



AMERICAN
COUNCIL ON
GERMANY

2023 Annual Report

Strengthening
Transatlantic Dialogue



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Mission

The American Council on Germany (ACG) is an independent, nonpartisan nonprofit organization that was founded in 1952 to strengthen German-American relations. Today, the ACG works across generations to provide a deeper understanding about Germany, Europe, and the importance of the transatlantic partnership. Through a range of programs and activities, the ACG addresses the most pressing economic, political, and social challenges of the day to ensure better mutual understanding. The ACG's initiatives are designed to reach a broad range of individuals to strengthen German-American relations and deepen the U.S.-European partnership. This is achieved through a combination of outreach and events designed to reach different audiences on both sides of the Atlantic to make sure they are better informed about transatlantic issues.

Vision

The American Council on Germany is the leading U.S.-based forum for strengthening German-American relations. It delivers a nuanced understanding of why Germany matters, because the only way to understand contemporary Europe is to understand Germany's role within Europe and around the world. And, the only way to understand contemporary Germany is to put it in a European context.

The Council is committed to:

Forging Mutual Understanding to Meet Tomorrow's Challenges

Through a range of activities, the ACG provides opinion leaders and decision-makers in a variety of fields with ideas and perspectives on important political, economic, and social developments on both sides of the Atlantic and around the world. Online programming and in-person events engage multipliers from government, business, nongovernmental organizations, academia, the military, and media on both sides of the Atlantic. The ACG conducts immersive programs on issues such as agriculture and resource scarcity, manufacturing, and social cohesion to examine challenges facing our societies and to develop possible strategies and collaborative solutions for the future.

Shaping Tomorrow's Leaders

The ACG invests in the future of the transatlantic relationship by helping the next generation of leaders in Germany and the United States learn about this indispensable partnership, exchange best practices, and build networks across the Atlantic. In 2023, the ACG convened the American-German Young Leaders Conference, fellowships, and leadership missions to bring together the next generation of German and American academics, journalists, and other professionals from diverse fields to deepen their understanding about transatlantic issues while forging lasting bonds with one another.

Addressing Global Issues Nationwide – and Beyond

The ACG recognizes the importance of presenting global issues not only to policymakers in Washington, DC, and business leaders in New York but also to decision-makers, practitioners, and the community at large at the local level. Through its online programming, the ACG has reached viewers in all 50 states and all 16 Bundesländer – and in more than 60 countries – for discussions on the most pressing economic, political, and social issues on the transatlantic agenda that in turn affect their communities. The Council remains committed to national outreach through its network of Eric M. Warburg Chapters.

Informing Members and the Community at Large

The Council reaches across generations, sectors, and regional boundaries to inform the community at large. The ACG keeps its alumni, members, and friends informed about important issues shaping the transatlantic partnership through a range of programs and activities. Online programming and regular updates have made the ACG a valued resource for news and information about the transatlantic relationship. Members receive the ACG's news digest with opinion pieces and analysis twice a week.

A Message from the President and CEO

2023 was a very active year for the American Council on Germany.

Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine continued to dominate the headlines – and provided a major focal point for our work throughout the year. At the Munich Security Conference in February, there was a clear sense of solidarity and support for the government in Kyiv among Western partners. This was on display at the four side events organized by the ACG, including a discussion about systemic rivalry with Bundestag members Franziska Brantner (The Greens), Parliamentary State Secretary in the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action; Lars Klingbeil, Co-Chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Germany; and Young Leader alumnus Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, Deputy Chairman of the Free Democratic Party Parliamentary Group; as well as New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy and Senators Angus King and James Risch.

The heinous attack by Hamas on an outdoor concert in Gaza in early October shifted attention to the Middle East – and Germany's special responsibility to support Israel, in the name of Staatsraison.

Germany's response to both conflicts provided a lens through which the ACG looked at German foreign policy. Through in-person events in New York City and at some of our Eric M. Warburg Chapters, as well as virtual events, the ACG hosted experts who shared their insights on the Zeitenwende and Germany's role in addressing global crises – analyzing the complexity of the German responses to developments as they unfolded. Other ACG events focused on a range of issues including the global economy, innovation and technology, and relations with China. Over the course of the year, the ACG held more than 60 virtual discussions and 50 in-person events in New York (many in its new office in Midtown Manhattan), its Warburg Chapters across the United States, and in Germany. More than 175 guest speakers shared their perspectives, and more than 20 leading German and American journalists shared their takes on breaking news and developing stories in our regular "Kaffeepause: What's Abuzz in Berlin" series – which is now available as a podcast.

At our inaugural Richard M. Hunt Memorial Lecture, members and friends heard from journalist and former Editor of *DIE ZEIT* Josef Joffe. Our flagship German-American Conference and American-German Young Leaders Conference brought together current and future thought leaders to look at a range of issues including climate change, the politics of identity, the fragility of democracy, and energy.

In 2023, the Council also organized and implemented seven immersive study tours. These study tours allowed more than 80 German and American professionals to engage in in-depth

discussions about diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility; antisemitism; immigration/migration and integration; access to civic participation and equity of educational opportunities; vocational training and apprenticeships; as well as approaches to sustainable urban development. Perhaps most importantly, these initiatives enabled participants to exchange best practices and share useful knowledge and insights to address common challenges facing communities on both sides of the Atlantic.

Each year as I reflect on what the small team at the ACG accomplished the previous year, I am impressed – and extremely proud. The number of events, their quality, timeliness, and relevance are remarkable. The ACG has served as a valuable source of news and information about the issues shaping the German-American partnership – and the transatlantic relationship more widely.

We are grateful to the many partners who helped us carry out our mission in 2023. We look forward to continuing our work to strengthen the transatlantic partnership in the years to come.

Dr. Steven E. Sokol
President and CEO

April 2024



German-American Conference

At a time of global economic disruptions – together with a poly-crisis in the public-health, environmental, and socioeconomic spheres – the American Council on Germany and Atlantik-Brücke convened their annual German-American Conference on May 1 and 2, 2023, at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. Those gathered looked at the economic challenges of the day – and how international cooperation can both alleviate these challenges and build prosperity. The conference, titled “Global Economic Disruptions and Transatlantic Alliances,” was generously sponsored by Allianz and Deutsche Bank.

ACG Chairman **Ambassador John B. Emerson** and Atlantik-Brücke Chairman **Sigmar Gabriel** opened the conference, recounting the seminal events that had unfolded since the last German-American Conference took place in Washington in 2018. They stressed the importance of coming together in person to examine the current state of German-American relations. In the Opening Keynote on “The Indispensable Partnership,” **Ambassador Emily Haber**, German Ambassador to the United States, called Russia’s invasion of Ukraine “a massive earthquake with tectonic aftershocks” that has effectively ended the post-Cold War era. While the new era we have entered has not yet come into focus, the situation has sparked a renewed sense of Atlanticism, and Germany has changed its approach to burden-sharing.

Panel discussions at the conference addressed the following topics:

- Geopolitics and the Global Economy
- Economic Security and Values-Based Trade
- Globalization and Economic Competitiveness
- At the Nexus of Business, Economics, and Public Policy
- Climate Policy and the Cost of Sustainability
- Crafting a New Global Economic Policy for the Transatlantic Community

Dr. Norbert Röttgen, a member of the Bundestag (CDU), said transatlantic partners must continue to cooperate on our mutual goals of peace, prosperity, and the protection of our planet even in the face of hurdles such as competition or outright aggression from China. Reflecting on the *Zeitenwende* delineated in defense and security policy, **Steffen Kampeter**, CEO of the Confederation of German Employers’ Associations (BDA), called for a similar transition in economic and social affairs in Germany and at the European Union level. Also examined at the conference was the challenge of ensuring economic security while also promoting values-based trade goals – and how governments and the private sector can work together to provide both. In the final session of the conference, ACG Board member **Dr. John Lipsky**, a Senior Fellow at the Foreign Policy Institute at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, said treaty-based multilateral institutions like the International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organization are not effectively addressing issues because of decisions by G20 leaders to create their own policies

based on each crisis. The result has been much less unanimity, like what had existed during the financial crisis, and more calls for reforms to the institutions.

Other speakers and moderators included **Elissa Alben**, Vice President and Head of Global Trade Policy and International Government Relations at Pfizer; **Dr. Emily Blanchard**, Chief Economist for the Under Secretary for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment at the U.S. Department of State; **Emily Kreps**, Managing Director and Head of ESG at Deutsche Bank; **Dr. Philipp Steinberg**, Director General for Economic Stabilization and Energy Security at the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action; **Ludovic Subran**, Chief Economist at Allianz SE; **Friederike von Tiesenhausen**, Global Head of Public Affairs at Bloomberg; and **Hartfrid Wolff**, Department Head at the Federal Ministry of Digitalization and Transportation.

Senator Chris Murphy (D-Connecticut), a member of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and Chairman of the Subcommittee on the Near East, South Asia, Central Asia, and Counterterrorism, concluded the conference with a keynote seconding calls for a strong alliance between Germany and the United States. Unity needs to be harnessed 1) against rising autocracies, 2) in an existential war in Ukraine to maintain the norms we believe should guide our societies, and 3) amid the rise of China.

[Read more about the conference](#)



Jacqueline Ramos, Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs at the U.S. Department of State; Dr. Norbert Röttgen, a member of the Bundestag (CDU); and moderator Ines Pohl, Washington Bureau Chief of Deutsche Welle

(All photo captions are left to right unless otherwise indicated)



Senator Chris Murphy (D-Connecticut), a member of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and Chairman of the Subcommittee on the Near East, South Asia, Central Asia, and Counterterrorism, and ACG Chairman Ambassador John B. Emerson

Eric M. Warburg Chapters Across the United States

The American Council on Germany's Eric M. Warburg Chapters were founded in 1992 to bring government officials, experts, journalists, and other practitioners to communities across the United States to share their perspectives on political, economic, and social issues on the transatlantic agenda. In 2023, the Chapters looked foremost at security issues as the world marked the one-year anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and in light of tensions flaring in the Middle East. They also considered what challenges lie ahead for the German-American partnership. The Council is grateful to the Warburg Chapter Directors who volunteer their time and efforts.

The Chicago Warburg Chapter welcomed **Metin Hakverdi**, a member of the Bundestag (SPD), on February 21 for a discussion and luncheon looking at the war in Ukraine and the *Zeitenwende* one year after the Russian invasion. The event was held in partnership with the University of Chicago International House. In this same vein, the Charlotte Warburg Chapter looked at transatlantic relations around the anniversary of the invasion with **Axel Dittmann**, Deputy Chief of Mission at the German Embassy. The event was held in partnership with the World Affairs Council of Charlotte. The Cleveland Warburg Chapter held a Breakfast Briefing focused on the *Zeitenwende* on April 5 featuring **Dr. Liana Fix**, Fellow for Europe at the Council on Foreign Relations. That event was held in partnership with the Cleveland Council on World Affairs.

The Los Angeles Warburg Chapter took the long view, looking at transatlantic challenges in the decade ahead at a discussion and luncheon on April 13 with Bundestag members **Isabel Cademartori** (SPD), **Matthias David Mieves** (SPD), and **Dr. Lina Seitzl** (SPD). The event was held in partnership with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and hosted by Sidley Austin LLP.

Looking at what challenges may be on the horizon for transatlantic security, **Lieutenant General Ben Hodges**, Senior Advisor at Human Rights First and retired Commanding General of the United States Army Europe, shared his insights with the San Francisco Warburg Chapter at a discussion and reception. The event was held in partnership with the Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung and hosted by Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP on May 15. Lieutenant General Hodges next visited the Los Angeles Warburg Chapter on May 17 for a conversation and reception with ACG Chairman **Ambassador John B. Emerson**, former U.S. Ambassador to Germany and Vice Chairman at Capital Group International. The event was also held in partnership with the Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung.

Two German journalists who are based in the United States – **Majid Sattar**, North America Correspondent for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, and **Juliane Schäuble**, U.S. Correspondent for *Der Tagesspiegel* – shared their insights on the *Deutschlandbild* in America at an event on June 20.

The Denver Warburg Chapter got a close-up look at Germany's new foreign and security policy from **Dr. Steven E. Sokol**, President and CEO of the American Council on Germany, at a discussion and dinner on September 7. The Chapter also held a roundtable discussion looking at "Germany's Foreign Policy Outlook in Times of Crisis and Conflict" with **Ralf Beste**, Director-General for Culture and Society at the German Federal Foreign Office, on November 21. The event was held in partnership with the Denver Council on Foreign Relations.

As 2023 began to draw to a close, two German officials shared their perspectives on the shifting geopolitical landscape. The Philadelphia Warburg Chapter held a Breakfast Briefing with **Michael Georg Link**, Coordinator for Transatlantic Cooperation in the Federal Foreign Office and a member of the Bundestag (FDP), on December 6 looking at German-American cooperation in times of conflict. The event was held in cooperation with the German Society of Pennsylvania. And the Pittsburgh Warburg Chapter met with **Dr. Christian Forwick**, Deputy Director-General for External Economic Relations, Trade Policy, and America in the German Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, to hear his perspectives on the shifting economic landscape at a Breakfast Briefing on December 15. The event was held in partnership with the Pittsburgh Committee on Foreign Relations.

[Read more about the Warburg Chapters](#)



Majid Sattar, North America Correspondent for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*; ACG President and CEO Dr. Steven E. Sokol; and Juliane Schäuble, U.S. Correspondent for *Der Tagesspiegel*

Kaffeepause Series

The American Council on Germany's Kaffeepause Series gives audiences the opportunity to start their workweek with an up-to-the-minute update on political, economic, and social developments in Germany. Each episode of the series – officially titled “Kaffeepause: What’s Abuzz in Berlin?” – features a conversation between a Berlin-based journalist and ACG President and CEO **Dr. Steven E. Sokol**. Speakers give their insights on the developing stories they are following, while also sharing observations on the headlines shaping political discourse. The series was launched in 2021. The themes covered in 2023 included the dynamics of the governing traffic-light coalition, Germany’s support of Ukraine since the Russian invasion, stumbling blocks in the German budgetary

process, and much more. The ACG also offered a Special Edition Kaffeepause on the Polish election with **Ambassador Rolf Nikel**, former German Ambassador to Poland.

Other speakers included **Melanie Amann**, Co-Editor-in-Chief of *Der Spiegel*; **Matthias Deiß** (2008 Young Leader), Deputy Director of ARD’s television studio in Berlin; **Steven Erlanger**, Chief Diplomatic Correspondent in Europe for the *New York Times*; **Sonja Gillert** (2019 Young Leader and 2019 Kellen Fellow), Head of Audio and Podcaster for *Die Welt*; **Brent Goff**, Chief Anchor at DW News and host of “The Day with Brent Goff”; **Miriam Hollstein** (2008 McCloy Fellow in Journalism), Chief Reporter for T-Online in Berlin; **Paul-Anton Krüger**, Parliamentary Correspondent in the Berlin Bureau of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*; **Loveday Morris**, the *Washington Post*’s Berlin Bureau Chief; and **Bojan Pancevski**, Germany Correspondent for the *Wall Street Journal*.

[Each Kaffeepause is released as a podcast. Listen here.](#)

Resilience and Adaptation 2.0 Series

In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, the American Council on Germany joined forces with 1014 Inc. to launch a series of virtual discussions under the heading Resilience and Adaptation, looking at key challenges both countries were facing during the simultaneous public-health, economic, and social-justice crises – with a mind toward forward-looking solutions. Speakers looked at topics such as democracy and democratic institutions, social equity, migration, and more. The series continued in 2023 with three virtual discussions.

On April 5, **Thorsten Benner**, Co-Founder and Director of the Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi) in Berlin, and **Dr. Shannon O’Neil**, Vice President, Deputy Director of Studies, and Nelson and David Rockefeller Senior Fellow for Latin America Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, considered “The Future of Globalization.” On November 16, the labor market was in focus as **Steffen Kampeter**, Chief Executive of the Confederation of German Employers’ Associations (BDA), and **Roberto Suárez Santos**, Secretary-General of the International Organisation of Employers (IOE), discussed “Shifting Skills, Creating Talent, and Remaking the Workforce.” And on December 13, **Ambassador Ertharin Cousin**, CEO and Managing Director of Food Systems for the Future and former Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme, and **Alexander Müller**, Managing Director of TMG Think Tank for Sustainability, discussed “Compounding Crises and Their Collective Impact on Global Food Security.”

Dealing with Disinformation Series

While technology can help societies become more efficient, disinformation has proved to be prevalent on some platforms. Information manipulation has become not only more common but also far more sophisticated in recent years. Domestic and foreign actors alike have been engaging in disinformation campaigns to disrupt democratic processes – and/or generate profit – by intentionally spreading false or misleading information. To analyze the situation, the American Council on Germany and the German Consulate General of New York launched a series of virtual discussions on Dealing with Disinformation. The series looks at how resilient nation-states and indeed the international order are – and what can be done to address disinformation both nationally and globally.

On October 4, the first discussion looked at forms of disinformation, actors, and spheres of influence, informed by the insights of **Lutz Güllner**, Head of Strategic Communications and Information Analysis at the European External Action Service, and **Nina Jankowicz**, Vice President at the Centre for Information Resilience and former Head of the Disinformation Governance Board of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. On October 12, German diplomat and former journalist **Ralf Beste** and **Melissa Fleming**, Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications at the United Nations, discussed the challenge of dealing with disinformation when it threatens to shift democratic processes and/or disrupt international relations. And on December 12, ACG members and friends met virtually with award-winning *New York Times* journalist **Tiffany Hsu** and Correctiv Co-Founder and Publisher **David Schraven** to consider whether societies are defenseless against disinformation.

Discussions in Germany

Leaders convened at the Munich Security Conference in February 2023 as the war in Ukraine raged on and tensions continued to rise with China. The American Council on Germany and the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies held an Official Side Event at the MSC on February 18 to look at the state of the transatlantic partnership not long after a new Congress had taken office. The event – titled “A Rocky Road Ahead? German-American Friendshoring in an Era of Systemic Rivalry” – featured **Franziska Brantner**, Parliamentary State Secretary at the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action and a member of the German Bundestag (Alliance 90/The Greens); **Lars Klingbeil**, Co-Chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Germany; and **Alexander Graf Lambsdorff** (1997 Young Leader), Deputy Chairman of the Free Democratic Party Parliamentary Group, along with New Jersey **Governor Phil Murphy**, former U.S. Ambassador to Germany, and **Senators Angus King** and **James Risch**.

Other events in Germany included a discussion on February 16 on harnessing innovation for national security with the insights of **Courtney Bowman**, Global Director of Privacy and Civil Liberties at Palantir Technologies; **Liesyl Franz**, acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Cyberspace Security in the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy; **Christopher Sharrock**, Vice President of United Nations and International Organisations at Microsoft; and **Ambassador Kurt Volker**, President and Founder of Alliance Strategic Advisors, LLC. Together with KPMG International, the ACG also held a

Breakfast Briefing on February 17 looking at global security issues. **Jane Harman**, Distinguished Fellow and President Emerita of the Wilson Center and former member of Congress, and **Lieutenant General Ben Hodges**, Senior Advisor at Human Rights First and retired Commanding General of the United States Army Europe, shared their perspectives on the situation in Ukraine and beyond. ACG Chairman **Ambassador John B. Emerson**, former U.S. Ambassador to Germany and Vice Chairman at Capital Group International, served as the moderator. And on February 19, the ACG held an event on “The Russian-Ukraine War and European Security: Defense and Deterrence 2023” with **Heather Conley** (2007 Young Leader), President of the German Marshall Fund of the United States; **Mircea Geoană**, NATO Secretary General; **Tobias Lindner**, Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office; and **Oleksii Makeiev**, Ukrainian Ambassador in Berlin. That event was held in partnership with the Aspen Institute Germany, Berlin Dialogue, and the German American Exchange.



Lars Klingbeil, Co-Chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Germany, and Franziska Brantner, Parliamentary State Secretary at the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action and a member of the Bundestag (Alliance 90/The Greens)



Those gathered at the Official Side Event of the Munich Security Conference

Dr. Richard M. Hunt Memorial Lecture and Dinner



The inaugural Dr. Richard M. Hunt Memorial Lecture and Dinner

In 2023, the American Council on Germany inaugurated the Dr. Richard M. Hunt Memorial Lecture and Dinner to pay tribute to its longest-serving President, who had also served as Harvard

University's Marshal and a mentor to many. Dr. Richard M. Hunt was known for his unwavering dedication to the ACG's mission of strengthening transatlantic ties, his wise counsel, his keen knowledge of German-American relations, his faith in younger generations, and his warm, unassuming manner. He was a driving force and an ardent supporter of the Council for 50 years until his passing in 2020.

More than 90 members and friends of the American Council on Germany gathered on September 13 at The University Club in New York City for the inaugural Dr. Richard M. Hunt Memorial Dinner and Lecture – among them his three children, **Helen Bouscaren**, **Susan Hunt Hollingsworth**, and **William Hunt**, along with other family members.

The first Hunt Lecture was delivered by renowned journalist and author **Dr. Josef Joffe**, Professor of International Politics at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. He delved into the complex topic of “Europe’s New Disorder and Germany’s Zeitenwende,” providing an overview of foreign policy and Germany and Europe’s past, present, and future roles in the world. Dr. Joffe said the world needs more leaders like Dr. Hunt – individuals who are committed to liberalism, duty, and love of country.

State-to-State: German-American State Legislator Dialogue

While policy addressing challenges of a global magnitude is traditionally the purview of national governments, political polarization and partisan gridlock have been known to hamper policymaking. On issues where federal legislation has met with limited success, subnational actors such as states, communities, and cities have stepped in to take action. The German-American State Legislator Dialogue was initiated by the American Council on Germany together with the Aspen Institute Germany to focus on the role of state representatives from the United States and Germany in addressing common challenges. In 2023, the series addressed education, structural change in industrial regions, and digital infrastructure.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on education; online learning presented hurdles to students and a teacher shortage worsened. To examine how best to remedy setbacks in learning, five legislators – **Senator Raumesh Akbari** (D) of the Tennessee State Senate, **Representative Edward DeLaney** (D) of the Indiana House of Representatives, **Jochen Ott** (SPD) of the State Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia, **Andreas Sturm** (CDU) of the State Parliament of Baden-Württemberg, and **Representative Steven Ultrino** (D) of the Massachusetts General Court – took part in a virtual discussion on May 31.

At a time when certain industrial sectors have struggled or even faced a near-collapse, the next session of the German-American

State Legislator Dialogue addressed the myriad consequences of this decline. On September 13, structural change and revitalization in post-industrial regions was the topic of a discussion with three German and American state legislators: **Senator Dave Argall** (R) of the Pennsylvania State Senate along with **Wibke Brems** (Alliance 90/The Greens) and **Romina Plonsker** (CDU), both members of the State Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia. The panelists highlighted measures local lawmakers are taking to sustain regions hit hard by post-industrialization – and to ensure that such transformations can be successfully managed in the future.

The third State-to-State Dialogue of the year considered the benefits of digitalization and what steps can be taken to promote the digitalization of government services and administration – not to mention digital literacy and equitable, broad access. The virtual discussion on “Building Digital Infrastructure for Government Services and Administration” took place on November 30 and featured **Ellen Demuth** (CDU) of the State Parliament of Rhineland-Palatinate, **Representative Jennifer Parenti** (2011 Young Leader) (D) of the Colorado General Assembly, and **Senator Bo Watson** (R) of the Tennessee General Assembly.



Dr. Stormy-Annika Mildner, Executive Director of the Aspen Institute Germany; ACG President and CEO Dr. Steven E. Sokol; and Wibke Brems (Alliance 90/The Greens), a member of the State Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia (top row); and Senator Dave Argall (R) of the Pennsylvania State Senate and Romina Plonsker (CDU), also a member of the State Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia (bottom row)

American-German Young Leaders Conference



The 2023 Young Leaders visiting the Reichstag

The American Council on Germany's American-German Young Leaders Conference brings together about 25 Americans and 25 Germans from a variety of backgrounds for one week to analyze political, economic, and social issues on the transatlantic agenda; to exchange perspectives from across disciplines and borders; and to foster a network of transatlanticists who will continue to build on their cooperation and friendships in the long term. 2023 marked the 50th anniversary of the program.

The 43rd Young Leaders Conference took place in Berlin from July 16 to 21, 2023, with the overarching theme of "Global Zeiten-when?" The Young Leaders considered the watershed era German Chancellor Olaf Scholz referred to in his speech on February 27, 2022, and the dynamics of global challenges and German-American relations in the intervening months. Meeting almost a year and a half after Russia invaded Ukraine, about a month after Germany released its inaugural National Security Strategy, and mere days after its first comprehensive Strategy on China was published, the group parsed the nuances of pressing issues of the day and identified priorities for the German-American alliance in the short and long term.

The packed agenda looked at a wide array of topics, including:

- Identity Politics
- Generational Rift
- Agenda at Home and Abroad
- Debt, Dysfunction, and Depopulation: The Future of the Global Economy
- The Fragility of Democracy
- China, Russia, and the West
- An Agenda for Our Time

The group spent a day in the offices of the German Bundestag, toured the Reichstag – including its signature rooftop dome – and visited the Chancellery for briefings. The Young Leaders met

“ Being part of the conference allowed me to take a step back from the daily grind and appreciate the bigger picture we work towards in our jobs. It was also really interesting to learn about the topics the U.S. delegates were thinking about most (China), and how different we approach certain issues (e.g., climate change, through the lens of regulation vs. innovation/industrial policy). All delegates were engaging, intelligent, and just great people – I think many new transatlantic friendships were made during the conference. Last but not least, the conference really made me want to spend some more time in the U.S.”

– **Mirjam Büdenbender** (2023 Young Leader), Senior Advisor for Political Planning and Strategic Foresight at the German Federal Chancellery



The 2023 Young Leaders amid one of many working sessions

with distinguished speakers including **Cem Özdemir** (Alliance 90/The Greens) (2001 Young Leader), Federal Minister for Food and Agriculture, and Bundestag members **Torsten Herbst** (FDP) (2011 Young Leader), **Ottilie Klein** (CDU) (2022 Young Leader), and **Annika Klose** (SPD), along with **Ricarda Lang**, Co-Chair of Alliance 90/The Greens. They met with **Dr. Tobias Lindner**, Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office, along with three State Secretaries: **Hans-Georg Engelke** at the Federal Ministry of the Interior, **Professor Dr. Luise Hölscher** at the Federal Ministry of Finance, and **Dr. Thomas Steffen** at the Federal Ministry of Health. In addition, they had audiences with **Dr. Christian Bluth** of the International Economic Policy Division and **Dominik Bohnen** of the North America Division at the Chancellery; **Steffen Hebestreit**, Secretary of State, Federal Government Spokesperson, and Head of the Press and Information Office of the Federal Government; **Steffen Kampeter**, Chief Executive of the Confederation of German Employers' Associations (BDA); **Lieutenant General Markus Laubenthal**, Deputy Chief of Defense; and **Professor Dr. Jens Weidmann** (2004 Young Leader), Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Commerzbank and former President of the German Bundesbank. They also met with U.S. Ambassador to Germany **Dr. Amy Gutmann**.

The Council is very grateful to the following for their support of the 2023 Young Leaders Conference:

- Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Foundation
- Deutsche Bank
- The German Marshall Fund of the United States
- Mercedes-Benz
- Noerr
- Pfizer
- Victoria Owen Klein Charitable Foundation

The ACG would like to extend great thanks also to the Young Leaders Conference Steering Committee for their tireless efforts: **Dr. Ronald J. Granieri** (2000 Young Leader), Associate Professor of History at the United States Army War College; **Sarmad Hussain** (2005 Young Leader), Director of Government Affairs in the Biotechnology Sector at Arcensus Diagnostics – Biotechnology; and **Edward S. McFadden** (Steering Committee Chairman; 2002 Young Leader and an ACG Board member), SVP for Communications & Marketing at the American Financial Services Association. In addition, special thanks go to **Tizoc Chavez** (2023 Young Leader), Visiting Professor of Government at Colby College, for preparing the conference report. [Read the report here.](#)

The conference is only the first step for Young Leaders; they will go on to connect with other alumni for years to come. Events for Young Leader alumni in 2023 included a discussion and reception with **Professor Dr. Luise Hölscher**, State Secretary at the German Federal Ministry of Finance, on February 7, hosted by Patomak Global Partners, LLC; a reception with **Ambassador Emily Haber**, German Ambassador to the United States, at the German Embassy on May 2; and a discussion and reception with **Thomas Haldenwang**, President of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz), on November 13 hosted by Bayer US LLC.



Professor Dr. Jens Weidmann (2004 Young Leader), Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Commerzbank and former President of the German Bundesbank, and Ines Emde (2023 Young Leader), Specialist in Supervisory Board Management at Commerzbank AG



Cem Özdemir (Alliance 90/The Greens) (2001 Young Leader), German Federal Minister for Food and Agriculture, with William Kimmitt (2023 Young Leader), Partner at Kirkland & Ellis LLP, looking on



The 2023 Young Leaders meeting with Steffen Hebestreit, Secretary of State, Federal Government Spokesperson, and Head of the Press and Information Office of the Federal Government, at the Closing Dinner sponsored by Noerr

Maureen Ahmed
Senior Foreign Affairs Officer
U.S. Department of State
Arlington, VA

Elise Anderson
Attorney – Advisor
U.S. Department
of Commerce
Washington, DC

Megan Andriankaja
Strategy Expert
BASF SE
Ludwigshafen, Germany

Alexander Buchta
Aftersales Customer Pay &
Service Retention Manager
BMW of North America LLC
Rutherford, NJ

Melanie Buser
Environmental
Health Scientist
Centers for Disease Control &
Prevention, Agency for
Toxic Substances
and Disease Registry
Atlanta, GA

Tizoc Chavez
Visiting Professor
of Government
Colby College
Waterville, ME

Jesse Corradi
Managing Director, Africa
U.S. International
Development Finance
Corporation
Washington, DC

Samuel Gage
Principal Scientist
Energetics
Lakewood, CO

Julian Gluck
Major / Chief of Mission
Sustainment and
Director of Staff (A3A),
Air Combat Command
United States Air Force
Newport News, VA

William Kimmitt
Partner
Kirkland & Ellis LLP
Arlington, VA

Peter Mathias
Senior Principal
Alumni Ventures
New York, NY

Alex McFarland
Russian Cultural Advisor
to the Ground Force
Commander in Syria
U.S. Army
Fort Drum, NY

Gleennia Napper
Director, Head of Research
Compliance, Americas
Deutsche Bank Americas
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Chukwudi Nwadiibia
Special Assistant to the
Undersecretary for
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Maria Onorato
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Program Manager
California Governor's Office
of Business & Economic
Development
Sacramento, CA

Adam Philipp
Partner
Cedar Brook Partners
Cleveland, OH

Thomas Quirk
R&D Manager
Sandia National Laboratories
Albuquerque, NM

Chryssa Rask
Vice President
Cerberus Capital
Management, L.P.
Washington, DC

Alexander Rodriguez
Director, Corporate
Public Affairs
Deutsche Post DHL –
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Washington, DC

Kendall Spencer
Attorney
Foley & Lardner LLP
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Kevin Swanson
Legislative Assistant
Office of Senator
Lisa Murkowski
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Aoibheann Thinnis
Stabilization and
Peacekeeping
Policy Officer
U.S. Department of Defense
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Aline Baur

Policy Coordinator
State Representation of
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Anna-Lena Beate

Policy Officer/Legal Expert,
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Christina Bellmann

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Boris Binkowska

Director
Gaully Advisors GmbH
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Mirjam Büdenbender

Senior Advisor, Political
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Ines Emde

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Laura Gier

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Lars Hartmann

Senior Product Manager
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Elgg, Zurich, Switzerland

Maria Jahnen

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Steven Jakstadt

Deputy Head of Liaison Office
MTU Aero Engines AG
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Member of the
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Saskia Pump

Relationship Manager
Corporate Banking
Citigroup Deutschland
Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Hauke Schaack

Program Manager
E-Mobility DACH
Shell Deutschland GmbH
Hamburg, Germany

Stefan Scheller

Personal Advisor
of the President
State Parliament of Hesse
Wiesbaden, Germany

Alexander Taylor-Fowles

Head of Office,
Federal Government
Commissioner for
Human Rights Policy and
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Marie-Louise Wagner

Senior Commercial
Strategy Manager
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Study Tours and Leadership Missions

The American Council on Germany conducts study tours to give practitioners and experts the opportunity to travel across the Atlantic to explore key issues in depth and meet with their professional counterparts to exchange best practices. Each group engages in dialogue with officials, business leaders, journalists, and one another to gain a better understanding of the political, economic, social, and environmental landscape on both sides of the Atlantic.

In 2023, the ACG conducted seven study tours through the following initiatives:

- [Stronger Together Manufacturing Workforce Missions](#)
- [Study Tour on Social Cohesion](#)
- [Leadership Mission on Agriculture Policy and Resource Scarcity](#)

Additional programs were implemented for two external partners: the American Council of Young Political Leaders and the Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness.

Together these study tours allowed more than 80 German and American professionals to engage in nuanced discussions about diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility; immigration/migration and integration; antisemitism; civic participation for marginalized communities; youth development; equity of educational opportunities; workforce development, vocational training, and apprenticeships; and German policy on defense, security, urban development, and climate change.

After the conclusion of each immersive exchange, participants are encouraged to continue their engagement in the issues central to their study tours and to apply lessons learned in their local communities.

2023 also marked the conclusion of the Transatlantic Cities of Tomorrow: Digitalization and the Future of Work initiative. A closing conference brought together the study tour participants to share lessons learned with practitioners and with one another.

[Read more about the study tours](#)

“ I would say that the exposure to how another country pairs industry with education was mind-blowing. Moreover, the experience allowed me to think about the systems and policies in and around my own community that I could impact because of new knowledge learned. Couple the foundational learning with intentional (or unintentional) opportunities to learn a new culture, a new language, a new region, traditions, customs, and more, it changed me in ways that I never thought were possible. I am truly grateful and would encourage anyone else to consider doing the same.”

– **Monica Lawson** (2023 Stronger Together Manufacturing Workforce Mission)
Education Coordinator
MAGNET: Early College Early Career



The American Council of Young Political Leaders delegation and ACG President and CEO Dr. Steven E. Sokol (second from right) at the Residence of John Crosby (fourth from right, back row), U.S. Consul General in Leipzig, who held a Political Salon for them with local politicians from Saxony

Transatlantic Cities of Tomorrow: Digitalization and the Future of Work Closing Conference

The American Council on Germany's Transatlantic Cities of Tomorrow: Digitalization and the Future of Work initiative brought together thought leaders in small and medium-sized cities in Germany and the United States to develop solutions to common challenges related to digitalization. The multi-year exchange was designed to create a sustainable network of decision-makers and practitioners in the participating cities who can learn from and support one another – and together turn these challenges into opportunities for their local workforce and economies. This includes rethinking education and workforce-training needs, fostering entrepreneurship and startup cultures, and making investments in digital and physical infrastructure. Engaging with citizens and community stakeholders is key to this process, as is examining social equity in a rapidly changing environment. The initiative consisted of four separate rounds of reciprocal exchanges visiting each country. The project was funded with generous support from the Transatlantic Program of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany through funds of the European Recovery Program (ERP) of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action.

In order to share the lessons gleaned during the initiative – and to highlight actions that have been or will be implemented in the participants' cities – the ACG brought together not only participants from the entire project but also external audiences for a conference on April 21 and 22, 2023, at the New Jersey Institute of Technology in Newark. More than 50 of the 78 participants in the project took part. On the first evening, New Jersey **Governor Phil Murphy** and **First Lady Tammy Murphy**, an ACG Board member, and NJIT President **Dr. Teik Lim** made remarks and helped set the stage for the gathering.

During the second day, participants from all four rounds of the project met in five breakout sessions to achieve the following goals:

- strengthen connections between program cohorts,
- share information across program cohorts on the themes of the project,
- discuss and identify concrete plans and projects that can be implemented in their communities based on lessons from the project, and
- explore how to sustain the TCT network now that the initiative has drawn to a close.



Participants in the Transatlantic Cities of Tomorrow: Digitalization and the Future of Work initiative gathered at the closing conference



Dr. Kathy Naasz, Vice President of Strategic Partnerships and Entrepreneurship at the New Jersey Innovation Institute at NJIT; Gina Lim and her husband, NJIT President Dr. Teik Lim; New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy and First Lady Tammy Murphy, an ACG Board member; and ACG President and CEO Dr. Steven E. Sokol and ACG Chief Content Officer Rob Fenstermacher



Participants in the Transatlantic Cities of Tomorrow: Digitalization and the Future of Work initiative meeting in breakout sessions

Stronger Together Manufacturing Workforce Missions

“ I strongly recommend this trip to other workforce professionals and manufacturing clients here in the U.S. I have a much better appreciation for the excellence in German manufacturing from our facility tours and candid conversations at every meeting. I have learned that although our countries are very distant from each other, we have many more similarities than differences and I am happy to have made many new acquaintances and friends while on this tour. Trips like these build bridges between nations and make the world a better place for all of us!”

– **Baxter Saucier** (2023 Stronger Together Manufacturing Workforce Mission)
Operations Director
MEP of Louisiana



Members of the June Stronger Together delegation visiting the ABB Training Center in Berlin

The United States currently faces a crisis in manufacturing talent, with open manufacturing positions vastly outnumbering new employees. To address this problem, America Works, a project of MAGNET (The Manufacturing Advocacy and Growth Network), and the American Council on Germany collaborated on two study tours in 2023 for workforce-development professionals across the NIST-MEP National Network. The goal was not only to learn about, explore, and experience firsthand the robust and vibrant dual vocational training system in Germany but also to pave the way for bringing aspects of that system back to American communities and companies. The program is made possible with generous support from the Transatlantic Program of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany through funds of the European Recovery Program (ERP) of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action.

From February 5 to 10, 17 Americans, representing 12 states and 14 Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) centers, visited Munich to see Germany's vocational education up close. They started their trip with a visit to the Chamber of Industry and Commerce for Munich and Upper Bavaria, which provided insight into the dual system of apprenticeship. The cohort then learned how German students are supported in their journey to apprenticeship by hearing from the Munich office of the Federal Employment Agency. The group got a taste for education in action by visiting, among others, the Berufsschule für Fertigungstechnik/Vocational School for Production Technology, Huber Technik's management team, and BMW's training center. The group then traveled to Augsburg to learn about the apprenticeship program from the perspective of students with special needs at the KJF Vocational Training and Youth Assistance Center (KJF BBJZ) Sankt Elisabeth. They explored apprenticeship programs at three institutions, which all emphasized the benefits of the dual apprenticeship program – and highlighted the success one company had in implementing the program in South Korea.

From June 4 to 10, an 18-person delegation of Americans visited Berlin, Leipzig, and Magdeburg. Representing 11 states and 10 MEP centers, as well as the U.S. Department of Defense Manufacturing Technology Program and other partners, the group first met with the Confederation of German Employers' Associations (BDA) in Berlin for an overview of the German dual system of apprenticeship training. Then, at the German Association for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (BVMW) the group had a lively discussion about the association's role in the apprenticeship system, with a specific focus on the interests of SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises, or the German Mittelstand). The cohort then transitioned to the theoretical portion of the dual apprenticeship training at the Georg-Schlesinger-Schule – Vocational School for Machine and Production Technology and Berlin's ABB Training Center. In Leipzig, participants looked at how companies invest in the apprenticeship system and the challenges and opportunities they face. The CEO of Profiroll Technologies, a Mittelstand company, underlined how critical apprenticeships are for the company to recruit and retain skilled workers. The participants compared and contrasted their learnings about small companies by visiting larger firms, including BMW.

Finishing the week in Magdeburg, the group visited the Magdeburg Chamber of Handicrafts' Training Center, where

the cohort learned about Intel Corporation’s extensive new investment to build a semiconductor factory in both Magdeburg and Columbus, Ohio. Over dinner with **Sandra Yvonne Steiger**, Magdeburg’s Deputy Mayor for Economy, Tourism, and Regional Cooperation, the group discussed the expansive new training opportunities in both regions resulting from the factory, as well as new opportunities for collaboration.

Visits to the Mittelstand helmet-making company SCHUBERTH and the Magdeburg Transit Authority provided added insights into the German apprenticeship system. Both organizations shared concerns about the lack of young people joining their workforces.

Transitioning from pure manufacturing to the research behind innovation, the program in Magdeburg included a meeting with the Fraunhofer Institute for Factory Operation and Automation, which helps small and medium-sized manufacturers solve the workforce challenges involved in the transition to Industrie 4.0 and even Industrie 5.0. After the group’s final working session at the Grüne-Zitadelle, the delegation highlighted themes they wanted to explore further and bring back to their home communities.

Both study tours equipped participants with a deeper understanding of how components of the dual apprenticeship program could be implemented in the United States – and how they could help alleviate the manufacturing talent crisis.



Stronger Together delegation members participating in an apprenticeship training exercise at BSH Hausgeräte, which produces Bosch dishwashers



Stronger Together delegation members visiting the BMW Group Plant Munich’s Apprentice Training Center

Study Tour on Social Cohesion

“Participating in the ACG’s Social Cohesion program in 2023 was one of the most impactful experiences of my adult life. As someone who has committed my career to equity and social justice, the opportunity to travel, build relationships, share meals, and build cohesion with my cohort and with the many NGO and government leaders in Germany and the USA helped build my understanding of how social cohesion is the glue that brings diverse people together to co-create a community where everyone can thrive. Policy and services are important, but the emphasis on social cohesion is what will make them sustainable over time. I am personally better and the work that I do is better because of my experience with ACG.”

– **Michaela Doelman** (2023 Study Tour on Social Cohesion),
State Chief Human Resources Officer in the Office
of Financial Management for the State of Washington

The American Council on Germany’s Study Tours on Social Cohesion bring together young German and American professionals to discuss different communities’ approaches to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. In 2023, the ACG conducted two study tours.

The first study tour, to Cologne and Stuttgart from September 3 to 9, brought together 10 Americans and 10 Germans. Having quickly bonded over a common interest in social-justice challenges, the group was prepared for the first stop: the Integrationshaus e.V., a haven for recently arrived immigrants in Germany. The group then visited the Department for Gender and Diversity Management at the University of Cologne to discuss the university’s inclusion and education efforts. They also met with academics analyzing German post-colonialism and Critical Race Theory.

The group was welcomed to Cologne City Hall for a meeting with **Bürgermeister Ralph Elster** and staff from the Department of Integration and Diversity. Mayor Elster discussed how Cologne is one of the most diverse cities in Germany, with approximately 50 percent of the population having a migration background and the largest LGBTQ+ community in the country.

The group visited a range of Cologne’s groups and services, from the LGBTQ+ advocacy organization rubicon e.V. to the NS [National Socialist] Documentation Center of the City of Cologne. In both places, the group learned about Cologne’s troubled past and the steps it is taking to counter extremism to ensure a better future. They also met with the Educational Manager of InterKultur e.V., **Professor Dr. Kemal Bozay**, who discussed the organization’s commitment to social learning and sharing knowledge and resources.

The cohort continued their conversations on diversity and immigration with the Ministry for Social Affairs, Health, and Integration for the State of Baden-Württemberg in Stuttgart, followed by a discussion at the German-American Center. The group also visited the Office for Anti-Discrimination at Work, and had dinner with members of the Black Community Foundation Stuttgart e.V.

Continuing the theme of immigration and acceptance, the group visited the Robert Bosch Stiftung to discuss survey results about Germans’ acceptance of diversity in general, and immigration specifically. The survey found that much work remains to be done regarding Germans’ attitudes toward people with migration backgrounds. The group concluded their last day in Stuttgart with **Rolf Graser**, Founder and Director of Forum der Kulturen Stuttgart e.V., a close partner of the Ministry for Social Affairs, Health, and Integration.

The second study tour took place in Northern Virginia and Chicago from November 5 to 10, bringing 19 professionals working in government, academia, and nonprofits together for a week of meetings, discussions, and museum visits.

Starting the week in Arlington only a month after Hamas’ attack on Israel, the group’s first discussion centered around the recent rise of antisemitism and anti-Muslim sentiments on both sides of the Atlantic. Leaving their conversation with a renewed commitment to social cohesion in light of the war

in Gaza, the group met with Women for Afghan Women and Access 4 All. United by their mission to provide holistic support for Virginians in need, the group learned about the myriad struggles that underprivileged youth and Afghan women face in Virginia – and the services designed to address their needs. The group concluded their first day with a trip to the German Embassy, where they discussed issues including the upcoming U.S. Presidential election.

The next day focused on the Black Virginian experience. The group met with **Takis P. Karantonis**, an Arlington County Board member, to discuss systemic racism and white supremacy, including an extensive report on Black experiences in Northern Virginia called “Deeply Rooted.” The group then went to Alexandria to visit the Freedom House, a newly opened museum focusing on Alexandria’s role in slavery, followed by discussions of contemporary efforts to promote equity. The group also met with the ECDC, a multicultural nonprofit and refugee resettlement agency, to learn about U.S. refugee resettlement and the ECDC’s role in the process. The group concluded the day with a trip to the Black Heritage Museum of Arlington.

The cohort visited the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC, where they spent the day exploring and learning at their own pace. The group then traveled to Chicago, where the American Jewish Committee hosted a breakfast discussion for the group to learn about the AJC’s role in combating the rise of antisemitism in the city,

including a comprehensive survey of Jewish Chicagoans. The group also met with the Executive Director of the Latino Union of Chicago to discuss the organization’s work with low-income immigrant and U.S.-born workers, as well as the complicated relationship the U.S. has with its territory of Puerto Rico. Next the group visited and toured the Gerber/Hart Library and Archives, whose rich book collection captures the varied histories and cultures of LGBTQI+ individuals and communities in the United States, particularly in Chicago and the Midwest.

The group concluded their trip with a day on the South Side, where they learned about community-improvement initiatives promoted by IMAN Central. Of particular emphasis was food deserts, an issue IMAN Central seeks to solve with its Go Green Community Fresh Market.

Whether in Cologne, Stuttgart, Virginia, or Chicago, the ACG’s Study Tour on Social Cohesion allowed participants to explore the issues facing underprivileged communities in Germany and the U.S. Each participant returned home with fresh ideas as well as tried-and-tested wisdom on how to promote justice and social cohesion.



Participants in the Study Tour on Social Cohesion and ACG Senior Program Director Robin Cammarota (second from right) meeting with Freedom Rider and civil rights activist Joan Trumpauer Mulholland at the Black Heritage Museum of Arlington, Virginia

Leadership Mission on Agriculture Policy and Resource Scarcity



Participants in the Leadership Mission on Agriculture Policy and Resource Scarcity on one of many farm visits

For over 40 years, the American Council on Germany has organized transatlantic exchanges on agriculture and food policy to allow practitioners to share ideas and best practices. In late October 2023, the ACG hosted nine young German professionals in a weeklong exchange in the United States. The participants in the ACG's Leadership Mission on Agriculture Policy and Resource Scarcity met with policymakers and practitioners in Washington, DC, and Georgia.

Starting the week in Arlington, Virginia, the trip began with a discussion about agricultural and trade policy, as well as the political climate in the United States. The group went on to Washington, DC, to discuss a variety of topics with the American Farm Bureau Federation, a longtime ACG partner. Following a lunch with alumni of the ACG's agriculture fellowships, the group toured the U.S. Capitol and met with agricultural staff at the German Embassy.

The group traveled to Atlanta for meetings to look at state policy and to visit farms. There the group took part in discussions highlighting Georgia's remarkably diverse farming industry, which makes up approximately 8 percent of the state's GDP. At the Georgia Department of Agriculture, the group discussed some of the outreach the state does with children, then toured the Georgia State Capitol and learned about the state's history. That evening, The Halle Foundation hosted a reception for the delegates, who were joined by German Consul General **Melanie Moltmann** and several ACG alumni. The group toured a poultry lab and an agritourism farm with a fellowship alumnus. That afternoon, the group was invited to go onto the field of Sanford Stadium at the University of Georgia. They then received an in-depth tour of the newly opened Poultry Science Department. Over dinner, the group discussed issues such as climate change and the future of farming.

Following a day of pigskin and poultry, the group visited a greenhouse facility in Colbert and a fertilizer company in Statesboro to learn about state regulations regarding fertilizers and pesticides. Before the day's final meeting, the group stopped to meet **David Cromley**, a sixth-generation peanut farmer. He provided a firsthand account of peanut farming methods and noted the increased value of agricultural lands, which has led many landowners to sell their properties to developers. The participants then toured the Port of Savannah.

The group next traveled to Surrency, Georgia, to visit the Southeastern Gin and Peanut to learn about processing cotton and peanuts, followed by the Great American Cobbler Company for a meeting with **State Senator Russ Goodman** (2022 Agriculture Leadership Mission). A seventh-generation farmer, Senator Goodman is the Chairman of the Agriculture Committee in the State Senate and splits his time between the Senate and his blueberry farm. In addition, **Jessica Bolesta** (2022 Agriculture Leadership Mission), part owner of the Corbett Brothers Farm, provided a tour of one of their bell-pepper farms and packaging facilities. As a final stop that day, the group was invited by owner **Chris Johnson** on a tour of the Georgia Beer Company. He proudly showed off his brews, one of which combined German hops and Georgian blueberries.

Departing the hotel before sunrise, the cohort headed to Poulan, Georgia, for breakfast with **Ricky Dollison** (2022 Agriculture Leadership Mission) on his farm. Joined by his family and farming team, Mr. Dollison talked about his family's history in agriculture and the struggles of being a farmer, particularly a Black farmer, in the South. The group then received a special welcome at Thomson Middle School in Centerville. Some two dozen students of agriculture teacher **Kenneth Ford** (2022 Agriculture Leadership Mission) greeted the group with posters and cheered and proudly displayed some plants they had grown and animals they had raised. As a highlight, the students taught the German cohort how to show pigs for competition, including walking and guiding the pigs. The group was impressed by the level of dedication by the teachers, students, and parents to agriculture and specifically raising animals, as such an educational program does not exist in Germany – but could be beneficial for youth across the country.

At a final dinner, the group reflected on the busy week of meetings and visits. They were able to gain an understanding of agriculture policy in the United States and bring unique experiences back home. Although the crops might differ between the two countries, the challenges remain the same. The new network developed through the Leadership Mission will continue to foster the exchange of innovative ideas between the United States and Germany.

The ACG is grateful for The Halle Foundation's generous support of this program.

Other Study Tours

STUDY TOUR WITH THE AMERICAN COUNCIL OF YOUNG POLITICAL LEADERS

From September 16 to 20, 2023, a delegation of six members of the American Council of Young Political Leaders visited Berlin and Leipzig to get acquainted with German subnational initiatives and meet with German political leaders to discuss issues from trade to sustainability to immigration during a study tour organized by the American Council on Germany. Split evenly along party lines, the participants were united in their eagerness to take lessons from current initiatives in German cities – and from German history – back to their constituencies.

Together with ACYPL CEO **Libby Rosenbaum** (2010 ACG Young Leader), the participants started the week with a walking tour of Berlin-Mitte, followed by an informal dinner with ACG and ACYPL alumni. The group visited Leipzig to meet with political leaders from Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, and Thuringia at the Residence of U.S. Consul General **John Crosby**. After a sustainability-focused biking tour with **Tobias David** (2016 Leadership Mission on Urban Affairs and Sustainability), Assistant to the Mayor of Leipzig, the participants returned to Berlin, where they had a discussion and dinner with Bundestag member **Metin Hakverdi** (SPD).

The cohort also had the opportunity to discuss foreign policy through the lenses of security and trade with government officials and a think tank. German Federal Foreign Office representatives **Dominik Mutter** and **Dr. Regine Grienberger** led discussions on Germany's foreign policy priorities and the hot-button topic of data privacy. The group met with two representatives of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), then had a discussion over dinner with **Jacob Schrot**, Chief of Staff to the Chairman of the CDU Parliamentary Group, and **Johannes Freist-Held**, Chief of Staff to the Chairman of the SPD. Other meeting partners included **Dr. Torsten Kühne**, State Secretary for School Construction and School Digitization, and **Rob Schmitz**, an NPR International Correspondent based in Berlin.

The study tour also looked at other pressing topics. After a discussion with the Deutsche Städte- und Gemeindebund (Office of German Cities and Communities) about the migration-related challenges surrounding sustainability that towns and municipalities face, the cohort met with government and NGO representatives to discuss federalism, antisemitism, prejudice, and the rise of the Alternative for Germany party (AfD). The study tour concluded with a walking tour of Berlin and dinner with government representatives and journalists. Throughout an educational week, the participants learned valuable insights to bring back to their communities across the United States.

STUDY TOUR WITH THE CENTER FOR REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

A delegation of 13 state workforce and training executives visited Bonn, Cologne, and Stuttgart from October 15 to 21, 2023, as part of the Economic Developers' Apprenticeship Learning Academy to gain a keen understanding of Germany's dual education system – and to help identify how U.S. states could emulate the apprenticeship system. This is a project of the Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness in collaboration with the American Council on Germany.

In Germany, around half of secondary education students choose to pursue vocational education and training. The dual system of apprenticeship consists of both theoretical training at vocational schools (25 percent) and practical training at companies (75 percent). In order to get an overview of this approach, the delegation – representing Arizona, Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Virginia, and West Virginia – began by meeting with the German Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung, BIBB). The group then visited various training centers, including the AusbildungsCampus der Handwerkskammer zu Köln and TechnologieCampus, the Werner-von-Siemens-Schule Cologne, and Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University (Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg). Delegates were given the opportunity to interact with trainers and apprentices during these visits to discover more about what motivated these individuals to pursue their trades. The group also met with the Cologne Employment Agency (Agentur für Arbeit Köln), the Cologne Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Industrie- und Handelskammer zu Köln), and IG Metall, one of the largest German unions representing the metal crafts and textiles industries, to gain additional insights about Germany's system. The group went on to tour Porsche's plant and training center; Coperion, a typical German Mittelstand company that produces compounding and extrusion systems; and the Bosch Training Center.



Participants in the Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness study tour visiting the German Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB)

Fellowships

The American Council on Germany offers fellowships to allow American and German journalists, scholars, and other mid-career professionals from across disciplines to travel overseas to conduct research and gain new insights on a topic with implications for transatlantic relations. In addition to gathering information on the ground, fellows often form lasting connections with their transatlantic counterparts. Since 1976, more than 1,100 individuals have broadened their personal and professional horizons under the auspices of the American Council on Germany's fellowship programs. Numerous fellows share their findings in ACG discussions.

MCCLOY FELLOWSHIPS ON GLOBAL TRENDS

The McCloy Fellowships on Global Trends allow young American and German professionals from a variety of sectors to research and assess the most pressing topics on the transatlantic agenda – from climate change and sustainability to technology and digitalization to trade and supply chains – while engaging with their counterparts overseas. Fellows create a program of their own design and decide where to go and whom to meet, with the goal of gaining a nuanced understanding of key policy issues shaping the German-American partnership while promoting better understanding between countries.

Eight McCloy Fellows on Global Trends were selected in 2023. **Steffen Bartschatt**, CEO of Hill88, will research how German Mittelstand companies adapt to digitalization. **Aaron Beitman**, Chief Financial Officer in the Executive Office of Elder Affairs for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, will investigate long-term care systems in German states. **Lina Berg**, International Capacity Coordination Manager for DB Netz AG, will explore how railroads can be used to combat climate change. **Paula Cipierre**, Head of Privacy and Public Policy for Palantir Technologies, researched American



Paula Cipierre (2023 McCloy Fellow on Global Trends) (right), Head of Privacy and Public Policy for Palantir Technologies, sharing her findings at a discussion on "The Implications of the EU's AI Act: A View from Germany" on October 4

perspectives on AI governance. **Stacy Hettmansperger**, Solid Waste Administrator for the Public Works Department of the City of Phoenix, will conduct research on circular economy initiatives to reduce waste. **Andreas Kaiser**, Policy Officer for the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, explored whether LNG trade could help strengthen transatlantic relations. **Dr. Maria Skora**, Research Associate at the Institut für Europäische Politik, will examine how conspiracy movements impact American politics. **Jaylin Stolter**, Community Connections Manager for the City of Thornton, Colorado, plans to investigate food security in low-income communities.

KELLEN FELLOWSHIPS

The Anna-Maria and Stephen M. Kellen Fellowships allow exceptional German journalists who live and work in Berlin to travel to the United States to conduct in-depth reporting on critical issues in the German-American partnership and interview policymakers, opinion leaders, and experts. The fellowships are named in honor of Anna-Maria and Stephen M. Kellen, a Berlin native who was an ACG Board member and Co-Chairman of the New York investment firm Arnhold and S. Bleichroeder Holdings. Two Kellen Fellows were named in 2023. **Yves Bellinghausen**, a freelance journalist and podcaster, will research America's fight against deepfakes and disinformation. **Lena Fielder**, a freelance journalist and author, will explore the industrial culture of the Rust Belt. This program is generously funded by the Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Foundation.

HUNT FELLOWSHIP

The Dr. Richard M. Hunt Fellowship for the Study of German Politics, Society, and Culture was established in 2003 to support the next generation of American academics whose research contributes to the scholarly discourse on contemporary German society and the political, cultural, and social history of Germany. Hunt Fellows undertake archival research, conduct interviews, and meet with their transatlantic counterparts to gain a better understanding of German society. The fellowship is named after former ACG Vice Chairman Dr. Richard M. Hunt, who devoted much of his career as a Harvard University historian to mentoring younger scholars. Dr. Hunt also served as President of the American Council on Germany for 15 years. Selected projects must make a contribution to a better understanding of contemporary Germany in a historical context. One Hunt Fellow was named in 2023. **Liam MacLean**, a Ph.D. student at Northeastern University, will examine and develop a comprehensive picture of the German radical Left in the unsettled period of the 1990s.

[Read more about the fellowships](#)

Policy Discussions

The American Council on Germany's policy discussions – both in person and virtual – give audiences the opportunity to gain perspectives from policymakers, experts, and thought leaders from both sides of the Atlantic on key political, economic, and social issues on the transatlantic agenda.

Over the course of 2023, the ACG held more than 60 virtual discussions and 50 in-person events in New York City, at its Warburg Chapters across the United States, and in Germany. More than 175 speakers shared their expertise, including more than 25 members of the German Bundestag and U.S. Congress and more than 20 leading U.S. and German journalists.

2023 was a seminal year for Germany; the country shared its first comprehensive National Security Strategy and its first comprehensive Strategy on China, along with Feminist Foreign Policy and development strategy. Ukraine remained under attack by Russia, while Germany deepened its commitment to Ukraine, continuing on its trajectory of *Zeitenwende*. Energy costs surged as the nation grappled with ways to accelerate its transition to clean energy. Germany's carbon-dioxide emissions fell to their lowest level since the 1950s, but this was attributed to less coal-fired power and reduced output by energy-intensive industries – leading a study to declare that the decline is unsustainable without changing climate policy. The federal governing traffic-light coalition continued to squabble, and toward the end of the year, the hard-fought budgetary process was upended when the draft budget was found to be unconstitutional. In short, there were innumerable developments up for discussion, among them the following themes.



Bundestag member Metin Hakverdi (SPD)

TRANSATLANTICISM AND GERMANY'S ROLE IN THE WORLD

The ACG hosted various discussions examining Germany's role in a globalized world, particularly since German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's speech in February 2022 announced the *Zeitenwende*. On March 8, the ACG hosted a discussion with **Barbara Mittelhammer**, a Berlin-based independent consultant and political analyst, regarding Germany's adoption of Feminist Foreign Policy and its implications and benefits for both women and men. An April 4 virtual discussion with **Dr. Ali Fathollah-Nejad** (2022 McCloy Fellow on Global Trends), Founder & Director of the Center for Middle East and Global Order (CMEG), centered on the West's relationship with Iran. That same day, the Council held a discussion and luncheon hosted by Microsoft with ACG Board member **Ambassador Christoph Heusgen**, Chairman of the Munich Security Conference. In addition to sharing a global outlook, he outlined approaches the transatlantic community can consider pursuing to bring peace and prosperity.

The ACG featured speakers from across the political spectrum looking at globalism's impact on Germany from an economic and political perspective. On May 9, the ACG hosted a discussion and luncheon with **Michael Kretschmer**, Minister-President (CDU) of the Free State of Saxony, to discuss Saxony's economic development and its close ties to the U.S. – along with the economic benefits of global trade. At a May 30 discussion held in cooperation with 1014 Inc., Bundestag member **Ricarda Lang**, Co-Chair of Alliance 90/The Greens, discussed the rise of far-right politics and anti-democratic voices in Germany – and how these phenomena are tied to outside players, such as Russia, and driven by the war in Ukraine.

On June 1, the ACG hosted a discussion with **Florian Hahn**, a member of the Bundestag (CSU) and Defense Policy Spokesperson for the CDU/CSU, regarding Germany's role during the crisis in Europe resulting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Mr. Hahn discussed strategies for Germany to strengthen its military and proactively defend against further Russian invasions. On June 26, at a discussion held in partnership with 1014 Inc., **Colonel Jörg Dronia**, Commander of the German Armed Forces Command in Reston, Virginia, discussed the importance of transatlantic military and security cooperation in times of crisis.

At a Breakfast Briefing on November 2, held in partnership with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, **Klaus Welle**, Chairman of the Academic Council at the Martens Centre for European Studies (Brussels) and former Secretary-General of the European Parliament, discussed the delicate balance of international cooperation with domestic politics, especially in light of polarization in the U.S. and the rise of China as an economic power.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

2023 was marked by ongoing economic uncertainty and inflation. Germany also continued to grapple with the fallout from turning away from its previous dependence on Russian oil and gas. The nation faced additional hurdles after the Constitutional Court struck down its budget.

At a discussion and breakfast on May 23, **Joseph P. Quinlan**, Senior Fellow at the Foreign Policy Institute at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, shared his insights on “The Transatlantic Economy 2023” – going so far as to say “U.S.-EU trade and investments are Number One.” The event was held in cooperation with the European-American Business Organization. At a Breakfast Briefing on June 9, **Burkhard Balz**, a member of the Executive Board of the Deutsche Bundesbank and a former member of the European Parliament, brought his perspectives on Germany’s economic situation in light of inflation and concerns raised by the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank.

The importance of German-American economic ties was also underlined in a discussion with **Julia Klöckner** (2007 Young Leader), a member of the German Bundestag, Spokeswoman on Economic Policy for the CDU/CSU Parliamentary Group, and a former Federal Minister, on November 1 in cooperation with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. Ms. Klöckner stressed the importance of increasing free trade, decreasing regulation, and countering protectionism to preserve strong economic ties. Another Bundestag member, **Metin Hakverdi** (SPD), chronicled the German budgetary process during a discussion on December 6. In vivid detail, he described the crisis sparked by the Constitutional Court’s decision to strike down a budget that represented nearly a year’s worth of work – and also next steps.

On December 11, recalling economic themes from throughout the year, **Dr. Christian Forwick**, Deputy Director-General for External Economic Relations, Trade Policy, and America in the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, discussed the implications of COVID-19, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, decoupling from China, and climate change for Germany’s economy. Dr. Forwick ended this conversation on a powerful note, emphasizing Germany’s support for Ukraine and the need for a strong U.S.-German relationship to ensure Germany can continue supporting their beleaguered ally.



ACG Board member Ambassador Christoph Heusgen, Chairman of the Munich Security Conference

RELATIONS WITH CHINA

In light of China’s strong economic presence and at times antagonistic relationship with the United States – and with the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment between the European Union and China still unsigned – the ACG hosted several discussions looking at China.

At a discussion and luncheon on March 15, **Dr. Kristin Shi-Kupfer** (2022 McCloy Fellow on Global Trends), Professor of Sinology at the University of Trier, looked at the impact China might have on the transatlantic relationship. The ACG hosted a virtual discussion on March 29 with **Dr. Lily McElwee** (2021 DZ BANK Fellow), a Fellow at the Freeman Chair in China Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, regarding Germany’s internal debate around China in light of the EU-China Investment Agreement.

A virtual discussion on August 8 took a close look at the question of whether to pursue “de-risking” or “de-coupling” with China. The discussion was held with **Dr. Janka Oertel**, Director of the Asia Program and a Senior Policy Fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations. On September 19, the ACG met with **Tobias Lindner**, Minister of State at the German Federal Foreign Office, for a discussion and luncheon on key elements of Germany’s National Security Strategy, as well as the country’s Strategy on China. The autocratic regime in China, as well as in Russia and other nations, was the focus of a discussion with **Thomas Haldenwang**, President of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz), on November 16. He looked in particular at the impact on Western democracies.

CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Programming in the fall was heavily influenced by the tragic October 7 attacks of Hamas on Israel. On October 27, the ACG hosted a discussion with **Steven Erlanger**, Chief Diplomatic Correspondent in Europe for the *New York Times*, and **Dr. Anna Sauerbrey** (2018 Kellen Fellow), Foreign Editor at *DIE ZEIT*, on the sudden polarization and uncertainty created by the attacks. On November 1, the ACG hosted **Professor Dr. Eckart Woertz**, Director of the GIGA Institute for Middle East Studies and Professor for Contemporary History and Politics of the Middle East at the University of Hamburg, for a discussion on the broader implications of the war in Gaza from a German perspective. On November 9, **Vladimir Balzer** (2022 Kellen Fellow), an award-winning journalist, met with ACG members and friends for a virtual discussion about the current situation in the Middle East and dark reminders of Germany’s past. And on December 14, **Stephan Detjen**, Chief Correspondent for Deutschlandradio and Director of the Berlin Studio, discussed the state of German politics in relation to the war in Gaza.

INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

While new technology continued to be integrated into the workplace to boost efficiency, the European Union was putting artificial intelligence under the microscope as it drafted and debated regulation.

The tremendous impact of AI on transatlantic policy and business was the focus of a discussion on June 8 with **Harry Rubin**, Partner and Chair of Technology and IP Transactions at Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel LLP, and **Oliver Süme**, Partner at Fieldfisher and Chair of the Board of eco – Association of the Internet Industry.

As New York City recovered from the haze of Canadian wildfires, the ACG looked at the role green technology is playing in the transatlantic economy. Events on September 19 and 20 in conjunction with the UN General Assembly discussed the role of the Climate Club in making green industry the default business case and financing decarbonization, respectively.

As green technology influences the economics of climate change, artificial intelligence and communications technology have begun to have a profound impact on transatlantic economic relations. On October 4, the ACG hosted a discussion with **Paula Ciperre** (2023 McCloy Fellow on Global Trends), Head of Privacy and Public Policy for Palantir Technologies, to explore the implications of the European Union's proposed AI Act for EU-based companies looking to innovate with this technology. Germany's internal division regarding the proposed act was a main focus of the conversation.

The pros and cons of AI were also considered at a Breakfast Briefing on October 27, when the ACG had a special opportunity to meet with **Dr. Volker Wissing**, German Federal Minister for Digitalization and Transportation and a member of the Bundestag (FDP). He said we must actively shape the future of AI – and anticipate the dangers during its development. He cited estimates that AI could generate an additional 330 billion euros for the German economy and allow employees to save 100 hours per year that could be dedicated to other activities.

The potential of AI was also highlighted in a discussion on November 14, when **Gerard de Melo**, Full Professor at the Hasso Plattner Institute for Digital Engineering and Chair for Artificial Intelligence and Intelligent Systems at the University of Potsdam, looked at ways artificial intelligence can harness creativity. The event was held in partnership with the German Center for Research and Innovation and the Hasso Plattner Institute.

Watch our virtual events



Michael Kretschmer, Minister-President (CDU) of the Free State of Saxony (center)



Julia Klöckner (2007 Young Leader), a member of the German Bundestag, Spokeswoman on Economic Policy for the CDU/CSU Parliamentary Group, and a former Federal Minister, and ACG President and CEO Dr. Steven E. Sokol



Charles B. Mathias (1997 Young Leader), Senior Counsel at Hogan Lovells, and Dr. Volker Wissing, German Federal Minister for Digitalization and Transportation and a member of the German Bundestag (FDP)

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