr. Jadranka Mrzljak](#) offer a few of their own ideas as to why a new College of the Atlantic in Germany is exactly what the country needs.

Their major point is that the education environment is changing a lot these day, especially due to the recent adoption of Bachelor and Master programs for students within the European Union. Students are able to choose their educations with much more flexibility now, and are thus seeking more diversity in their education and looking for schools that provide them the ability to develop their own talents, interests, and skills.

Secondly, there is a general lack of educational programs that focus on ecological challenges we currently face the whole world-over. The proposed new school of Human Ecology in Germany explicitly states that one of their main focus points will be to “offer an innovative, experimental, but also deliberate environment to the new generation of students,” whom are the unlucky enough to inherit all the challenges such as climate change our generations are leaving for them. The new college will be committed to sustainable development.

What will the new college look like?

Well, the short answer, it will look something very similar to College of the Atlantic (COA) in Bar Harbor, ME. More information about COA can be found on their website www.coa.edu.

It will also have bits and pieces inspired by the Eco-league, which is a network of American colleges that focuses on sustainability practice in education.

The new school of Human Ecology will offer students a project-oriented method of study, “allowing students

to develop and alter their projects and study plans step-by-step all the way to the graduation.”

This means that there will be a wide-range of courses offered, covering various topics and subjects across many disciplines, often times with overlap. The new school will also most likely be offering various interdisciplinary team-taught courses. Multiple faculty, each experts in different disciplines, will work together to develop classes that tackle very specific local and global problems.

Besides emphasizing problem and practice oriented studies, the new college of Human Ecology will also be devoted to “encouraging and supporting cross-disciplinary projects in research, science, and off-campus practice. Human Ecology connects theoretical models and traditions of thought in all participating fields of human, social, and natural sciences, as well as engineering with their scope of application building being the bridging concepts for disciplinary cooperation as well as specific research projects leading to transdisciplinary dialogue.”

What about Administration?

At conception, it seems that the German Society for Human Ecology will come to represent the pool for which most of the faculty of the new college will most likely be drawn from. The Society will also serve as an institutional committee “securing the quality of teaching and research at the college.” A scientific advisory board will be elected from the Society as well.

The current proposal suggests that the new college of Human Ecology in Germany will be the first local European branch of the College of the Atlantic. Thus, if this succeeds, and the new college does become a sister or brother to College of the Atlantic, “parts of the administration could initially remain in the United States.” Then, slowly, upon successful implementation, the new college would eventually become independent in Germany and Europe.



What’s next then?

Well, Wolfgang and Jadranka say that they must first answer a few important problems before they can press on any further. The main problems they face now are to find the best location for the various segments of the organization and administration, and how they will afford the project up front, and over the long-haul. “Developing an adequate financing model for a private university in Germany is one of the prior tasks,” they say.

Luckily for them, they have a very good model fundraiser. “The college of the Atlantic offers us a plethora of experience with fundraising and cooperating with supporting groups and individuals, which would be useful to us in building up and developing a College of the Atlantic for Europe.”

The location is thought best to be selected where research and student projects can be done on a local level. As the thought goes, it is very important that the school is integrated tightly into the community which surrounds it. When it is, it is a benefit to the community, the students, and also to the school itself.



Some suggested sites have been made, using the [UNESCO Biosphere’s program](#) as a guide in the selection of a location which suits the needs of the school to be in a place thematically connected to research contents with the social and environmental region where it is to be sited.

“The island of Ruegen and the Suedostruegen biosphere: On a longer-term perspective, a College of the Baltic is foreseeable, which would target cooperation with other Baltic Sea countries. ([more information](#))

The Spreewald biosphere in the south of Brandenburg: This is a possible location for a proposed College of the Wet Lands. ([more information](#))

The Tal der kleinen Emme in Switzerland and the Entlebuch biosphere: This is a perfect location for a

proposed College of the Alps. ([more information](#))

Finally, there are a few additional questions that need to be answered as well, especially if the new college will really become a sister or brother college the the already existing College of the Atlantic. Some of these questions are :

What languages will be used officially?

What role does language play in general, concerning development, discussions, practice, and other aspects?

Call for input and invitation to join new study group

As stated earlier, there has been an official call for participation by Wolfgang, Jadranka, and the rest of the German Society for Human Ecology. An invitation to take part in a newly formed study group within the society has been sent out as well, which is focusing all of its efforts on this new initiative to create a new college of Liberal Arts and Human Ecology in Germany.

More on the initiative will be introduced at the next [SHE Conference in Rio](#) this October of '07. So keep your eyes and ears out for the latest updates and information to come in the near future.

More information can be found in both English and German at www.coa-europe.eu/

Contact : [Dr. Wolfgang H. Serbser](#) and [Dr. Jadranka Mrzljak](#)

*Note: Images used in this post are from COA.edu and www.coa-europe.eu/

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