



Solidarity and Civic Engagement in Transatlantic Perspective

Goethe-Institut USA Essay Competition 2025

The Goethe-Institut USA invites high school students and college/university students to participate in our 2025 Essay Competition!

Solidarity shapes political, economic, social, cultural, and religious movements—it is a core value in times of crisis, transformation, and global challenges. But what does solidarity mean today? What role does it play in the transatlantic relationship between Germany, Europe, and the USA? In this competition, solidarity should be understood as collective action in which individual interests are set aside for the common good. Participants are encouraged to reflect on how this concept plays out in a transatlantic context.

Goal of the Competition

The aim is to encourage young people to critically examine the meaning of solidarity and civic engagement between Germany, Europe, and the USA and to develop new perspectives. Participants can explore how solidarity can serve as a tool for addressing shared challenges and promoting freedom, justice, and responsibility. Cultural differences, tensions, and contradictions should also be considered.

Essay Topics

Participants may choose one of the following topics:

1. Solidarity in a globalized world: How can solidarity be strengthened across the transatlantic space? Explore the challenges and opportunities for cooperation in social, economic, political, planetary, and environmental matters.
2. Solidarity in politics: What role does solidarity play in the democracies of Germany, the USA, and Europe? How does it contribute to stability and justice—or give rise to tensions?

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3. Digital solidarity: How do social media platforms influence modern solidarity movements? What opportunities and risks arise from digital engagement? Does the use of AI pose a challenge to solidarity-based action?
4. Solidarity in art, film, and music: How is solidarity represented in creative forms of expression, and what impact do these portrayals have on civic engagement?

Preparation Phase

To support participants, the Goethe-Institut will offer workshops and informational sessions for both educators and students.

Participation Requirements

- Target Group: High school and college/university students in the USA
- Essay Length: Between 1,500 and 2,000 words
- Language: English or German
- Submission Deadline: October 14

Honor Code

By participating in this essay competition, students agree to use AI tools such as language models responsibly—for brainstorming, research, and drafting only. Any content generated by AI must be clearly marked and cited. Participants commit to academic integrity by avoiding plagiarism and ensuring their work reflects their own critical thinking and creativity, with proper source citations. Violations of the honor code may result in disqualification.

Evaluation Criteria

Essays will be evaluated by a jury based on the following criteria:

- Originality (5 points)
- Depth of analysis (5 points)
- Relevance and timeliness (5 points)
- Structure and clarity of argument (5 points)

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- Language quality (5 points)
- References (5 points)

Prizes

The top three essays in both the high school and college/university categories will be awarded the following prizes:

- First Place: A scholarship for an in-person language course at a Goethe-Institut in Germany and a prize package
- Second & Third Place: A scholarship for an online German course from the Goethe-Institut USA and a prize package
- All participants will receive a certificate of participation
- The six winning essays will be published in the Goethe-Institut North America's online magazine [Gegenüber](#)

The six winners will be invited to an in-person award ceremony. As part of the ceremony, they will have the opportunity to present and defend their ideas in a moderated panel discussion. The event will be held in both English and German.

Questions? Contact: teacherservice-usa@goethe.de

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