Leadership entails determining a position, charting a course, and heading towards a destination. It means navigating around various obstacles - concrete ones like road blocks or soft ones like different views - and sailing through weather conditions as harsh as moral dilemmas. But are the manners of and tools for leading equally important as the end goal? And what are the elements – facts, beliefs, values, practical issues – that influence decisions in navigating towards a certain direction?

As an educational institution, what role do you play in nourishing ethical literacy among youth?

As an institution with a self-conscious mission to train young people for work in areas such as EU institutions, policies and international business, the nurturing of ethical literacy goes to the heart of our mission.

From its foundation in 1992, the College of Europe at Natolin has focussed on the need to encourage effective and ethical approaches to sustaining lasting peace and cooperation in Europe. In the 1990s and early 2000s we were particularly focused on breaking down the barriers between Central & Eastern Europe and the part of Europe that had not been forced behind the iron curtain, so as to build towards the full integration of all parts of Europe into the EU - an ethical project in itself! We have also always been committed to encouraging our students to look beyond Europe and apply these same effective and ethical approaches to the wider world. In line with this, and in a very different political and moral landscape than that of the early 1990s, we continue to work to equip our students to understand the sheer complexity of ethical decision-making and leadership. We help them to understand that all their decisions as potential future leaders will carry the risk of, among other things, unintended consequences, complacency, ideological rigidity and partiality, whatever their original intentions. We emphasise the need for moral integrity combined with critical thinking involving a rigorous interrogation of both received wisdoms and new and fashionable ideas. In our small, but extremely diverse student and teaching community, we foster an atmosphere of mutual respect, creating a laboratory of debate, life-changing encounters, challenge and resolution, which gives our young students an ideal opportunity to profoundly enhance their ethical literacy.

This ethical literacy is also embedded in the way we formally teach and learn at Natolin. Our academic standards are the very highest and we require the strictest adherence to transparent research methods, acknowledgment of sources and factually based argumentation. We offer our students an interdisciplinary curriculum which allows them to break out of academic silos and see problems from a full range of sometimes competing, intellectual standpoints. In recent years, we have focused much of our academic work on the nearest neighbours of the EU, to the East, South East and to the South. These vast regions contain societies which are markedly different in cultural, religious and political terms. We see it as our duty to instil in our students an understanding, respect and sympathy for these many differences. Central to this is an underpinning of our students’ work with an approach to history that takes in a long and broad view of our shared and complex civilisation, so that our young people can understand contemporary phenomena with greater clarity and assess the options for the future with a proper degree of knowledge of previous generations and their ideas.
Define an ethical leader for you.

It would be nice if there was an “off-the-peg” agreed definition of an “ethical leader” which we could apply to all situations. Perhaps some of us with convinced religious views may be able to point to one or two such leaders. However, what we can offer is a rough guide to young people of the sorts of “habits of mind” they will need to adopt in order to maintain an ethical approach in their future lives in political, administrative or business leadership. Perhaps we can point to three main elements which help a leader remain as ethical as possible in their decision making and to be ready to take responsibility for their decisions: humility, intellectual imagination and humanity.

**Humility:** ethical leaders need to be humble enough to realise that they can never be perfect – leaders who think they are ethically perfect have usually become tyrants. They need to be ready to face the fact that they will always have critics and always displease some people. They need to be ready to fail and recognise that in this they are not necessarily any better or worse than many who have preceded them. They need to know that there are never “final solutions” in decision making. In addition, ethical leaders must have the humility and decency to be ready to take responsibility for the decisions they take and not hide behind others when things get difficult.

**Intellectual imagination:** ethical leaders need to be prepared to understand issues from many points of view, to comprehend the complexities that they face. They need the capacity to critically assess their ideas and motivations in light of tried and tested solutions, as well as the ability to think in fresh and new ways. Nonetheless, they also need to know when to stop deliberations and to take decisions which they will have to fully assume.

**Humanity:** perhaps the most important element of all – ethical leaders need to maintain a profound sense of empathy for those they lead and those led by others. Their decisions should focus on the long-term welfare of others and not on their own narrow self-interest, vanity or personal satisfaction.

Why did the College of Europe decide to support the ASEFYLS Navigation Training?

Besides the fact that the ASEFYLS and the Navigators Training preparing it are very interesting initiatives, worthy of support in themselves, our involvement with them stems from a more general desire to develop stronger links with organisations working on Asia-Europe relations.

When the College of Europe was set up at Natolin in 1992, its objectives were more or less limited to the herculean task of helping break down the divisions of post-Cold War Europe. More than 25 years later, it has vastly expanded its curriculum and is increasingly broadening its horizons. One of the areas we are expanding into is the issue of Asia-Europe/EU relations. Not only do we want to broaden our curriculum offer in this area, offering more specific courses to deepen our students’ knowledge, but we also want to attract more Asian students to our study programme. By incorporating more Asian students into our student body, we will achieve the double goal of increasing knowledge of Europe and the EU among Asia’s future leaders, whilst at the same time increase the diversity of our community of learning. A more diverse community, though more challenging, is also capable of building the kind of ethical literacy needed in our modern, globalised world. With this in mind, we found ASEF to be a perfect partner in developing an excellent project for young leaders as well as a doorway to further collaboration in line with our aims.