

The European Youth Centre's architecture



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Youth and the Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is the only international organisation maintaining for more than 50 years an educational and residential establishment dedicated solely to the use of young people. The plans for a permanent European Youth Centre took shape in the 1960s. The Committee of Ministers adopted the statute of the Centre on 12 January 1971. The Centre is not only unique as a youth space. It remains a unique example of real co-management between youth and member States' representatives. The activities held in the Centre are decided upon jointly by members of youth organisations and governments. The Centre's programme aims:

- ▶ to supplement the training of youth leaders in a European context;
- ▶ to provide non-governmental youth organisations and networks, as well as other non-governmental structures involved in areas of youth work, relevant to the Council of Europe youth policy, with a meeting place for the furtherance of international understanding in the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the detailed study of European problems;
- ▶ to seek, more particularly, means of ensuring participation by young people in solving the problems which concern them;
- ▶ to promote research into youth matters through the exchange of ideas and experiences.





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The preliminary project for the European Youth Centre (EYC) consisted of four articulated wings with a central courtyard. It finally ended up as a cube in which the structure is delineated in the plan and facades. For the architects, cubic buildings mark a fixed point in the landscape. The use of steel, concrete and glass gives the impression of a crystal. The architects wanted to make sure that the exterior surroundings were visible as much as possible from the different areas in the building.

The centre was designed and organised to provide a variety of functionalities to enhance conditions for all kinds of activities, whether individual or in a group, or leisure activities.

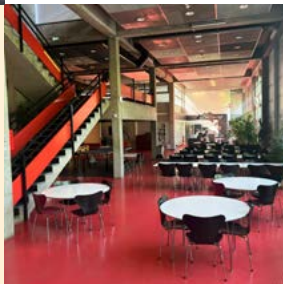


Kurt und Traute Weber-Mariazell, Der Baum des Lebens, 1980, Glasmalerei

The meeting rooms are two floors high, so the columns and beams form a square on the exterior elevations.



From the vast reception and dining room, a large main stairway zigzags upwards, linking the high-ceilinged floors. The stairs lead to the meeting and conference rooms on levels 3, and 5. The stairs continue right up to the roof terrace which provides a view of the luxuriant landscape and Strasbourg European district. This is reminiscent of Le Corbusier's ideas for a modern building: «The house can be 'climbed', there is a rooftop from which the landscape can be viewed".



Smaller spaces such as offices (on levels 1 and 5) and single or double bedrooms (level 2 to 5) are placed along one side in such a way that other floors become mezzanines offering informal spaces which are ideal for informal exchanges.



Nils Slaatto / Kjell Lund, 1985 – Photo: © Lund + Slaatto Architects

Kjell Lund and Nils Slaatto were, for more than two decades Norway's most prominent and influential architects, who left a strong and distinctive mark on Norwegian architecture.

European Youth Centre's architects



The original furniture in the European Youth Centre was designed by the Danish architect and interior designer Arne Jacobsen, whose style is still today very typically Scandinavian with its elegant and functional forms.



Their architecture is one of abstraction, assimilation and reason. It builds on the heritage of the Modern Movement as well as on the Nordic tradition. Their architecture is disciplined and based on the ideal of Nordic democracy. Some of their works are reminiscent of Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe and Louis Kahn.



The two architects were given the rare opportunity of giving a new architectural definition to the centre of the Norwegian capital, Oslo (extension of the National Gallery and the National Theatre, city centre plan, Theatre Square, Students' Park, etc.). St Hallvard Church and Monastery, Chateau Neuf (The Norwegian Students' Society), and the Bank of Norway are examples of their other works.

For and by young people



EUROPÉENNES ET M. MAURICE HERZOG

Le Centre expérimental de jeunesse a été inauguré, hier, à Obernai

Le Centre européen expérimental de jeunesse, consacré à la formation de moniteurs et dont le premier stage sera réservé aux organisateurs de rencontres internationales, a été inauguré hier soir à Obernai par M. Wurtz, représentant personnel du gouvernement luxembourgeois, qui représentera le comité des ministres du Conseil de l'Europe.

À 19 h 30, les personnalités et les invités ont été reçus dans les salons de l'hôtel de ville, où une réception a été organisée par M. Wurtz, représentant personnel du gouvernement luxembourgeois, qui représentera le comité des ministres du Conseil de l'Europe.

A l'issue du vin d'honneur, les personnalités se sont rendues au village de vacances facilitant, ainsi, l'ouverture du Centre européen de jeunesse, qui est l'un des centres d'enseignement et de formation.

« Une pépinière d'Européens... »

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Le Dr Gilman, maire d'Obernai (au centre), pendant son allocution de bienvenue. À sa droite : M. Herzig ; à sa gauche : M. Benoit.

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LES PERSONNALITÉS

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The two Norwegian architects Kjell Lund (1927-2013) and Nils Slaatto (1922-2001), proposed by the Norwegian Government, were tasked with designing the building and its extension.

Since the early 1960s the Council of Europe has been co-operating with European youth movements in order to involve them in the process of European integration. From 1963 until the opening of the European Youth Centre (EYC) in 1972, there was an experimental education centre operating in the holiday village of Obernai. From the outset, youth organisations have been involved, together with governments, in decisions relating to the European youth centre's activities, creating a unique Co-management system.



The site, so-called "Sports island" in the Wacken district, was chosen because of its setting, which offers both the tranquility required for educational activities, and opportunities for recreation. It is located between the canal linking the Marne and the Rhine and the Ill and Aar rivers. The land was provided by the City of Strasbourg.



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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.



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