

25|26



**GOETHE
INSTITUT**

Sprache. Kultur. Deutschland.



75

YEARS
Anniversary
celebrations

NEW SPACES
Sustainable
architecture in Dakar

AMONG FRIENDS
Transatlantic
perspectives



A DJ behind the decks at **KULTURfest** in Lisbon. Across concerts, film screenings, workshops and exhibitions, the festival unites people through music and makes Germany's cultural diversity tangible.



In collaboration with European libraries, the project **Change the Script** saw scenographic experiments created out of books that had been removed from collections. The resulting works were displayed in the library of the Goethe-Institut Athens - the first and oldest Goethe-Institut abroad, established in 1952.

“We want to strengthen our efforts to help skilled workers from Indonesia to come and work in Germany, especially in the healthcare sector. The expanded cooperation between the Goethe-Institut and the Indonesian health ministry is a key step. It shows what is possible when theory goes hand in hand with practical training and language teaching – a win for both countries.”

Federal Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul during his visit to the Health Polytechnic Ministry of Health Jakarta III, August 2025

“The one-year Sasa Nairobi Artist Fellowship at the Goethe-Institut was a formative learning experience that enabled me to reflect critically on my artistic practice in Kenya within a broader global context.”

Joel Lukhovi, visual artist and photographer from Kenya, at the exhibition *The Ties That Bind*, May 2025

“The relationship between Mexico and Germany cannot be reduced to purely economic exchange; it is also sustained by culture. Ever since the first partnerships, the PIAC (Private Initiative for the Promotion of German Culture in Mexico) has supported the Goethe-Institut in Mexico with immense gratitude for its work – in the conviction that corporate engagement with the arts and critical thinking is not philanthropy but rather foresight and historical responsibility.”

Bernd Rohde, President of the PIAC in Mexico

“The Goethe-Institut creates spaces around the world for exchange, dialogue and different perspectives. This work helps us all to better understand one another and to strengthen open societies. In Hungary, too, the Goethe-Institut is a truly invaluable place.”

Julia Gross, German Ambassador to Hungary, during a discussion on press freedom at the Free Media Awards ceremony, January 2026

“The two countries have very close ties. For one thing, there’s still unwavering enthusiasm for German culture, precisely because it’s portrayed as incredibly diverse and complex. ... I’ve never before experienced such intense engagement. That was the case in all three of the countries I had the privilege of visiting. I’m still completely stunned by it. I would like to believe that ‘Goethe’ is ‘Germany’.”

Swiss writer Thomas Meyer on cultural exchange between Germany and Argentina during the Hannah Arendt Days in September 2025

“The inclusion of Deutsch Lehren Lernen has hugely enriched our teacher training programme: we are seeing a marked improvement in our students’ language and didactic level – and how much they value working with the practice-oriented, scientifically grounded material. A real gamechanger for our programme, a clear win for us!”

Professor Lies Sercu from the Linguistics Department at the KU Leuven School of Education, which has been working with the Goethe-Institut on the Deutsch Lehren Lernen (DLL) programme since 2024; the first cohort completed their studies in 2025

THE GOETHE-INSTITUT

We connect people all over the world. As a cultural institution of the Federal Republic of Germany, we promote cultural exchange, education and societal discourse in an international context, and support the teaching and learning of the German language. Together with our partners, we focus on global opportunities and challenges, bringing different perspectives into a dialogue that is based on trust. We regard the ability to listen and to reflect as the key to understanding. We are bound by principles of transparency, diversity and sustainability. These principles characterise our services and our ways of working. ●

154

Goethe-Instituts are active in **100 countries**.

12

of the institutes are in **Germany**.

4.497

employees are active worldwide.

1.100

points of contact are part of our network through collaborations with partner organisations at many locations.

1952

the **first Goethe-Institut** opened in Athens.

Cover image: A group of students in front of the entrance to the Goethe-Institut Schwäbisch Hall in 1975.



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The artist and choreographer **Netta Weiser** explores history and sound in new contexts.



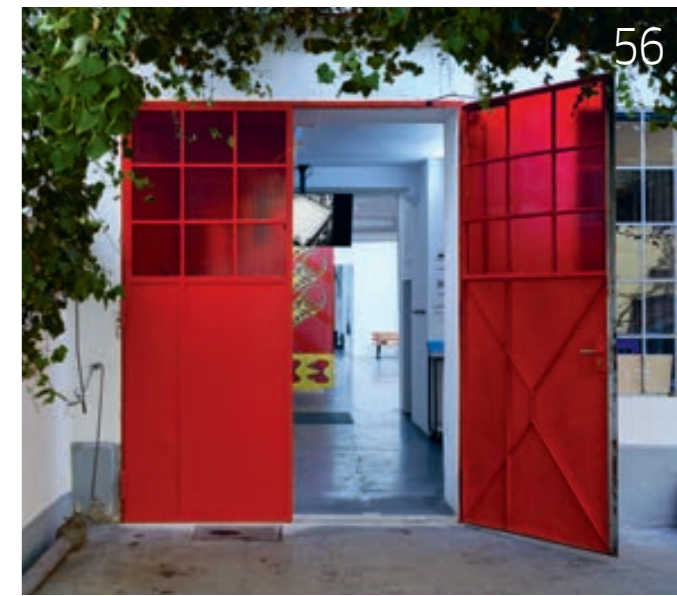
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Opening of the new Goethe-Institut in Dakar. Designed by the architect Francis Kéré, the building represents sustainable construction and cultural exchange.



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A view of the exhibition *Wovon träumen die Unsichtbaren*, from the project **Cosmoperceptions of the Forest** at COP30 in Belém, Brazil.



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The entrance to Lothringer 13 in Munich, which hosted the launch of the project **Antifascism: Now.**

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CRITICAL HOPE AND THE FREEDOM OF ART

During a discussion with young students about the many global crises of our time, someone said: "We need critical hope again." This phrase has stayed with me ever since, because critical hope describes an attitude that can envision alternative futures and make them possible.

The concept combines a sober, even painful analysis of reality with the conviction that a more just future is within reach. In the 1960s, the educator and philosopher Paolo Freire laid the foundations for this in Brazil with his efforts to raise political consciousness – he popularised the term "critical consciousness" – and to combat oppression in Latin America. Back then, he brought an unflinching eye to structural inequality, never glossing over or concealing what he saw. This stood in productive tension to hope, which showed that through collective action and solidarity, change is possible.

Today, in Germany, an analysis of the current situation also appears bleak. The concept of the West, transatlantic friendship, rapprochement with Russia and the resolution of the conflict in the Middle East – all that is now a distant vision. There is no longer a global movement for democracy. And it is not only global politics that is marked by upheaval: in Germany, too, debates are increasingly polarised. In recent months, the freedom of art has come under growing pressure. Disputes continue to flare up over the question of what can be expressed and where lines have to be drawn. These lines must be considered carefully, because even harsh critique of our politics must remain possible. This requires open and honest debate, which is currently absent. We must not allow the upheaval we are witnessing to make us fearful as a society, exerting more control over art and culture in an attempt to somehow keep change at bay.

Critical hope, in this context, means analysing the power shifts and ruptures in the rules-based order and collectively considering the question: what will the consequences be for our country, our society, for Europe? The Goethe-Institut's work is becoming more political; the contribution we make to freedom,

wellbeing and security is sought after. Hope means developing alternative futures that are speculative, experimental, courageous and radical. This is what the Goethe-Institut's global network is committed to. The tools at our disposal are art, culture and language, which connect people around the world. For this, we need the freedom of art, the freedom of culture and the freedom of expression. Democracy thrives when these freedoms are strong.

At the Goethe-Institut Toronto, for example, the re-opening minds programme imagines radical new democracies that fuse art and science. These are contributions to freedom. In the new institute in Chişinău, the EU's joint initiatives and cultural projects pave the way to Europe. In Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, the focus is on the Vietnamese diaspora and the history of Vietnamese migration to Germany. Today, too, skilled workers from Vietnam are coming to Germany; we help them to prepare for the move with our language and cultural work, and they contribute to the prosperity of both countries.

This past year, more than 250,000 people learned German with the Goethe-Institut. In doing so they helped to foster mutual understanding, sharing part of our culture and getting to know this country.

As the Goethe-Institut, we too must be courageous and open to change, helping shape it. This we can accomplish as a network for critical hope, which we so urgently need in these turbulent times.

Gesche Joost
President

75 YEARS OF COMMUNICATING WITH THE WORLD

The 9th of August 1951 was a sunny day with a few clouds in the sky, around 25 degrees. Bavarian beer garden weather. "Kaiser's weather", as they say in Munich. On this day, the "Goethe-Institute. V. for the training of international German language teachers" was created from the remnants of the Deutsche Akademie, which had become an organ of the National Socialist state. Could the founders who sat together back then in Munich have possibly imagined how their Goethe-Institut would evolve over the next 75 years?

To summarise: it began with training teachers at idyllic Bavarian locations like Bad Reichenhall, Kochel and Murnau. As early as 1952, the first Goethe-Institut abroad was opened in Athens. The aim was to bring the new democratic Federal Republic, and its culture and language, back into the fold of the international community. In 1963, the 100th Goethe-Institut was established in Algiers, and in 1969, the Federal Foreign Office and the Goethe-Institut signed their first cooperation agreement. It entrusted the Goethe-Institut with the task, to be carried out independently, of promoting the German language and international cultural exchange and of providing information about Germany.

In the 1970s, Willy Brandt described foreign cultural policy as the third pillar of foreign policy. Cultural dialogue instead of a one-way-street; interactive German lessons instead of a didactic, teacher-centred approach; cooperation instead of self-promotion; respect for other cultures instead of hubris – numerous principles we have to thank for the Goethe-Institut's worldwide success originated here and continued to develop over the following decades. Today our motto is "Communicating with the world. For diversity, understanding and trust."

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, new institutes and networks formed in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Following September 11, dialogue with the Islamic world, and later with Africa, too, took on new importance. Russia's attack on Ukraine, the conflict in the Middle East, shifting transatlantic relations and the shortage of skilled workers are just some of the issues reflected in the Goethe-Institut's work today.

The Goethe-Institut is deeply anchored in the society, the culture and the educational landscape of the Federal Republic. On these strong foundations, as part of Germany's foreign policy, it has been meeting global challenges for the past 75 years with the utmost dedication and ingenuity. It is doing so today – and it will continue to do so in the future!

Would the founding fathers and mothers, on that sunny summer's day in Munich 75 years ago, have ever imagined that the Goethe-Institut would today be one of our country's largest cultural institutions, with more than 4,000 staff across 154 locations in 100 countries? That it would enjoy a global reputation as a brand that stands for an open-minded and modern Germany? That it would have countless partners, at home and abroad, across the fields of culture, education, society, the economy and politics, and more than seven million followers worldwide on social media? That as a global network it anchors our country in societies around the world, ensuring robust relations even in times of crisis?

The founding of such a large international organisation would, one imagines, have been a momentous occasion. Surely afterwards our founders would have sought out a shady Munich beer garden, ordered glasses of beer and enthusiastically toasted their creation.

And so we ask you, dear readers of this report, to raise a glass with us to the health and future of the wonderful Goethe-Institut!

Johannes Ebert
Secretary General

Doreen Kirmse
Business Director

FAREWELLS AND FRESH STARTS

From new institutes to global crises, from major reforms to quiet moments of reflection: Johannes Ebert looks back on nearly fifteen years as Secretary General and forward to the future of international dialogue.

An editorial by Johannes Ebert

Fifteen years of my professional life have been spent between Munich and Mexico, Weimar and Windhoek, Kyoto and Cape Town. These were years characterised by conversations, negotiations, moments on stage, hopes – and the quiet certainty that the work of culture and cultural exchange is never over. Now, as my tenure as Secretary General of the Goethe-Institut comes to an end, one surprisingly simple, yet challenging question remains: how to summarise the last fifteen years of Germany's largest cultural organisation in one editorial? How to capture everything this institution has done – how it has continually reinvented itself over the years and hosted more than 600,000 events sharing culture, language and information – in a few pages?

WHERE TO BEGIN A RETROSPECTIVE?

With the outstanding programmes that I had the privilege of experiencing? With the Year of Germany initiatives in the USA, India and Mexico, the artist residencies in Istanbul, Kyoto and Salvador da Bahia, the Kultursymposium Weimar, the Internationale Deutscholympiade or the Goethe-Institut in Exile?

Do you start with the encounters with people from the spheres of culture, politics, business and civil society on every continent – some of which are pictured in this annual report – or with the founding of new institutes in Myanmar, Namibia, Saudi Arabia, Armenia and beyond, signs of our growing network in an unstable world?

Or do you begin by talking about the crises we have faced, starting with the allegation that Goethe-Institut teachers in Germany were falsely classified as freelancers, which occupied us

from 2017 until it was resolved three years later? By talking about the COVID-19 pandemic and the unimaginable efforts it required globally, or about Russia's attack on Ukraine, the political and financial effects of which are still being felt today? Or the escalation in the Middle East, which is putting extreme pressure on our staff in the region and further fuelling debates in Germany?

Then there are the everyday challenges of our work: economic instability in many countries, restrictions on culture and civil society, and finally the most painful losses: the death of our colleague Henrike Grohs in the 2016 terror attack in Côte d'Ivoire. The killing of long-serving teacher Nawal Yassine during the incursion on South Lebanon in early April this year.

HOW DO YOU PUT NEARLY FIFTEEN YEARS INTO WORDS?

What does a person do when they don't know what to do next? They turn to artificial intelligence. "Idea for a starting point (developed with Copilot)" – this was the title of the document kindly handed to me by my colleague after I came to her for help. The machine proved generous, giving me several possible starting points, each of them plausible, well-crafted and surprisingly apt.

I opted for three of them – not simply copying them but elaborating in my own words what the headings might point at.



A selfie of President Gesche Joost, General Secretary Johannes Ebert and former Business Director Rainer Pollack at the **2025 Globale Arbeitsbesprechung in Munich**, a gathering of 225 Goethe-Institut managers from around the globe.

STARTING POINT: VALUES

"Communicating with the world. For diversity, understanding and trust" – this is the Goethe-Institut's vision. We stand for democratic values, for freedom of opinion and the freedom of art; something that sounds simple but is often put to the test in local contexts, as the global democratic order – and with it, cultural scenes – comes under pressure. Wherever free spaces are becoming more constrained, our institutes often function as more than just sites of learning and engagement with Germany; they become places for open debate, critical artistic expression and freedom as a lived practice.

At the same time, another challenge looms: how to deal with the increasing ambivalence and scepticism towards liberal values, even in democratic societies. If we are to avoid polarisation leading to silence, we need dialogue precisely when differences seem irreconcilable. Working to stay in conversation is a central task for the future.

That it succeeds is thanks to a special feature of German foreign cultural and education policy: the intermediary principle. Legally independent organisations act autonomously, with the trust of policymakers but institutional distance from them. This principle is grounded in history – a lesson learned from the commandeering of culture for the purposes of the Nazi dictatorship – and today forms the cornerstone of our credibility internationally. Working "at arm's length" fosters trust, and trust is the most valuable asset for successful foreign policy.

There is a temptation to reduce this distance, particularly in moments of crisis. That would be a mistake. Operating effectively in a multipolar world is not about prescription or publicity, but about genuine dialogue, long-standing cooperation and independent professional conduct. The more scope the government grants, the more effective intermediary organisations can be in using their experience to benefit Germany.



Johannes Ebert at the **2025 Summer Festival of the Tarabya Cultural Academy**, a residency programme for artists from various disciplines. The academy was founded by the German Federal Government in 2011 to support artistic exchange between Türkiye and Germany.

STARTING POINT: A KEY QUESTION

“What does ‘capacity for action’ mean?” This AI-authored question strikes at the heart of the matter, because securing the Goethe-Institut’s capacity for action has been the central goal of the transformation processes of the past four years. Faced with global crises and budgetary constraints, in 2022 the Goethe-Institut’s Executive Committee decided on comprehensive reforms and entered into a strategic dialogue with the Foreign Office in autumn, in tandem with the Bundestag. The Board of Trustees approved the strategy in 2023.

The aim of the reforms was to strengthen the Goethe-Institut structurally and to reduce financial pressure. This was achieved by reducing overheads by about 10 percent of the institute’s state subsidy and systematically reallocating funds to cultural, language and information work. New event series and Goethe-Institut branches were also established in culturally and politically relevant locations.

This process is for the most part successfully complete. Our network has been restructured: some institutes have been closed – those were difficult decisions – and several smaller offices have



Johannes Ebert on a visit to Senegal in March 2019, where plans for the **new Goethe-Institut building in Dakar** were discussed with architect Francis Kéré, Regional Director Philipp Küppers and Serigne Mbaye, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Urban Development.

“Our institutes often function as more than just sites of learning and engagement with Germany; they become places for open debate, critical artistic expression and freedom as a lived practice.”

been opened, for example, in Yerevan, Houston and Chişinău; other branches are planned. The European regions have been merged, and language courses and exams have been financially restructured; with their record numbers, they play a crucial role in balancing the books. The head office in Munich has a new, more service-oriented structure; jobs have been cut in a socially responsible manner. The digitalisation of our internal processes continues, and the introduction of SAP S/4HANA will constitute another important milestone.

Despite measurable reductions in costs, the situation remains delicate. Cuts to institutional budgets during the transformation mitigated some of the successes; meanwhile, costs are increasing worldwide. The question of our capacity to act thus remains timely – but with its new structure, the Goethe-Institut is confidently facing these challenges head-on.

STARTING POINT: THE ANNUAL REPORT ITSELF

Looking back, taking a snapshot, introducing the organisation, providing information, giving thanks, and looking to the future – this is the yearbook of the Goethe-Institut. On fifteen occasions I have worked with the Communications Department to define the key themes of this publication, collaborated with the Business Directors on the Executive Board’s foreword and wrote editorials as its Chair. The yearbook also serves, of course, as an annual report which the Executive Board submits to the supervisory bodies of the Goethe-Institut e.V.: the General Assembly and the Board of Trustees.

In 2026, the 75th anniversary of the Goethe-Institut takes centre stage: 75 years of dialogue, exchange and engagement with the world as representatives of Germany and as part of its foreign cultural and education policy – a remarkable success story.

In this edition, several articles on international cultural exchange showcase the diversity and impact of cooperation in the culture sphere, exemplified by the EU-funded projects in Africa. They point to a trend that is reflected in the figures: since 2012, the percentage of EU funding awarded to the Goethe-Institut has continually increased, from almost zero to nearly €28 million in

2025. Other texts highlight the centrality of our language and intercultural literacy offers in supporting skilled workers to come to Germany.

I am particularly pleased to see the article about the opening of the architecturally innovative new Goethe-Institut in Dakar this year. I will never forget the moment I first stood on the site with architect Francis Kéré in March 2019, under the Baobab tree, and we imagined how the building might look. The theme of looking to the future is continued in articles on artificial intelligence and what it means for language learning, for our society and for the Goethe-Institut as an organisation.

This year’s report showcases the breadth of the work through which the Goethe-Institut facilitates global exchange and contributes to Germany’s reputation worldwide. It also makes visible the people who do this work: the members of our advisory bodies and boards, the artists and experts, as well as our partners from the organisations and businesses with whom we collaborate. I want to express my sincere admiration for them. My special thanks goes to our staff across the world – they are the backbone of our organisation, enabling us to deliver our services, and the reason for the trust our institution enjoys.

In autumn 2026, I will assume the directorship of the Goethe-Institut Athens and the Europe I region. I am very much looking forward to it. To be working abroad again – where the core work of the Goethe-Institut happens – after nearly fifteen years at the head office in Munich, is a great privilege. ●



Johannes Ebert has been Secretary General and Chair of the Executive Board of the Goethe-Institut since 2012.

WHEN DAILY LIFE IS ANYTHING BUT NORMAL

In times of growing geopolitical tensions, the Goethe-Institut faces particular challenges in fulfilling its specific mission. How can we work together when daily life is shaped by uncertainty, war and crisis? And what roles can dialogue, solidarity and institutions play in such circumstances? A conversation with Lilli Kobler, Regional Director for North Africa and the Middle East, about the current situation and the work of the Goethe-Instituts in the region.



This must be difficult to answer in a few words, but what is the situation on the ground in the region? How are the Goethe-Institut's staff doing?

It varies greatly between countries and it is difficult to make comparisons. But if you look at the general conditions in which they are operating, our colleagues in the region are, understandably, not doing well. In many places, daily life has become anything but normal and is taking a toll on people – including our staff, partners and those who use our services.

Are the institutes directly affected by the war?

Absolutely. As things stand, we have no representatives in Lebanon or in Iraq; it is not possible to conduct regular work. In Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Ramallah, the situation remains extremely difficult and volatile. One of our members of staff is still living with his family in Gaza – living, or should I say “surviving”. In Amman, too, things are very challenging, while the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia are facing an unprecedentedly tense situation. And then there are the horrific wars in Sudan

and Yemen, as well as the grave circumstances in Libya and Syria. In many places, life is marred by violence, trauma, loss and immense human suffering. One of our teachers was killed by an Israeli attack during the recent escalation in South Lebanon, and an employee was wounded. There has also been damage to Goethe-Institut buildings in Tel Aviv and Beirut. In many places, air raid sirens are a daily occurrence. Some institutes have closed and are operating online, while others are operating on a limited basis. That work continues at all under such conditions is impressive. Still, the exhaustion is palpable. It is important to acknowledge and accept that.

And yet, under pressing circumstances, services continue: from cultural programmes to language courses and exams. Often these provide people with structure and a new outlook, even when the future remains uncertain.

What keeps employees going at the moment?

We as employees have no way of influencing these wars. We must bear their destructive force. But we can stick by each other as we do so, look out for each other, listen to one another and seek support. That's why we are trying regionally, in our local teams and as

an institution, to provide opportunities and spaces for engagement. Some days, it is simply not enough. There is a noticeable frustration and a certain helplessness, as well as a grasping for answers and a tension between different positions in discussions and in the political sphere that is overwhelming – for us, for our customers and partners and also within our projects. It requires a great deal of time, trust and perseverance.

As Regional Director, how do you handle these tough operating conditions?

I live in Cairo, so I am not exposed to any combat or crisis situations. That enables me to maintain even closer contact with affected colleagues. At the same time, I personally find it very difficult to accept that there is so little I can do to counter the suffering and the escalation of the war. What I am describing here is nothing new. But since October 2023, the situation in many countries has deteriorated further still.

Is there still interest in our cultural programmes, given the current context?

Culture remains a vital part of society – even in periods of rupture, crisis and war. We see that everywhere, including in our region, even when daily life is a matter of survival and trauma often curtails creative endeavour. Especially in times like these, it is important to create space for culture and cooperation, dialogue and exchange, also out of the spotlight; that is what characterises us as an institution.

We have had a presence in most countries in the area for decades and we have built strong networks of trust. In recent years and months these bonds have been tested, as our partners in the cultural sphere, as well as large swathes of civil society in the region, perceive Germany as having an overly one-sided position towards Israel. Though they condemn Hamas's attack and have understanding for Germany's historical responsibility, they criticise the country's position in the face of the immeasurable suffering in Gaza and beyond.

Moreover, the increasing polarisation in German discourse is hard for them to comprehend. There are partners and artists, too, who do not want to work with German institutions at the moment. Remaining in conversation anyway and truly listening, enabling the sharing of different perspectives, staying with the complexity – that is difficult, but it is our task. We provide opportunities for this, and they are taken up. It is important to acknowledge the suffering on all sides and to give a platform to a range of differing positions and voices, even when this is really challenging for cultural work.

Which cultural event has personally spoken to you or touched you the most?

A lot of impressive work has emerged amid difficult circumstances, to the huge credit of our colleagues. The regional project Un|Controlled Gestures particularly moved me. In it, young choreographers in residency in Cairo and Germany developed contemporary dance practices that grapple with personal and collective memories. A fourth edition was presented at HAU Hebbel am Ufer, an independent theatre in Berlin, in 2026. It featured really moving performances from the region that give an emotional and

physical embodiment to so much that goes unsaid, enabling dialogue without words. Sometimes that can convey so much more. It really touches you deeply.

“Culture remains a vital part of society – even in periods of rupture, crisis and war.”

And what about language courses? Do people still want to learn languages in times like these?

The simple answer is yes. For one thing, the desire to migrate to Germany, whether to pursue higher education or as a skilled worker, remains as strong as ever – sometimes even stronger precisely because of the dire situation in people's home countries. Due to the security situation, with closed borders and airspace, we are not always able to meet demand, however.

What gives you hope right now? What keeps you going?

The people around me give me strength and inspiration, particularly when it is hard to keep going. So does the thought that one day, this region can live in peace again. Abandoning this hope is not an option for me, even when it isn't always easy to maintain in daily life. Our work also sustains me – the individual projects and the sense of community. Witnessing how our colleagues and partners endeavour to find a path forward together, to develop projects and give artists and stories from the region a voice and foster new perspectives in these difficult times. Perhaps this is the key: that, despite everything, we hold on to the belief that change is always possible and all of us can have a hand in it. ●



The interview took place in May 2026 and was conducted by Katrin Sohns, Head of Strategic Communications, Media and Policy at the Goethe-Institut.

NEWS FROM THE GOETHE-INSTITUT



DOREEN KIRMSE IS THE NEW BUSINESS DIRECTOR OF THE GOETHE-INSTITUT

Since January 2026, Doreen Kirmse has been Business Director of the Goethe-Institut. Prior to this, she was Chancellor of the Stuttgart Technical University of Applied Sciences. Her previous roles include Vice President of the Leibniz Association and Business Director of the Leibniz Institute for Solid State and Materials Research in Dresden. Doreen Kirmse began her career as a lawyer in Frankfurt/Main, specialising in taxation, association and foundation law.

How did you experience the first few months in your new role?

The first months were both, very intensive and extremely constructive. The focus has been on getting to know my new colleagues, as well as the different areas of work, regions and institutes. I find it very exciting and motivating to experience and help shape the breadth of what the Goethe-Institut does as a globally active cultural organisation. Open communication, the high level of professional expertise and the great readiness to contribute are what distinguish the work at the Goethe-Institut.

Which aspects of the work are you most looking forward to?

I am looking forward to working with my colleagues at the Goethe-Institutes and at the head office. There are lots of good ideas about how we can equip the Goethe-Institut for the future together, and I'm keen to have these conversations. Together, we can meet the coming challenges. I am convinced that through its cultural and language work, the Goethe-Institut plays a very important role in international exchange and promotes mutual understanding. I want to actively contribute to this.

What do you see as the greatest challenges, and how do you plan to handle them?

One key challenge is the simultaneous implementation of several comprehensive change processes. In particular, the Digital Administration project (the introduction of SAP S/4HANA) should not be viewed merely as an IT project; it requires a shared understanding of standardisation, new roles and modified working methods. I am approaching this with a clear focus on transparency and involving process partners early on, as well as realistic time and resource planning. Training, ongoing communication and close coordination between the head office and the regions will be key factors for success here.



NEW LOCATIONS IN HOUSTON AND CHIȘINĂU

In October 2025, the Goethe-Institut opened a branch in Houston, which is strengthening cultural dialogue with young Americans and paving the way for exchange and partnerships with its Among Friends programme. In early 2026 a new institute was established in Chișinău, Moldova, which will support local initiatives, promote civil society and assist European integration and transformation processes.



CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP

The Goethe-Institut is about to see a change of leadership: after almost fifteen years at the helm of the organisation, Johannes Ebert will take on a new role in the Goethe-Institut's international network in summer 2026 and has therefore decided to step down from his role as Secretary General. On 18th July 2026 he will be succeeded by Gitte Zschoch, who has been Secretary General of the ifa - Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen since October 2021. From 2018 to 2021, Gitte Zschoch was President of EUNIC, the Brussels-based network of national European cultural institutions. Prior to this, she held various positions at the Goethe-Institut, which she joined in 2009.



OPEN DAY IN KYIV

In September 2025, the Goethe-Institut Ukraine hosted its first Open Day since the pandemic and the start of the war. Around 700 visitors took the opportunity to explore the new location and celebrate the return of in-person courses - despite a 40-minute air raid siren. Each department gave a short presentation of their services, ranging from language courses and the library to cultural programmes and European partnerships, as well as activities for children and young people. To conclude, there was an outdoor silent film screening with live music and a DJ set.

75 years of understanding, diversity and trust. The Goethe-Institut celebrates its anniversary.

TRANSFORMATION IN MUNICH

Since January 2026, the Goethe-Institut head office has been operating under a new organisational structure. This marks the completion of the main phases of the transformation: the network and the regional structure have been streamlined and new institutes opened in key geopolitical locations. With this comprehensive reform, the Goethe-Institut is positioning itself for the future in view of global challenges and budgetary constraints. Some measures - specifically in the area of digitalisation - are planned to continue until 2027.

MEANINGFUL ENCOUNTERS

In March 2012, Johannes Ebert succeeded Hans-Georg Knopp as Secretary-General of the Goethe-Institut. The photo series looks back on defining moments of his tenure and the encounters along the way.



The interactive installation **"Disappearing Wall"** in Berlin in November 2021, featuring (from left to right) Michelle Müntefering, Claudia Roth and Johannes Ebert. Comprising around 6,000 small wooden blocks, the wall brings together quotations from high and popular culture, making Europe's diversity tangible.



Johannes Ebert at the **opening of the exhibition "Take Me to the River"** in November 2021 at Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin. The exhibition formed part of the Goethe-Institut's 70th anniversary celebrations.



Johannes Ebert and Serap Güler, Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office, at the summer festival of the **Tarabya Cultural Academy** in Istanbul in June 2025.



At the **Germany Year in Mexico 2017**, Johannes Ebert presents Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel and Rudolf de Baey, then Director of the Goethe-Institut Mexico, with the Goethe Info Container from the pop-up tour, which hosted, among other things, German language courses, electronic music and workshops.



Handover of office from Secretary-General Hans-Georg Knopp to Johannes Ebert in January 2012.



Presentation of the **Goethe Medal 2022 in Weimar**: Johannes Ebert together with (from left to right) Rainer Pollack, former Commercial Director of the Goethe-Institut, Carola Lentz, former President of the Goethe-Institut, and Annalena Baerbock, former Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany.



Frank-Walter Steinmeier **visiting the Goethe-Institut** in July 2016: together with Klaus-Dieter Lehmann, then President of the Goethe-Institut, and Johannes Ebert, he discussed issues relating to Germany's foreign cultural policy.

PRESS REVIEW

DEUTSCHE WELLE NEW BUILDING IN SENEGAL

From the article "Neues Goethe-Institut in Dakar eröffnet" by Susanne Lenz-Gleißner, 21.04.2026

"Encircling an ancient baobab tree, the Goethe-Institut creates an open space for music and art, education and dialogue. A place that symbolises respect for local traditions and the courage of global visions."

RADIO 3 MUNICH SECURITY CONFERENCE

From Frank Meyer's interview with Johannes Ebert, "Goethe-Institut diskutiert über Kultur und Reputation", 12.02.2026

"We have to make it clear in the context of security policy that cultural exchange plays an important role. That's why we attended the Munich Security Conference, which focuses on integrated security. We also see a role there for international cultural and educational exchange."

TAGESSPIEGEL ART STRENGTHENS DEMOCRACY

From the article "'Antifascism: Now': Mit den Mitteln der Kunst für Demokratie" by Gabi Czöppan, 06.02.2026

"Munich is kicking things off in collaboration with the Goethe-Institut; curator and artist Kalas Liebfried wants to take the term 'antifascism' out of its political niche and 'put it at the centre of society', he says – not as a slogan, but as praxis."

KOMPAS.ID AN ART FESTIVAL IN INDONESIA

From the article "Dealing in Distance – ein Festival voller Abwechslung" by Dwi Bayu Radius, 05.02.2026

"The multi-dimensional art event Dealing in Distance turns the traditional exhibition space on its head, dissolving the spatial boundaries for presenting artworks. ... Here the Goethe-Institut, as a German cultural organisation, demonstrates its particular flexibility by designing a festival that adapts to the features of its location."

TAZ – DIE TAGESZEITUNG UKRAINIAN ARTISTS IN BERLIN

From the article "Warten auf Gott und das Ende des Krieges" by Beate Scheder and Julian Weber, 02.02.2026

"Under the slogan 'Disturbed Ground' and thanks to the curatorial work of the Kyiv club K 42 and the support of the Goethe-Institut, Ukrainian artists travelled to Berlin. Their commissioned work centred on how the Russian war of aggression is affecting nature."

DPA DEUTSCHE PRESSE-AGENTUR TOGETHER FOR EUROPE

From the article "Goethe-Institut will europäische Zusammenarbeit stärken", 26.01.2026

"The Goethe-Institut plans to place greater emphasis on cooperation with European allies. Freedom is a central benchmark of the institute's work, President Gesche Joost said at a press conference in Berlin."

WDR 3 NEW INSTITUTE IN MOLDOVA

From the report "Neuer Standort in der Republik Moldau", 18.01.2026

"The Goethe-Institut has opened a new institute in Moldova. In doing so, the institute is sending a signal for cultural cooperation and strengthening European integration and civil society. As well as Moldovan-German initiatives and local cultural workers, it plans to support European transformation processes, for example in the fields of digitalisation and youth development."

TAGESSPIEGEL NEW ROLES FOR CULTURAL POLICY

From the essay "Kampfzone Kultur: Die Demokratie muss lernen, sich zu verteidigen" by Rüdiger Schaper, 29.09.2025

"Supporting professionals from abroad has long been part of the Goethe-Institut's remit. Goethe-Institut language courses are crucial for facilitating skilled immigration. What was previously called the 'third pillar of German foreign policy' today ranks right at the top of the agenda as part of an attendant economic policy."

TAZ – DIE TAGESZEITUNG THE GOETHE-INSTITUT'S DNA

From the article "Ohne Dialog ist alles nichts" by Andreas Fanizadeh, 26.09.2025

"But it is also part of our mission as a globally active cultural institution to advocate for and promote free art and culture. That will not change. The Goethe-Institut has artistic and cultural freedom in its DNA", says Johannes Ebert."

NORDSEE-ZEITUNG FIRST PORT OF CALL FOR SKILLED WORKERS

From the article "In Brake gibt es jetzt ein Infohaus: Das hat es damit auf sich" by Kerstin Seeland, 08.09.2025

"The Welcome Center Wesermarsch aims to be the central point of contact for international skilled workers, talent and companies in the region. It will advise them and provide support."



Bernhard Kotsch, State Secretary of the Federal Foreign Office, and Gesche Joost, President of the Goethe-Institut, at the opening of Goethe-Institut's new liaison office in Moldova.

SÜDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG SKILLED WORKER IMMIGRATION

From the article "Ohne meinen Chef sag ich nichts" by Daniel Brössler and Sina-Maria Schweikle, 03.09.2025

"On the stage sit seven Indian men and women who are learning German at the Goethe-Institut. They all want to work or study in Germany as soon as possible. In the centre of the group: the German Foreign Minister."

FRANKFURTER RUNDSCHAU GOETHE MEDAL FOR OSMAN KAVALA

From the article "Die Kunst des Widerstands", 29.08.2025

"On Thursday Osman Kavala was honoured in absentia with the Goethe Medal; his wife accepted the award on his behalf. 'For me the Goethe Medal is and will remain a symbol and an affirmation of everything that human dignity means', read his message, to the applause of the audience."

NDR.DE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF GERMAN TEACHERS

From the report "Lübeck wird zum Zentrum für Deutsch als Fremdsprache", 27.07.2025

"On Monday, the largest conference in the world for German as a foreign language began in Lübeck. Over 2,500 teachers from around 100 countries – from Togo to Australia – will spend the week discussing methods, practical approaches and perspectives for German teaching."

GEORGIA TODAY BETWEEN TBILISI AND WEIMAR

From the article "Kino im Aufbruch: Weimarer Filmklassiker neu gedacht – mit Live-Musik im Innenhof des Goethe-Instituts Tiflis" by Ivan Nechaev, 27.07.2025

"The Goethe-Institut's programme showcases Weimar cinema not as a remnant of the last wave of modernity before it was silenced by fascism, but as a living, still radical archive of aesthetic resistance – a glinting mirror in which present-day Georgia can recognise its own creative tensions and societal upheavals. The format – half picnic, half protest – invites a new generation to view these films not as academic monuments but as living impulses in the struggle for the cultural future."

DEUTSCHE WELLE CULTURE AND SECURITY

From the article "Ob Türkei oder USA: Das Goethe-Institut setzt auf Kulturarbeit" by Stefan Dege, 30.03.2025

"Ebert says there is currently a lot of discussion in Germany about security and defence. 'But defence doesn't just consist of weapons, it is also about the existence of positive relations between people from different countries.' An argument for the strengthening of cultural intermediary organisations like the Goethe-Institut."

75 YEARS OF THE GOETHE-INSTITUT

For 75 years, the Goethe-Institut has stood worldwide for encounters, dialogue, and cultural cooperation. The anniversary year 2026 invites us to look back on this history while also demonstrating how language, culture, and education continue to build bridges and shape the future today.

goethe.de/75Jahre



Left: The "German All Stars" on an Asian tour: autograph session at the Goethe Institute Delhi, 1975.

Right: Participants in a language course in Iserlohn in the 1960s.





Language learners work with headphones in the **language laboratory of the Goethe-Institut in Mumbai, 1973.**

11 million

language course participations at Goethe-Instituts worldwide since 1951.



1 million

cultural events were carried out by the Goethe-Institut worldwide – in addition to language and information events – since its founding.



Setup of the exhibition on German **poster art at the Goethe-Institut Rome, 1974:** Institute director Michael Freiherr Marschall von Bieberstein (far left) hangs the exhibition posters together with staff members.



As part of an official state visit to New York, the former Federal Chancellor **Helmut Schmidt** also visited the Goethe-Institut.

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language course enrollments the Goethe-Institut recorded in Germany in 1953. Today there are over 50,000 registrations per year in the region.



Above: Artist meeting for a sound art project in 1980 in the **library of the Goethe-Institut London.**

Below: **Günter Grass** during a visit to the Danish Museum in Copenhagen in 1968, as part of the Goethe-Institut's program activities at the time.

THE FOUNDING GENERATION

In January 2025, the Goethe-Institut commissioned an independent study on its founding generation. In this article, Nils Havemann describes the questions he has been exploring as part of this project.

Since the late 1990s, the German academic landscape has seen a veritable boom in commissioned studies on the continuity of personnel between the National Socialist era and the Federal Republic of Germany. Whether ministries, associations or other institutions, almost all of Germany's organisations of note have had the early years of their existence examined to see if their staff had close ties to the "Third Reich".

Until now, the Goethe-Institut has been a latecomer with regard to this aspect of reappraising the National Socialist past. This is due not least to its name: established in 1951, its namesake – the great German poet – elicited the image of an apolitical, purely cultural organisation. Yet behind this humanist facade hid the Deutsche Akademie, which had been founded in 1925 and until 1945 served as an instrument of National Socialist cultural policy abroad. Although several studies on the history of the Deutsche Akademie and the Goethe-Institut exist, they address this issue of continuity only in passing, if at all. This can likely be attributed to the fact that both institutions long escaped the attention of historians, who considered them mere appendages of the Federal Foreign Office.

Which methods should be used to investigate the continuity of personnel between the Deutsche Akademie and the Goethe-Institut? And what can we conclude from it? These are two key questions of the ongoing study which turn up complex answers. After all, it would not be surprising if in the early years of the Goethe-Institut, as in many other institutions of the young Federal Republic, one stumbles across a multitude of people who not only were members of the Nazi Party, but who enthusiastically supported Hitler and his henchmen.

In this context, the main difficulty is evaluating such findings. For a long time, when considering an individual's personal burden of complicity, historiography distinguished between a formal level – like joining the Nazi Party or being a member of another party organisation – and a substantive level, searching for concrete words and deeds that could be linked to National Socialist crimes. Yet the more studies of this type that were conducted, the clearer it became that such a schematic division is often inadequate. A party member may have been in the resistance, while a brutal mass murderer may never have filled out a membership form. The biographies of many people – including individuals who have achieved historical renown for risking their lives to oppose Hitler – reveal both formal and substantive burdens of complicity. Historiography has thus now largely concurred that the simple listing

of Nazi Party members, and the search for compromising statements that can be interpreted as expressing sympathy for the Nazi regime, can warrant only limited conclusions regarding the extent of individual responsibility for the crimes of the "Third Reich".

The ongoing research project on the Goethe-Institut's founding generation is therefore not about exposing individuals' ties to the Nazi regime or unleashing moralistic furore. Rather, the question that comes to the fore is why the Goethe-Institut, despite having many employees who were socialised in the Nazi dictatorship and who in many cases actively participated in it, was able to integrate largely seamlessly into the "successful democracy" (Edgar Wolfrum) of the Federal Republic. Here, the focus should be widened beyond the Goethe-Institut's leadership, as it was the teachers in the numerous branch offices, in Germany and abroad, who performed the actual groundwork of the organisation. The project will be completed in summer 2027 and its findings will be published in a book by spring 2028. ●



A view of the Goethe-Institut's stand at the 1972 **didacta** education conference in Cologne.



Dr. Nils Havemann, born in 1966, studied History, Romance languages and political science in Bonn, Paris and Salamanca and completed his doctorate in 1996 at the Universität Bonn. He has previously conducted numerous similar studies on associations, companies and other institutions as a researcher at various universities. His current work is part of a larger research project by the Universität Mainz on the history of the Goethe-Institut.

STORIES

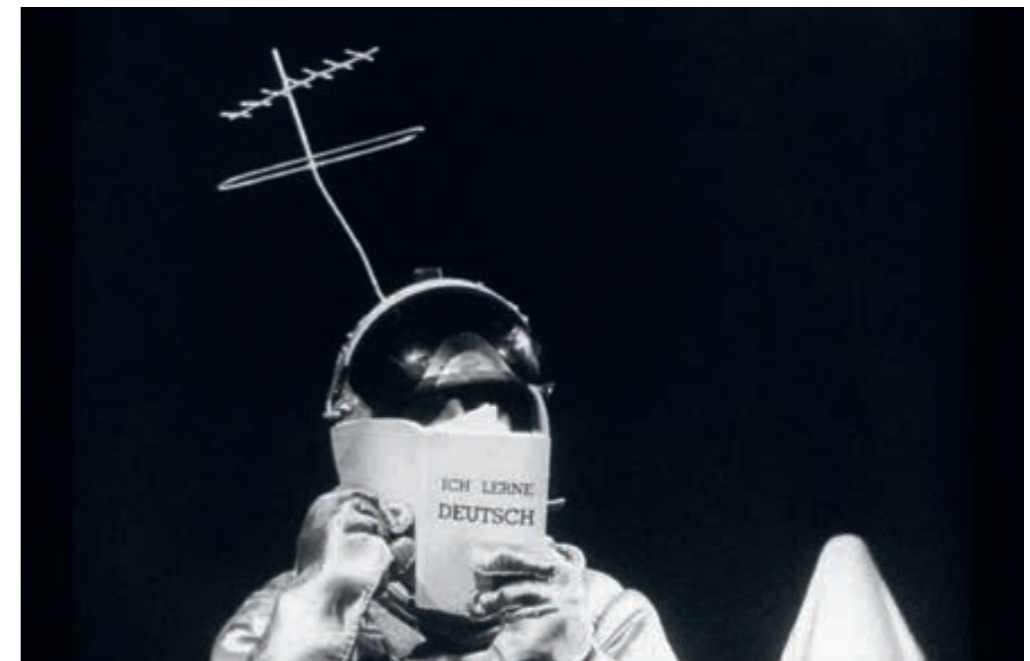
FROM 75 YEARS OF THE GOETHE-INSTITUT

A prominent language student, an apparently harmless piece of decor and teaching resources from another planet – the Goethe-Institut has collected stories from the past 75 years which are stranger than fiction. They not only tell of bizarre incidents, they also attest to just how closely the Goethe-Institut's development has been intertwined with the political, cultural and societal shifts of the times.



THE SKETCH

In 1987, Rudi Carell of the comedy programme *Rudis Tagesshow* performed a sketch to mark the eighth anniversary of the Iranian Revolution – featuring Ayatollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, being pelted with women's underwear. The satire triggered diplomatic tensions: just one day after it was broadcast, the Iranian government demanded an official apology from the German government, halted all flights to Germany and expelled two German diplomats. The Goethe-Institut subsequently had to cease its work in Tehran.



LEARNING GERMAN IN SPACE

In the 1950s and 1960s, popular culture was dominated by outer space: science fiction programmes filled TV schedules, and the Goethe-Institut also took up the trend. With its films for language learners, it ventured one small step into space; in the series *Guten Tag*, some learning units even took place on fictional planets. The films were created to prepare German learners for everyday scenarios like visiting a restaurant or finding a flat. In order to attract young learners in particular, some featured scenes in the style of the beloved science fiction series *Raumpatrouille Orio*.



THE BUG

Following the fall of the Iron Curtain, the Goethe-Institut Prague was in search of new premises and ended up moving into the former embassy of the GDR. Much was in its original condition – there was even a plastic rose still standing on what had been the ambassador's desk. A cleaner gave it to Carola Bloss, wife of the institute's director Jochen Bloss. It was not until later that the pair realised that the harmless-looking rose concealed a bug. "That means," said Jochen Bloss, "when the ambassador was receiving his guests at the round table, there was a recording device present."



THE LODGER

In 1985, one of the German students at the Goethe-Institut Boppard was none other than Jorge Mario Bergoglio – who would later become Pope Francis. During his time in the city he, like many other language learners, lodged with a family. An epistolary friendship developed between the married couple Helma and Josef Schmidt and Bergoglio, with the latter repeatedly recalling this time in his handwritten letters and thanking the Schmidts for their hospitality – in German, of course. Though the Goethe-Institut in Boppard no longer exists today, the memory of its special student remains.



Emrike Knoche is a trainee in the Marketing and Corporate Communications department at the Goethe-Institut head office in Munich.

ANNIVERSARY IMPRESSIONS

Five perspectives



“I believe that the central questions we ask ourselves as humans are: who are we? Where are we going? What can we do for the future? I am convinced that arts and culture can provide answers to these questions.”

Maria Kalesnikava became a leading voice in Belarus’s pro-democracy movement, but her incredible resilience has made her a symbol of civic resistance far beyond the country’s borders. In 2020, she ran alongside Svetlana Tikhanovskaya and Veronika Zepkalo against Alexander Lukashenko, which led to her arrest. She was released from prison at the end of 2025 after five years. Her biography as an artist has been closely tied to the Goethe-Institut in Belarus since the late 1990s. Through the institute’s masterclasses and concerts she discovered her passion for Early Music, which later led her to study at the State University of Music and Performing Arts Stuttgart.



“After the fall of the Wall the concept of freedom was very important to me. There was an exhibition once in the East, the title of which I still find beautiful: ‘In Grenzen frei’ (Within borders, free). It describes the 1980s: suddenly we had freedom. For me, it took years to really live this concept.”

Photographer **Sven Marquardt**, who was born in East Berlin and influenced by the punk and New Wave scene of the late GDR, figures as one of the most prominent voices in Berlin club culture. Growing up in a divided city sharpened his eye to the ambivalence of freedom and limits. In the 1980s, this subculture’s self-awareness was encapsulated in the phrase “New York is where we are”. For years Marquardt has travelled to Goethe-Institut residencies in places like São Paulo, Lagos and Sydney, experiences that have shaped his photography and his work as a teacher at the Ostkreuz School of Photography in Berlin.

“When I think of the Goethe-Institut, I think first of all of global cultural exchange. I particularly appreciate that, here, Germany doesn’t function as a fixed, closed construct, but is constantly presented anew thanks to the different regional directors and the people on the ground. This is what makes the exchange unique.”

Meron Mendel

“We live in an increasingly polarised society. Many people are retreating to their echo chambers and filter bubbles – in digital and in real life. That’s precisely why we need more dialogue and encounters with people who think differently from us. Their opinions may vex us but therein lies the chance to think twice and develop counter-positions – that’s how democracy functions.”

Saba-Nur Cheema



Saba-Nur Cheema und Meron Mendel represent vastly different perspectives in public discourse. For over five years, Cheema, who was born in Frankfurt, and Mendel, who comes from Israel, have written about societal and political developments for their FAZ column “Muslimisch-jüdisches Abendbrot”. Cheema is a researcher at the Institut für Sozialforschung and Mendel leads the Anne Frank Educational Centre in Frankfurt and is a professor of social work; both have an academic interest in Islamophobia, antisemitism and memory culture. Mendel’s first encounter with the German language was at the Goethe-Institut in Tel Aviv – a place he still associates today with an open, dialogue-ready Germany. Cheema is a member of the Goethe-Institut’s Board of Trustees and values it as a place for exchange, debate and compromise.



“I would advise young people considering this programme to have faith in themselves. I know leaving friends and family behind is scary. But the world is big and you have your whole lives ahead of you. If you find that the training programme is not right for you, you can try something new. That’s not a problem – trying something and discovering the world a bit is what’s important.”

Ámbar Navarro, a medical technical radiology assistant, grew up in Mexico and has been living in Germany for over three years. She gathered her first German experience in lively language classes at the PASCH school in Guadalajara. The decision to move to Bonn for a training programme was not an easy one for her, but the Ausbildungspartnerschaften Lateinamerika (APAL) programme affirmed her decision. Now she encourages young people to seek out new experiences – fortune favours the brave!



Katharina Becker is a trainee in the Marketing and Corporate Communications department at the Goethe-Institut’s Berlin office.

The celebrations marking the 75th anniversary of the Goethe-Institut are made possible by the following companies from the Goethe-Institut’s Business Advisory Board: Bertelsmann, BMW Group, Evonik Industries AG, Holtzbrinck, Volkswagen Konzern, and Adolf Würth GmbH & Co. KG.



THE SPACES IN BETWEEN



The Goethe-Institut in Exile offered artists from crisis-affected regions a space for exchange, art and discussion. Following the end of the programme, the project's leader Carmen Herold looks back at its experimental approaches, emotional limits and the question of what forms exile work may take in the future.



How did the Goethe-Institut in Exile come into being?

The project built on the Goethe-Institut Damascus in Exile from 2016. Back then, with the support of many dedicated colleagues, the Goethe-Institut established a temporary space for the Syrian exile community in Berlin. The global political situation has deteriorated in recent years – more autocratic regimes, new wars, increasing censorship – and this spurred the desire to create a new, longer-term version of the format, initially focusing on countries such as Ukraine, Syria, Sudan, Belarus, Afghanistan and Iran.

You eventually dropped the focus on specific countries in favour of specific themes. Why?

Biographies can't be reduced to national borders. People who have experienced forced migration have usually lived at transit points and their sense of identity has been shaped by multiple contexts. At the same time, cultural work is changing: a younger audience is looking for new resonances, new forms of conversation and participation, and so we experimented with genres like stand-up comedy, which are becoming increasingly accepted in the cultural sector.

With *Through the Cracks*, our annual programme considered the cracks in societal visibility – the gaps that people fall through because of violence, bureaucracy and hegemonic perceptions, yet through which new forms of storytelling, remembering and being together emerge. Four curators, each with their own experience of having to flee their homeland, developed, from shared conversations, their own thematic intersections and curatorial answers. We understand “cracks” not as merely a metaphor for exclusion and invisibility, but also as a productive liminality, in which new aesthetic and political articulations become possible.

The project also brought people from different exile communities together. What role did this play?

A very important one. It's exactly between communities that receive very different treatment structurally that unwanted tensions often arise. The Goethe-Institut in Exile provided spaces where these groups could engage with each other, collaborate creatively and share related experiences.

Were there moments that left a particular impression on you?

I found it especially moving to see how much the programme's theoretical notion of cultural hybridity was fully realised in practice: as the aesthetic diversity that emerges from diverse biographies, languages and formative experiences. This was particularly striking in the fields of music and literature, which repeatedly demonstrated how different traditions, references and modes of expression merge with one another without settling into a single cultural form.

The focus on Syria deepened the question in another way: following the fall of Assad's regime, some artists were able to return to Syria for the first time in years and had to redefine their relationship to home and exile. In particular, one observation by the theatremaker Mohammed Al Attar sticks in my mind: it was at the moment of return that he truly understood the definition of exile – when he had become a stranger in his own homeland.

What challenges did you have to overcome?

One central challenge lay in the framing given by the term “exile”. Some of the artists didn't want to constantly appear in the context of this label or to automatically represent their homeland. We had to convey to the audience that artistic identities are diverse and sometimes contradictory, too.

At the same time, we were continually confronted with overlapping global crises. The media's attention shifts quickly – raising the question of how specific themes could continue to remain visible and be communicated while some conflicts were being rapidly overshadowed by others.

Then there was the challenge of working with people whose lives were marked by persecution, loss and existential insecurity. Although our expertise lay in the realms of organisation and programming rather than in psychosocial work, we repeatedly found ourselves in situations that clearly crossed that line: personal losses, threats from family members, arrests – as in the case of a musician from Belarus, who was arrested after a concert in his home country. These experiences were hard on the team and demonstrated that projects of this kind require not only cultural but also structural support and welfare provisions too.

The project was discontinued in February 2026. This decision received a lot of criticism. However, the project's themes will be continued at the Goethe-Institut. What does that look like in concrete terms?

First, we want to preserve the knowledge gained – the networks, experiences, documentation – not least because it can inform the development of related projects. In the future, experiences of exile could be examined in connection with related social phenomena such as migration or diaspora. In the past, for example, we explored a festival format with various locations across the country, partly because different social dynamics are at work outside of Berlin, especially in South and East Germany.

I think it's important that we commit decisively to this topic. Not only because migration sparks heated and often uninformed debates, but also because we, as a stakeholder in the field of skilled labour migration, have a particular responsibility. Carefully curated programmes and aesthetically ambitious events can help illuminate complex dynamics and create space for nuanced perspectives. ●

 SDG 10, 16



Interview by Katrin Figge, Marketing and Corporate Communications Officer at the Goethe-Institut head office in Munich.

Left: Visitors attend the cultural event *Staying Visible, Defying Limits: Afghan Culture at the Crossroads*.



NEW PATHS TO FRIENDSHIP

In the USA, a new Goethe-Institut initiative has launched under the motto “Among Friends – Unter Freunden”. Its goal is to establish presences across the country to support transatlantic dialogue and facilitate diverse perspectives on the relationship between Germany and the USA.

LITERATURE ON THE MOVE

Authors Sonali Beher and Iven Yorick Fenker, both students at the Literaturinstitut in Leipzig, spent a month last year traversing the East Coast of the USA, from New York to Texas via Florida. Along the way they encountered diverse audiences at readings, discussions and talks in vastly different locales – in bookshops, schools, libraries and even a pizzeria. They documented their impressions and experiences in a travel blog.

WHEN IS NEW YORK NEW YORK?

New York, September 2025. Iven and I are sitting outside an Italian American deli, before each of us a sandwich as big as your forearm, filled with tuna, spinach, jalapeños and onions. The table is red. Something is dripping from the awning, although it isn't raining. A police car drives by with flashing lights and NYPD signage. “Hey, look!” I say, dumbfounded. “Someone’s rented themselves an American police car.”

America is everywhere: on my TV, on my radio, in my jokes. I know where Americans go for discount shopping (Target), and I know that some of them pronounce it “Targé”, to make it sound more expensive. I know that US police officers are also called rangers, and I know what the sirens on their cars sound like. I know more street names in Manhattan than in Munich. And, more tragically: I know more about America than about India, the land of my heritage. If ethnicity were allocated according to cultural knowledge, I'd be wearing cowboy boots right now.

As we walk to our hotel in Chinatown and I look around (Canal Street – another mark against Munich), I feel for the first time something I will feel often in the days to come: I'm not discovering something, I'm recognising it. I watch yellow cabs honking and construction workers on the job and don't see them but rather the image of them in my head – one produced by Netflix, starring Adam Sandler or Jennifer Aniston.

Iven and I are sitting in a bar; before me, a quarter-full glass of white wine which apparently costs \$14. Our neighbours invite us to join their table. I don't know these people and yet I have the feeling that I've been with them for three seasons and a series finale: Sasha asks a lot of questions and interrupts our answers two sentences in, he's lived in New York for four years and talks ironically about the dating scene in the city while rolling a cigarette. Julie has been here for two months (she comes from a small city in Florida “really not worth mentioning”); she is excited for everything and everything is excited for her: the city, the evening, the wine, us, the next day, the day after that. Jacob is New York-born and bred, Italian American and proud of it. As Iven raves about our sandwich, Jacob waves his hand dismissively: “That place is good, but it used to be great.”

Is it possible to experience something in the here and now, when the here and now is always competing with your own imagination? When every moment automatically gets categorised into “that's familiar” or “I thought as much”? When every interaction seems like a game: now I'm paying with a dollar bill! Now say you want a small coffee and you'll get a litre. How can you really experience this country? Day two and America is like a video game, and every American a mythical creature.

Maybe we aren't here at all, I think, as we head back to our hotel. I haven't slept in 22 hours. Maybe someone put VR glasses on us and we're walking around in a simulation, a visual collage of every episode of *Friends*, *Brooklyn 99* and *Law & Order*. Because there is no New York, only the idea of New York. Because New York is a fiction, a filmset, a postcard. Maybe there's only Gießen, I say to Iven. Maybe there's only the Harz.

Sonali Beher (pictured right), born in 1997 in Gießen, studied English and political science in Heidelberg and has been studying creative writing at the Deutsche Literaturinstitut in Leipzig since 2023. She works part-time for NGOs promoting democracy. Beher writes prose, essays, poetry and dramatic works.

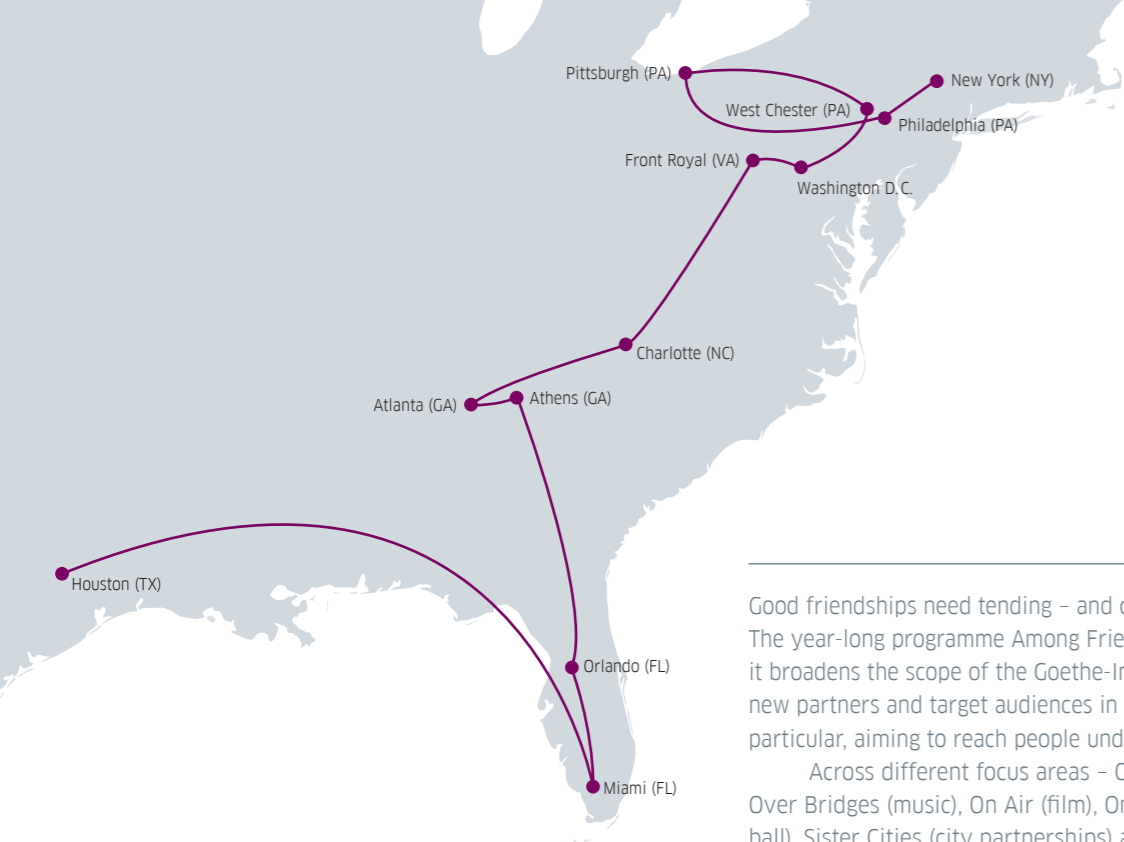
TACOS, GUNS, NO COWBOY BOOTS

Texas looks different from how I imagined it, and I saw more cowboy hats at the airport in Miami than here in Houston, where we are waiting for our luggage. I bought an extra suitcase and am now unsure what it looks like. Sonali recognises it and laughs at me.

Houston is a great city to drive in, according to our Uber driver. Here the highway runs right through the city, he says, accelerating. The sun is just setting, a flock of birds flying against the light.

We're going for another walk. Again, this makes no sense and is no fun at all. It's way too hot, too loud and there's nothing to see. I take a few photos of neon liquor store signs; otherwise, there's nothing here but heat-reflecting concrete.

Then suddenly, a green street and dream houses. I don't know if this is the American dream or the universal desire for property and nice cafes within walking distance. What brought us here is my desire to search for treasures in thrift stores. Houston is underrated as a city for thrifting. Later, I'll buy another new suitcase to store my Goodwill finds. Three suits: Brooks Brothers, Calvin Klein and Oscar de la Renta. Shirts, polos and ties. I keep trying on cowboy boots, but none of them fit me, even though they're my size. Later, I get to know everyone at the bar. Whenever I introduce myself, I say: I am Cowboy Cinderella. It's not until the next morning that I realise the joke doesn't make sense, because Cinderella's shoe fits. Everyone laughs anyway.



Good friendships need tending – and can withstand differences. The year-long programme Among Friends builds on exactly this: it broadens the scope of the Goethe-Institut in the USA, seeks out new partners and target audiences in the country's heartland in particular, aiming to reach people under pressure.

Across different focus areas – On the Road (literature), Over Bridges (music), On Air (film), On the Field (German & football), Sister Cities (city partnerships) and New Horizons (German-American coalitions) – since September 2025, the institutes in the region have been engaging with locations beyond the major cities, from Portland in Oregon and Peoria in Illinois to Athens in Georgia and Front Royal in Virginia.

Authors went on tour along the East Coast, the Hamburg Boys' Choir extended their partnership with Georgia, new film festivals were founded from Vermont to Louisiana, partnerships were strengthened through various cultural competitions and associations were encouraged to develop new projects on Germany today.

The founding of a Goethe-Institut branch in Houston, Texas, in October 2025 marked the start of the programme and an early high point. The opening of an office in St. Louis, Missouri is scheduled for 2026.

In 2026, as the USA celebrates 250 years of independence, the core assumptions of the transatlantic friendship are being called into question. In response, Navid Kermani and Karl Schlögel are setting out on a speaking tour and two further literary trips through the Midwest are planned, as well as panels on the state of democracy, music tours and cinematic programmes. Meanwhile, the 2026 FIFA World Cup serves as an opportunity to unite the love of language and sport through the Soccer and German camps.

Starting in autumn 2026, *Alle gegen alles* will take a distinctly different approach, celebrating German-American punk music ties, and the significance of the genre in the protest cultures of both countries, with 50 Years of Punk.

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Klaus Krishchok was Regional Director for North America until March 2026; Tatjana Brode was Head of Information at the Goethe-Institut North America until March 2026.

At night, I dream of wealth and success. I wake up before sunrise. I stare out of the window, dawn outside, my stomach full of meat.

Then it's morning and a brass band from Bavaria is playing in front of us. There's beer again, from Germany. It's German Unity Day. Speeches are made and Sonali and I have problems with Germany. We go to bed early, no dreams, thinking about Germany until we fall asleep.

Sonali and I have another reading. We are well-versed. I hardly stutter. We can answer the audience's questions before they are asked; we know what's coming. Prior to the reading, there were some thoughts about word choice in my texts. I'm not afraid of what gets said, but sometimes I worry about what it might lead to.

I spend the night with my new friends. Sonali is already back at the hotel. When the last bar shuts, we sit on the terrace and wait for it to get light. That night I held a gun in my hand and wore cowboy boots. I bring neither back to Germany.

Iven Yorick Fenker (p. 30, pictured left), born in 1994, grew up in the Harz region of Germany, an area once divided by the inner-German border and often the setting for his writing. His work explores themes of masculinity, fascism, football and love. He is currently studying at the Deutsche Literaturinstitut in Leipzig and works as a writer, filmmaker and journalist, contributing to outlets such as DIE ZEIT in Berlin.

IN DIALOGUE WITH AFRICA

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the Goethe-Institut is delivering the largest EU-funded projects for cultural exchange to date. Four initiatives, amounting to 50 million euros in total, focus on museum partnerships, creative mobility, connecting festivals and reinterpreting cultural heritage. The Goethe-Institut is responsible for 33 million euros of this funding, and the Goethe-Instituts in the region, together with their local networks, have taken a leading role in developing all four projects – the result of trust that has grown over decades.

In April 2023, 60 museum directors from African and European countries met in Dakar. At a conference organised by the Senegalese Musée des Civilisations Noires and several European and African partner organisations, they signed the "Declaration of Dakar", collectively pledging to learn from one another, to use resources fairly and to keep the cultural diversity and the cultural heritage of both continents alive for future generations.

FROM MANIFESTO TO FLAGSHIP PROJECT

On the basis of the museum directors' shared vision, the Goethe-Institut, in cooperation with other intermediary organisations and EU member states, successfully bid for funding from the European Commission. Strengthening African-European Museum Partnerships is today one of the EU's flagship projects in the cultural sphere and is, as a Team Europe Initiative, jointly supported by the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships and the EU member states.

Museums in Africa and Europe are developing contemporary exhibitions together, exploring new ways of presenting collections and focusing on younger audiences, who constitute the largest demographic group on the African continent. At the core of their work is the question of how exhibitions can be designed to illuminate and juxtapose different perspectives, giving them equal prominence. The museum partnership creates the framework for negotiating this collectively, allowing new narratives about the cultural relations between the two continents to emerge.

enables artists and cultural workers to cross national borders, familiarise themselves with new working contexts and build networks that will outlast their individual stays, while also strengthening arts and cultural venues in Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe as spaces of engagement. The second project crosses language and national borders to connect festivals in West Africa. Bringing together various cultural partners and diverse audiences, festivals are ideal platforms for intra-African and African-European collaboration. The third project links cultural heritage organisations in Southern Africa with interdisciplinary groups of artists in order to develop new narrative forms from local knowledge and contemporary artistic practice. Traditional heritage should not be enshrined as something belonging to the past, but instead brought to life for communities in the here and now.

A new form of regional cooperation also underpins the four projects. In multidisciplinary teams, the Goethe-Instituts in the region and their local partners cooperate with the EU Liaison Office in Brussels and the Commissions, Projects and Partnerships department at the Goethe-Institut head office. Together they have developed programmes that meet EU requirements while also reflecting the local realities of the African countries. ●

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Georg Milz is a Marketing and Corporate Communications Officer at the Goethe-Institut head office in Munich.

AN INTERCONNECTED ECOSYSTEM

As well as the museum cooperation, the Goethe-Institut is also implementing three other projects under the umbrella of Africa-Europe Partnerships for Culture (AEPC), which together form an interconnected ecosystem. The first

IN THE SHADOW OF THE BORDER

Photographer and filmmaker Tobias Zielony talks about his work *How to Make a Fire Without Smoke*, which is featured in the *Bells and Cannons – Contemporary Art in the Face of Militarisation* exhibition in Vilnius. In this interview, he discusses his nighttime research at the border between Lithuania and Belarus, clandestine meetings in the shadows and the question of what role art can play in times of increasing militarisation.



Mr Zielony, what particularly struck you about working at the border between Lithuania and Belarus?

The fascinating – and unsettling – thing was how much reality happens in the shadows. The border is a place that we rarely have access to, where things transpire that we only know about in fragments. I spoke with people who had crossed this border and with people from Belarus who live in exile in Lithuania, as well as with activists who support refugees. And yet this gorgeous nature also exists there, overlain by security cameras and military infrastructure.

Your video *How to Make a Fire Without Smoke* is based on recordings that are extremely light-sensitive. Why did you choose this technical approach?

I was interested in the question: what do you see when you can't actually see anything anymore? Eventually, digital cameras will reach a point where they show more of their own algorithms than the actual world. In the darkness you can see silhouettes, (visual) noise, the camera's internal images. This reflects the situation at the border: you try to make out what is happening, and yet you remain unsure. The motif of the fire without smoke, which you only have a vague sense of, also plays into this. It is an image for hybrid conflicts, which begin before you can really perceive them.

Which encounters made a particular impression on you?

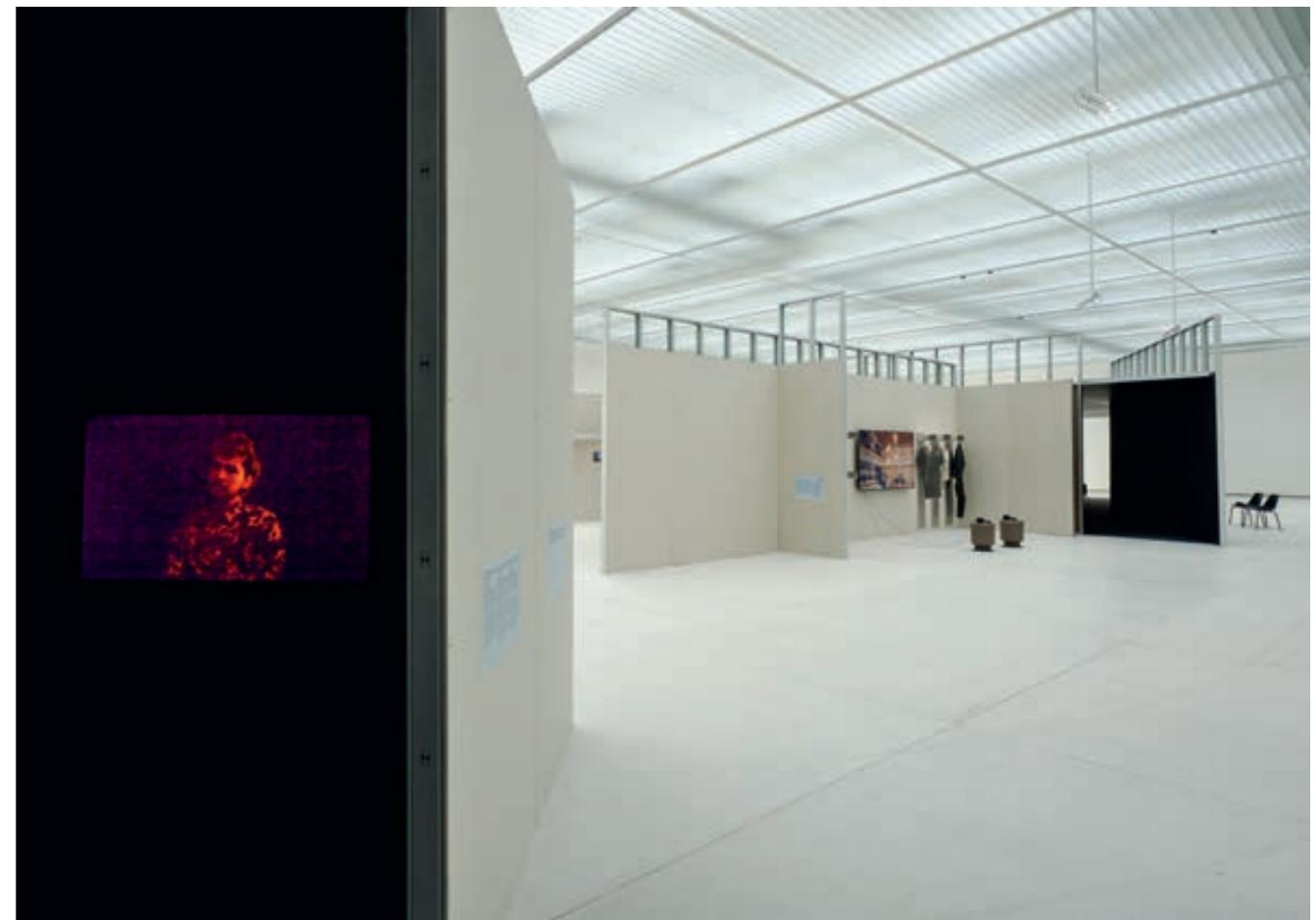
I was very moved by the story of a man from Belarus, who had to flee the country for political reasons and was trying to climb over the border fence with a rope and a hook. Lithuanian border guards saw him on their infrared cameras and eventually opened a gate for him. A joyful moment for him, but also evidence of how differently people are treated depending on where they come from. And maybe an entirely different image that stays with me: three elk at dusk in a deserted village.

Your project is rooted in the context of political tensions – militarisation, surveillance, fear. What role can art play here?

Often, the first thing authoritarian systems do is to try to control cultural spaces. That shows how important art is: it allows for other perspectives, other ways of thinking and alternatives. In Lithuania, I witnessed how present the question of "What will happen if war comes?" is in everyday life. Art can't solve this reality, but it can make visible what would otherwise remain in darkness. It can pose questions, sow doubts, reveal nuances where political debates are often only in black and white.

Looking back, what will you take away from the project?

On the one hand, a very intense time with people who have to deal with uncertainty and threat every day. On the other, the awareness



View of the exhibition *Bells and Cannons – Contemporary Art in the Face of Militarisation* The works by international artists show the influence of militarisation, technology, information and memory on our view of the world.

“Art can make visible what would otherwise remain in darkness.”

of how quickly those of us in Germany could ourselves be confronted by these issues. The borders of Belarus or Russia may seem far away, but the societal and political dynamics in operation there have long been affecting us too. And finally I learned that darkness – in a technical as well as a metaphorical sense – is a space in which insight and mystery often go hand in hand. This space is exactly what my film tries to make tangible. ●



Interview by Katrin Figge, Marketing and Corporate Communications Officer at the Goethe-Institut head office in Munich.

The exhibition *Bells and Cannons – Contemporary Art in the Face of Militarisation* was presented at the Contemporary Art Centre (CAC) in Vilnius and was part of the project *Aspects of Presence*, initiated by the Goethe-Institut in Lithuania. Dedicated to artistic perspectives on security, presence and societal transformation, with a focus on Central Eastern Europe, the multi-part programme brings international and local perspectives together. *Aspects of Presence* is a collaboration between the Contemporary Art Centre (CAC) in Vilnius, the Akademie der Künste in Berlin, and the Goethe-Institut in Lithuania.





An installation created by Netta Weiser during her residency in Jerusalem.

NEW SPACES FOR OLD VOICES

During a six-week residency in Jerusalem, the Berlin-based artist and choreographer Netta Weiser worked with rare archive material from the Jewish German composer Brigitte Schiffer. From historical recordings, she developed a multi-channel sound installation – discovering new perspectives on memory, migration and artistic research.



During the past few years you've worked on the topic of radio choreography in depth. How did you pursue this during your residency in Jerusalem?

In my artistic practice I combine research and choreography with sound and radio art. A central part of my project is concerned with the stories of lesser-known artists, with migration, exile and sound archives. During the residency I mainly worked with material from the estate of the Jewish German composer and ethnomusicologist Brigitte Schiffer. Her archive recordings and her extraordinary life story were the focus of my time there.

How did you come across Brigitte Schiffer?

That actually happened rather coincidentally, through a conversation with the curator of the Phonogramm-Archiv at the Humboldt Forum. When I asked whether composers were also represented in the archives, he mentioned Brigitte Schiffer, who worked in Egypt during the 1930s. This combination – a German composer who was researching and recording in Egypt while the National Socialists were rising to power in Germany – immediately piqued my curiosity. Once I listened to the material, I was utterly fascinated.

In concrete terms, how did you work with this material during the residency?

There were two threads that I pursued particularly intensively. First, the recordings that had been bequeathed. These included a stunning live recording of a mourning song, sung by a boys' choir in the Siwa Oasis. The combination of children's voices, a death rite and the audible mechanism of the phonograph cylinder, a medium for audio recording, still moves me today. During my stay – in the middle of the war between Israel and Palestine – this material again took on an additional weight and urgency. Then there were what are called the "date-picking songs". In the archive they were initially classified as songs sung during the harvest, but later research revealed that they were actually love songs – some involving queer male performativity. They were sung by itinerant labourers in a call and response pattern, often from the treetops. That reminded me of an early form of "radio": as sound that communicates across distance. During the residency I created a new arrangement of this material, continued the composition and translated it into a multi-channel sound installation.

Did you have access to other work by Brigitte Schiffer in Jerusalem?

Yes. In the national library in Jerusalem there is a score by Brigitte Schiffer for a string quartet – a work that is also based on her field recordings. I was able to see and replicate the score, and integrate it into the exhibition. It was incredibly affecting to actually hold this fragile trace of an almost forgotten composer in my hands.

You concluded the residency with an exhibition – what did that look like?

The exhibition was at the Mamuta Art and Research Center – a place with a long tradition of critical, experimental art. The installation was comprised of multiple elements: a six-channel sound installation based on the mourning song, the reproduction of Schiffer's string quartet score and a graphic score that the composer, vocalist and multimedia artist Chanan Ben Simon had

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artists took part in residencies around the world in 2025.

developed for the love songs. As well as this, there were translations of the song lyrics and short sound fragments from our rehearsals. Chanan travelled to Jerusalem for the concluding event and we gave a live performance: a duet consisting of him and a loudspeaker, with the historical and the contemporary voices joining in dialogue.

Which moment during the residency made the strongest impression on you?

There were many significant moments. But working on the compositions and hearing the voices of the boys as I did so – of children who were recorded in the 1930s and who are probably no longer alive today – was deeply emotional during a time of extreme violence in Gaza. The juxtaposition of past and present, of death and childhood, of Egypt and Palestine was extraordinarily powerful.

How will the project continue?

This autumn, I will present an ambisonic version of the installation at the Humboldt Forum in Berlin. Ambisonics is a process of recording and replaying an audio field. This audio technology was developed in the 1960s and 1970s in the UK. The Humboldt Forum's listening space is one of the most advanced spaces for sound art in the world. The installation will be on display for about six months, and will be accompanied by performances, radio programmes and new choreographic works on the theme of embodied listening. ●

Residencies are a key instrument for promoting cultural mobility, cultural transfer and networking. The Goethe-Institut has been developing curated residencies in Jerusalem since 2025 in close collaboration with local partners. goethe.de/residenzen

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Interview by Katrin Figge, Marketing and Corporate Communications Officer at the Goethe-Institut head office in Munich.

FINDING YOUR OWN FREQUENCY



On 26 August, Nazrin Mammadova presented her experimental practice, which merges electronic sound with performance, at Sonic Crossings in Berlin's Sinema Transtopia.

When Nazrin Mammadova aka inherroom travelled to Berlin for Sonic Crossings, the city became a place of artistic exchange and personal evolution for her. In her immersive sets, the interdisciplinary sound and visual artist creates spaces for intensive listening. In this interview she explains why belonging is a process – and why substance in music knows no gender.

How do you look back on your time with Sonic Crossings today?

Berlin felt less like a new scene, more like a place of kindred spirits. I didn't want to immerse myself in its identity, but see how my own language of sound would resonate in the city. What has stayed with me most is the intensity of the engagement: artists who speak through texture, noise, silence and risk rather than through polished narratives. When I look back on this time today, it was a kind of reference point. It showed me what is really important to me and what I would like to hold on to. And it made it clear to me that I don't need to copy existing structures in order to find my own place.

What would you say characterises your music and which emotions do you want to convey through it?

My music emerges from the tension between control and release; it is very instinctive. I am drawn to moments of transition – the split second just before a change, the psychological space in which something is about to tilt or transform. My background in visual art strongly influences how I build sound: I think in layers, surfaces and atmospheres. I am not looking to convey any single emotion. For me it's about setting something in motion within myself.

What was your experience of collaborating with artists from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia?

When artists come together in this context, the exchange takes on a special depth. What made the biggest impression on me was how naturally this unspoken bond developed. It was also very inspiring to witness how different cultural influences are expressed through rhythm and tempo: some approach sound with urgency, others with a rather meditative tranquillity. This contrast enhanced my listening and working process.

What has to happen for women to become not only present in electronic music, but rather an undisputed part of the scene?

Women shouldn't be considered an "addition" to a scene. Inclusion will become natural when competence is presupposed. When programmes are based on artistic quality and not symbolic representation, then that changes the entire discussion. I don't see myself as a "female electronic artist". I see myself as an artist. I live this, in that I go my own way without justifying myself and focus on depth and tonal precision. Visibility comes from substance – and substance has no gender.

What did you learn about yourself during Sonic Crossings?

I learned that I'm at my strongest when I trust my own internal tempo. In new surroundings there's often pressure to fit in quickly, but there I became aware that my strength lies in keeping my own beat. Besides this, I came to understand that I'm not looking for belonging – I'm creating it. Every collaboration, every performance, every exchange is part of crafting an environment where my artistic language feels self-evident and not dependent on external conditions. ●



Interview by Emrike Knoche, a trainee in the Marketing und Corporate Communications department at the Goethe-Institut head office in Munich.

In collaboration with the Goethe-Institut's Music division, the Goethe-Institut in Exile and the Pop-Kultur Festival in Berlin, 2025 saw the founding of a new cooperation project: Sonic Crossings explores the many facets of the pop music of a selected region, bringing its specific cultural characteristics to the fore. The launch featured musicians from the South Caucasus who, during a short

residency, engaged in various ways with the question of how pop music is understood in their respective countries of origin – with historical ruptures, traditions and musical heritage playing a central role. The result was lively cultural exchange that enabled new connections and creative perspectives. The project will be continued in 2026 with a focus on Central Asia.

BUILDING BRIDGES –

EVEN BEFORE ARRIVAL



Germany relies on skilled immigration to be economically competitive. Qualified international workers contribute urgently needed skills and perspectives; at the same time, migration is a topic of public debate. The Goethe-Institut project Pre-Integration and Transition Management – Ensuring a Successful Migration Process demonstrates what successful preparation can look like. At the closing event Forum: Prepare. Support. Arrive. in Berlin, participants took stock of the project’s progress after three years.

At the Forum: Prepare. Support. Arrive information stand in Berlin, participants make contacts and trade experiences.

“I love sparkling water now! And sorting rubbish – when someone incorrectly sorts rubbish, I do get a bit worked up.”

Victor Santiago, Forum participant

SUCCESSFULLY SHAPING MIGRATION

From 2022 to 2025, the project supported around 100,000 third country nationals who wanted to move to Germany for career or family reasons. Preparations begin well before departure: at more than 60 locations around the globe, participants can access information on language, culture and everyday life in Germany. At the core of the programme are values such as self-efficacy, cultural awareness and setting realistic expectations about life after the move. The goal is to make the transition as smooth as possible and to alleviate uncertainties from the outset through knowledge and information sharing. Numerous free resources are available through the Welcome Coaches and the multilingual website *Mein Weg nach Deutschland*, which provide support and orientation particularly in the delicate period directly before and after arrival in Germany.

In Germany, too, the Goethe-Institut has created structures to make the transition easier. At 50 infohouses – primarily in rural areas and small towns – migrants can receive information about living and working in Germany, practice their German, familiarise themselves with local resources and make connections with others. The infohouses function as accessible meeting places, helping to ensure that integration programmes are not just concentrated in the big cities but are present everywhere people live and work.

VICTOR SANTIAGO'S PATH TO GERMANY

The case of Victor Santiago from Brazil shows just how important this support can be. He is one of the many skilled workers who are so desperately needed in Germany – especially in the care sector, where the shortage of qualified staff has been growing for years. His path first took him, via the APAL training partnerships programme jointly funded by the Bundesagentur für Arbeit, to the Goethe-Institut, where he learned German up to A2 for free as part of the initiative *Fit for the German Labour Market (FIMA)*. He also took advantage of the consultations provided by the Pre-Integration and Transition Management project. With the financial support of his eventual employer, he was able to improve his language skills further, before beginning his vocational training at the Universitätsklinikum Bonn.

His early days in Germany were full of new experiences, some surprising. “I love sparkling water now! And sorting rubbish – when someone incorrectly sorts rubbish, I do get a bit worked up,” Victor admits. He has also discovered nature in a new way: “I go hiking more often now and go out and enjoy nature; I didn't do that so much in Brazil.” Still, he knows how challenging the move to a new country can be, that's why he has a few words of motivation for other people considering migrating to Germany: “Be brave! Try to incorporate as much German as possible into your daily life. It's also important to inform yourself about education options and work culture in Germany beforehand. You have to learn to be independent and to set goals for yourself. And be ready to embrace change.”

The success of the project's approach was made clear at Forum: Prepare. Support. Arrive., the closing event of Pre-Integration and Transition Management at the Pfefferberg Theatre in Berlin. Participants from various countries as well as partner organisations reflected on the project's achievements over the past three years. The event, which brought together stakeholders from the sectors of migration and skilled worker recruitment, served as a forum for highlighting expectations, comparing them to the reality and formulating action areas for the years to come.

VIRTUAL REALITY AS A TRAINING ARENA

The insights into innovative working methods, such as virtual reality tools, were particularly striking. How does it feel to take the bus in Germany for the first time, to visit a pharmacy or to conquer the first day of work in the care sector? For many people wanting to come to Germany, such everyday situations elicit uncertainty and fear – exactly what one Goethe-Institut in Turkey wants to tackle through its virtual reality (VR) experience. Thanks to a VR headset, participants can immerse themselves in realistic scenarios from daily life, which help prepare them for life in Germany. “These scenarios have a real effect,” Lale Erol Ün from the Goethe-Institut in Izmir reports. Afterwards, there is time for reflection and interactive exercises. Feedback from participants is impressive: many report that their anxiety about the first visit to a government agency has lessened, now that they know what to expect. Others, for the first time, receive a realistic impression of what life in Germany looks like.

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Infohouses across Germany provide migrants with the opportunity to network and get support with orientation.



At the two-day event in Berlin, stakeholders from the sectors of migration and skilled worker recruitment came together to jointly identify areas where action is needed in the coming years.

INSIGHTS FROM THREE YEARS OF PROJECT WORK

Our experiences and evaluations from the past years clearly show that successful migration begins long before arrival. It requires reliable information, ongoing support and partners who work closely together. Trust and the will to build bridges are decisive factors – for those coming to Germany as well as for the society they will become part of.

A follow-up project has already begun, expanding the programme to new countries including Uzbekistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Processes and formats will be optimised based on evaluations and – to the extent possible within the project aims – standardised. Teachers of regular language courses serve as key multipliers for projects; as such, they should receive further training on the content and on working with the target groups. They need more detailed knowledge of the specific needs of immigrants in order to adequately address their questions.

With its approach, the Goethe-Institut is demonstrating how sustainable integration can be achieved and highlighting the importance of professional preparation for the successful immigration of skilled workers. ●

The project Pre-Integration and Transition Management - Ensuring a Successful Migration Process was co-funded by the EU's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) from 2022 to 2025. It prepared third country nationals migrating to Germany for professional or personal reasons for everyday life and work. Since October 2025, the programmes have been running as part of the follow-up project *My Path to Germany – Shaping Successful Migration Pathways*.

goethe.de/meinwegnachdeutschland

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Emrike Knoche is a trainee in the Marketing and Corporate Communications department at the Goethe-Institut head office in Munich.



The German Ambassador to Indonesia Ina Lepel (left) and Constanze Michel, Regional Director of the Goethe-Institut for Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand (right), open the new Competence Centre Southeast Asia for Labour Migration to Germany in Bandung.

A CENTRE PAVING THE WAY

For the first time, the new Competence Centre Southeast Asia for Labour Migration to Germany (KSM) in Bandung combines consultation, training and fair migration under one roof.

“Germany’s demographic challenges and Indonesia’s young and skilled workforce provide an opportunity to foster strong partnerships based on mutual respect, shared responsibility and common goals.”

Ina Lepel, German Ambassador to Indonesia.

On 19 June 2025, the Goethe-Instituts in Jakarta and Bandung and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) hosted a formal reception to mark the opening of two centres in Bandung, West Java, which will advise Indonesians interested in migrating to Germany and assist with the recruitment of skilled workers. Encompassing consultations, language courses, informational events and a wide range of online activities for the Indonesian target audience as well as services for German employers, the cooperation between the GIZ and the Goethe-Institut in Bandung thus establishes a hub that will have a lasting impact on skilled worker migration.

More than 200 guests attended the opening, among them representatives from the Ministry of Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection (KP2MI), the health ministry, the presidential office and the German Ambassador to Indonesia, Ina Lepel. Partner organisations including EKONID and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) were also present. The focus was the joint objective of not only facilitating fair migration, but shaping it in a structured and sustainable way.

The newly created Competence Centre Southeast Asia (KSM) of the Goethe-Institut in Bandung is aimed primarily at people aspiring to a professional future in Germany. With language courses, informational events and intercultural preparation, it will offer them targeted support before the move. At the same time, it will also provide services for German employers looking to recruit trainees or skilled workers from Indonesia. This dual focus will mean that expectations can be clarified early on and realistic career paths outlined.

The GIZ is supplementing the KSM with the Centre for Migration and Development (ZME), which is designed for all migrants, regardless of their destination country. It provides information about fair migration standards and helps Indonesian authorities to expand their structures. With the ZME, Indonesia joins a global project network that already has locations in Morocco, Tunisia and other countries.

In 2025, the first joint activities took place: informational events, visits to trade shows, career days and special German courses for aspiring trainees. Through close coordination, the two institutions offer a service that provides individual support while simultaneously improving institutional framework conditions – and thus far transcends normal language teaching.

Bandung, an important university city and a commercial centre of West Java, proves an ideal location. Many Indonesians planning a professional future abroad come from Bandung itself or from the region, and so the presence of the two institutions paves the way for direct access, local cooperations and sustainable engagement.

The cooperation with Indonesia is a key element of Germany’s long-term skilled worker strategy. With its young population and dynamic economy, Indonesia has great potential, and the country’s government is focusing intently on professional education and international partnerships in order to achieve its economic goals by 2045. The new Competence Centre creates an institutional framework for this – and opens the door to fair, transparent and forward-looking migration between the two countries. ●

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Ulrike Drissner is Deputy Director of the Goethe-Institut Indonesia and Director of Language Programmes for the Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand region.



IN TIMES OF GLOBAL CHANGE

How is German as a Foreign Language (DaF) doing worldwide? Analysis of the latest trends reveals that German remains in demand, particularly when it comes to vocational training, study and career. Yet in many countries, factors including teacher shortages and social and political circumstances are putting DaF under pressure.

GERMAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

The study of data and trends in the DaF sector began in early 2024 with a call to local Netzwerk Deutsch organisations across the globe. Coordinated by representatives abroad, intermediary organisations in 126 countries conducted research into the latest numbers and developments. In cooperation with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Zentralstelle für das Auslandsschulwesen (ZfA), the network of Goethe-Instituts played a crucial role, especially in compiling data and trends from the school and adult education sector.

The Goethe-Institut head office began processing and verifying the data in September 2024. As not all countries were able to provide comparable or complete datasets, last year the

decision was made not to release a total figure of German learners worldwide; the published study focuses on the main trends.

The study “Deutsch als Fremdsprache weltweit 2025”, which is available online through the Federal Foreign Office, was timed to coincide with the start of the Internationale Tagung der Deutschlehrer:innen (IDT 2025) in Lübeck, the largest conference for German teachers in the world. Johannes Ebert, Secretary General of the Goethe-Institut, and Ralf Beste, former Director-General for Culture and Society at the Foreign Office, presented the most salient results of the analysis at the opening on July 28, discussing them with teachers from Latvia and India. The key findings are summarised below.

LEARNING GERMAN FOR GLOBAL MOBILITY

Analysis of the trends clearly shows that German is in demand globally – especially as a language for work and study. Particularly in countries with major demographic growth such as India, Egypt, Kenya and Nepal, German is associated with concrete chances for better mobility. Governments and education systems are increasingly orienting themselves towards the needs of their young populations, who are interested in training, study and career prospects in Germany. Programmes like the APAL training partnerships with schools in Latin America, Fit for the German Labour Market and Career Bridge, as well as pre-integration measures, help prepare people linguistically and culturally. The data show that Germany remains highly attractive as a study destination: the boom in English-language degree programmes is fuelling interest but requires accompanying German-language courses to ensure sustainable integration.

SETTING THE EDUCATION POLICY AGENDA

Growth in the DaF sector is especially prevalent in places where migrating for study or labour opportunities is encouraged, and where education systems are undergoing reform. Examples include the Baltic states, where German is being strengthened in the curriculum, and the Egyptian programme for 100 Egyptian-German schools. The demand for German in schools is increasing in many African and Asian countries too – often driven by bilateral agreements on skilled workers at the state level and by Germany's reputation for being a stable labour market. At the same time, elsewhere German is coming under pressure – from other foreign languages, an educational policy focus on STEM subjects and the promotion of local languages.

THE KEY: ATTRACTING AND TRAINING TEACHERS

One of the greatest challenges is the global shortage of qualified German teachers. Many countries report shortfalls due to retirement, the low number of students in teacher training or a lack of DaF-specific degree programmes, as in Japan, Morocco and Uruguay. In some schools, there is just one teacher for all pupils learning German; in some cases that means one teacher for more than 100 pupils. The Federal Foreign Office and intermediary organisations are responding with campaigns that focus on the expansion of teacher training at universities, training programmes such as Deutsch Lehren Lernen (DLL) and Dhoch3, career change initiatives, and providing better incentives and targeted support for young talent. One strategy developed by the Federal Foreign Office collates measures in pilot countries including Brazil, Latvia and Kenya.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND ADULT EDUCATION

At universities around the world, German is studied alongside the main degree – often as an additional qualification in technical, medical or business degree programmes. Internationalisation and exchange and scholarship schemes reinforce this trend. At the same time, in many countries the demand for specific training pathways for DaF teachers is growing.

The situation in adult education is dynamic: in many regions, the number of learners is rising rapidly due to legal and economic framework conditions driving labour migration to Germany. Private course and examination providers are seeing an influx. German is increasingly viewed as a language for career advancement,

particularly in the care, engineering and IT sectors. Pre-integration initiatives as well as partnerships with companies and professional associations play a decisive role in ensuring that migrants are well prepared and professional qualifications between countries are comparable.

DIGITALISATION AS A STRUCTURAL TREND

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a lasting effect on digital language learning. Despite the global return to in-person teaching, online formats remain a key component of many people's learning journeys. Digital platforms facilitate access for people outside of urban centres and enable flexible modes of study. Simultaneously, the influence of commercial apps continues to grow, making the market more fragmented and harder to track. Successful strategies must combine pedagogical quality with technical innovation and mobile usability.

NEW CHANCES

The 2025 data painted a multilayered picture: the position of DaF globally remains strong, driven by professional prospects, international education and stable partnerships. Still, teacher shortages, competition from other languages and digital innovations pose significant challenges. When sound policy frameworks, qualified teachers, integrated learning models and attractive academic and career pathways come together, stable conditions for the flourishing of German as a Foreign Language result – and with them, new opportunities for international educational cooperation. ●

Under the umbrella of the Federal Foreign Office, every five years the Netzwerk Deutsch, together with local working groups, gathers data on German learners worldwide. The Goethe-Institut, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Zentralestelle für das Auslandsschulwesen (ZfA) worked together on the data collection for 2025. Other institutions including German teachers' associations, Deutsche Welle and the Gesellschaft für Akademische Studienvorbereitung und Testentwicklung (g.a.s.t) also participated.

goethe.de/publikationen



Matthias von Gehlen is Head of Educational Cooperation at the Goethe-Institut head office in Munich.



German is becoming more important as a foreign language in Kenya. The interest in German courses has markedly increased, particularly since the two countries signed a skilled labour migration agreement in September 2024.

“Targeted language support and culturally sensitive preparation in the country of origin provide opportunities – both for the people coming to Germany and for a labour market that relies on skilled workers.”

Johannes Ebert, Secretary General of the Goethe-Institut

LEARNING GERMAN WITH THE BOTO GANG

Since mid-October, the Goethe-Institut has been offering a wide range of language programmes for children that – with the Boto Gang – make learning German an adventure. Seyna Dirani, Project Manager for the Boto Gang, and Kristine Petrušić, Head of Language Work at the Goethe-Institut Croatia, discuss the new services and what's special about courses for children.



Who are Boto and Pong and their gang?

Seyna Dirani: Boto and his friends are language-learning monsters from our new German programmes for children. The monsters have the children themselves to thank for their names and their appearance: in a workshop at the Goethe-Institut Croatia, children from our courses and from an Educational Cooperation (BKD) kindergarten crafted and painted their own world of monsters, and gave their creations names. Hundreds of artworks were made in the process, which we exhibited in our library. The children got to vote for their favourite monster, and then three illustrators transformed the children's drawings into wonderful graphics. The final decision was also made by the children: they selected their favourite characters, which were brought to life by the illustrator Julia Nüsch. That's the origin story of the Boto Gang.

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What's innovative about learning German with the Boto Gang?

Seyna Dirani: The Boto Gang is a joint project by the BKD and our language course services. Colleagues from Washington, Tbilisi, Jakarta, Skopje and Cairo with experience in children's courses also assisted us with various stages of the design process.

One especially innovative aspect is the project's participatory approach: children were involved in developing the new imagery, and we gathered material for young learners of German with the help of the institutes abroad.

The holistic educational concept of the Boto Gang is innovative, too. Thanks to Professors Petra Gretsch and Ana Petravić, our programme is informed by current trends in language and educational research: the teaching plan is designed to promote consistent language development and thus enables continuous teaching and learning. It also fosters, in addition to pure communication skills, interpersonal skills and Education for Sustainable Development (BNE) competencies.



Experience running children's courses in Croatia was foundational to the development of the new programme. What does it consist of?

Kristine Petrušić: The Boto Gang isn't a model language course package that can be replicated and transferred to every location in the world. Rather it's more like a set of building blocks: a collection of teaching and learning materials for children at Goethe-Instituts worldwide, a teaching plan for every course level and four exemplary implementation concepts from children's courses in our Goethe World, a methodical, didactic handout with practical recommendations for designing courses and on-site planning and a marketing catalogue to advertise the courses. Following the idea of building blocks, each Goethe-Institut can assemble a programme for young learners, adapted to local conditions and requirements.

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In Croatia there are more courses for children than for adults. From your perspective, what is special about children's courses?

Kristine Petrušić: The researcher of language teaching and learning Professor Hans-Jürgen Krumm put it well: "It's never too early when you do it right." Young children are particularly curious, open and receptive to new experiences and have no problem making mistakes. Grammar and vocabulary are acquired implicitly, in contexts that mirror their everyday lives, through games, trial and error, experience and action. The central thing here is the emotional connection to the language and identification with the teacher.

There's also a strong focus on working with parents: the Goethe-Institut Croatia organises activities like project days, theatre trips and festivals which parents can get involved with. We also have events that parents can visit while their children attend a language course. Through these opportunities, we facilitate a longstanding connection between children, their parents and the Goethe-Institut.

How does the Boto Gang cater to the specific needs of a very young audience?

Seyna Dirani: The Boto Gang are fun, likeable and easy for all children to engage with – that's the core of it. The visual and textual world means there is a high likelihood the children will identify with the gang. Every monster looks different, has different needs and, above all, contributes their own superpower, so the children can each choose a personal Boto monster to accompany them on their individual learning journey. A close, identity-building learning relationship develops, which motivates the children, fosters self-belief and allows for intercultural growth.

The Boto Gang was piloted at the Goethe-Institut Croatia last year. Could you give us a brief insight into how you went about this?

Kristine Petrušić: Starting in late September, we incorporated the material we'd collected into our children's courses, using the Boto Gang as learning assistants. The monsters are friends of Hans Hase, Felix and Franz, Karla and Kai and others; they bring along material developed at individual Goethe-Instituts and integrate it into lessons. We can already see that the children are responding positively to the concept. Since November we've been organising Boto Days at various locations around Zagreb, and the Boto Gang are also available in the form of pen toppers, finger puppets and stickers. All this enables the monsters to take on a key function as learning assistants and to support learning processes. ●

goethe.de/deutschstunde

All Boto Gang resources are free to access.



Interview by Miriam Gröning, Marketing and Corporate Communications Officer at the Goethe-Institut head office in Munich, and Pia Weide, who was a trainee in the Communications department until December 2025.





A NEW CHAPTER FOR DAKAR

The new Goethe-Institut in Dakar embodies sustainable construction and cultural exchange. Built with local materials and designed to be in harmony with the surrounding environment, it will offer space for engagement, education and inspiration.

The opening of the new Goethe-Institut in Dakar in April 2026, attended by Minister of State Serap Güler and Gesche Joost, President of the Goethe-Institut, establishes a place that combines cultural cooperation, contemporary architecture and sustainable construction. The new building, which had its foundation stone laid in 2022 by President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, is a powerful symbol of cultural exchange between Germany and West Africa.

A BUILDING CONCEIVED OUT OF DAKAR'S LANDSCAPE

The building is the creation of multi-award-winning architect Francis Kéré, whose work is known for drawing on local resources and traditional approaches to the built environment. For the new Goethe-Institut, Kéré used laterite, a material that occurs in the region and provides excellent protection from heat and noise thanks to its natural properties. The clay soil can naturally regulate a room's temperature – a crucial factor given Dakar's heat.

The material is not only a sound choice ecologically; it also boots Dakar's construction industry, as the bricks are manufactured locally and tradespeople from the region are directly involved in the construction. Kéré puts particular emphasis on matching traditional techniques with modern requirements, thereby creating architecture that is rooted in its environment without losing sight of the future. In this collaboration between his architecture studio and the Goethe-Institut, sustainability gradually became the guiding principle, resulting in a building that is specifically designed to suit the climate and everyday life in West Africa.

ARCHITECTURE AND THE CITY

The piece of land, roughly 2,700 square metres in size, is situated in close proximity to the former home of the poet and statesman Léopold Sédar Senghor, now a museum. The location is not only symbolically meaningful, it also anchors the institute in a culturally significant area of Dakar, one which thrives on the interplay of historical memory and urban change. It is therefore perfectly placed to bring past and present into productive dialogue.

Dakar itself is characterised by a mixture of modern, partly Western-influenced architecture and traditional building forms. Climate-induced challenges shape life in the dynamic and growing city, and the new building sends an important signal: in place of concrete, glass and energy-intensive air conditioning, the Goethe-Institut relies on intelligent natural cooling methods. Strategically placed openings promote air circulation and create shade – techniques that have been used in West Africa for centuries and are now making a comeback in a contemporary guise.

A PLACE FOR EXCHANGE AND FUTURE-FOCUSED QUESTIONS

The completed building offers a range of spaces for cultural events, language courses, dialogue and artistic practice. The combination of a structure with sustainability at its heart and a public cultural space lends the institute its special character: it is viewed as a flagship institution and an architectural statement – as well as an example of successful cooperation between Africa and Europe.

With the new Goethe-Institut, Dakar receives not only a modern cultural centre, but also a building that demonstrates the ecological, social and cultural impact of architecture. It creates spaces – in the figurative as well as the concrete sense – for exchange, creativity and collective engagement with future-focused questions. ●

 SDG 4, 11, 12/13



Katrin Figge is a Marketing and Corporate Communications Officer at the Goethe-Institut head office in Munich.

The new Goethe-Institut in Dakar, designed by Francis Kéré: a new space for learning, working and engaging, created using sustainable local materials.

LISTENING TO THE FORESTS

Between the Atlantic Forest and the Rio Negro, two Indigenous voices are illuminating how to take the climate debate out of the realm of experts and make it a living subject. As part of the project *Cosmoperceptions of the Forest*, Cristine Takuá and João Paulo Barreto share perspectives from their territories, in which nature, culture and spirituality are inextricably intertwined.

What can the forests teach us about the climate that the world isn't yet hearing?

João Paulo Barreto: The world isn't listening because we are being badly translated. Our relationships to what surrounds us invoke other concepts. When I view the river as "water", it becomes a resource. When I understand it as a house, I create a relationship with it, subject to subject.

Western knowledge generates isolated subjects. That's why science treats the Atlantic Forest and the Amazon as distinct. But for us, they constitute a collective body, made up of different subjects. Separating air, rain, temperature, forest makes no sense. And it is illusory to believe that the Amazon will save the planet. It exists only in connection with the other forests.

Cristine Takuá: I speak of "Nhe'ery", the Atlantic Forest – the place where the spirits bathe. A territory rich in water, where water springs forth out of the Earth, flows down the mountains and then lives on in the sea and in the waterfalls. The world has profited from the violence waged against this territory. For over 500 years this rainforest has been exploited. What is left are small islands protected by Indigenous and traditional communities. The world looks to the Amazon but it does not see that which is invisible: the guardians of the stones, the rivers, the mountains, the water. At the UN Climate Conference COP30, I saw how few Indigenous leaders from the Atlantic Forest were present in the rooms where decisions are made, even though this biome is gravely endangered. Our ancestors let themselves be guided by dreams and by nature-based intelligence. Today artificial intelligence prevails. Who is still connected to that which comes from nature?

What changes when we understand the climate as a cultural matter?

João Paulo Barreto: Science works with reason. For us, reason is just one form of knowledge. The world is inhabited by subjects – water, forests, air – with whom we cultivate relationships in the form of dialogue and reciprocity. The climate crisis stems, too, from a rupture in this relationship. When we stop communicating, we lose the ability to understand what is happening. That does not mean we should reject science, but rather recognise other forms of knowledge as well.

Cristine Takuá: The problem begins when nature and culture are split. Then, humans are centred and everything else becomes a resource. As such, it is not considered a crime to destroy a river, and deforestation is seen as development. Consumption shapes



João Paulo Lima Barreto viewing a lithograph at the Five Continents Museum in Munich as part of the project *Cosmoperceptions of the Forest*.



many of our modes of living and thinking. The modern education system imparts valuable knowledge, yes, but it often emphasises how nature can be used and regulated – instead of how we can enter into a relationship with nature. Learning for me means understanding the code of the forest: clouds, thunder, wind. When we look only at ourselves, there are no solutions.

What do the next generations need to learn?

João Paulo Barreto: Indigenous education differs from mainstream education, which follows Western logic. Yet every people has their own form of learning, and the challenge is to share this with the world.

Cristine Takuá: The first thing is to respect nature and ask for permission when you want to enter, touch, or gather from it. You are entering another's house. Schools teach theory, but not life. They do not teach you to build a connection with the territory, to get to know plants, to heal. Children are filled with content and emptied of sense.

What impact has *Cosmoperceptions of the Forest* had?

João Paulo Barreto: The project shows that our knowledge exists, it has value and it must be considered. The dialogue with other territories opens up a path for the rebirth of our own cosmoperceptions.

Cristine Takuá: For us it was very concrete. We built a house in the forest out of wood, lime, liana – a living school. The wind destroyed everything the night before the opening. A difficult but important lesson. We rebuilt the house. Today this place exists: a space in which children can learn from the forest. The project lives on – in relationships, connections, in living things. ●

Cosmopercepções da Floresta – Cosmoperceptions of the Forest, initiated by the Goethe-Institut in Rio de Janeiro, brought together Indigenous and traditional communities from South America and Europe, and started from the idea of forests as living spaces of knowledge. Between 2024 and 2025, through residencies it wove together art, science and ancestral forms of knowledge, and mounted a programme for COP30 in Belém. Cristine Takuá, philosopher, thinker, educator, artisan and member of the Maxakali people, and João Paulo Barreto, member of the Tukano people and founder of the Bahserikowi Indigenous Medicine Center, were two of the participants. Several of the works from the exhibition are still being exhibited. Cristine Takuá also had the opportunity to present the results of the project in a parliamentary session at the Bundestag.

 SDG 4, 10, 11, 16



Interview by Isabel Hölzl, Director of the Goethe-Institut in Rio de Janeiro, and Renata Leite, who works in the Communications and Marketing department.

Above: Cristine Takuá during an artist residency in the Gurani community of Rio Silveira, Brazil.

At the opening of the *Antifascism: Now.* exhibition in Munich, a panel discussion took place with curator Kalas Liebfried (centre) and the Secretary General of the Goethe-Institut Johannes Ebert (right), as well as David Suß from the Munich city council and the Serbian theatre director Ana Miljanić.



ANTIFASCISM: NOW.

Antifascism: Now. creates a space for art, activism and research to respond to our increasingly polarised present. The project establishes a vital transnational network that interrogates antifascism anew and places it at the centre of society. We spoke to curator Kalas Liebfried about the launch in Munich, the project's next 14 locations and why it is urgent we reflect on antifascism now.

What is the central idea of Antifascism: Now., and which contemporary societal developments provided the impetus for it?

The central idea of Antifascism: Now. very much depends on how you view the term. Antifascism is a highly complex concept that is frequently instrumentalised these days, and this is where the project comes in: it's about opening up new ways of approaching the concept and discussing it together – not in order to provide a ready-made definition, but to develop perspectives that enable us to adequately address fascism and antifascism. Here it is key that we devise a definition of antifascism that isn't exclusively associated with the left, but rather which is anchored in the centre of society. Antifascism should be normalised, destigmatised and democratised.

How do you link art, activism and research in the curatorial concept and why is this crucial for the project?

We link art, activism and research according to a bottom-up principle. The starting point is always the topic itself; that is, the societal ecosystem that surrounds each one of us. The rise of fascist parties, authoritarian tendencies – all this has become omnipresent. The research trips I went on last year with the Goethe-Institut were key to the curatorial concept – we drove from Munich to Rijeka, Sarajevo, Belgrade and Sofia. From Bulgaria we went on to Skopje, Tirana and Pristina, then back to Munich via Belgrade and Vienna. The regions in Eastern Europe and the Balkans have far more similarities than differences; the issues and experiences are similar, yet there's little dialogue. The exhibition in Munich presents a broad spectrum of work, from sculptures and installations to live performances and choreography, as well as participatory and archive-based events. Developed from the research trips, it is designed to initiate themes and projects that will unfold over the next three years.

Which artistic work or interaction during the preparatory or initial phase of the project did you find most moving – and why?

The preparations and the initial phase of the project were, of course, extremely intensive. We invited 50-60 guests from abroad, primarily from Eastern and Southeastern Europe. It's important to highlight that this event was not only the opening of the exhibition and the programme in Munich, but in fact the launch of the entire project, which is planned to run for three years. Many people were meeting for the first time in person – including people and institutions who are very close to one another geographically but had never before been in contact. And you could clearly see how much this reflected the project's aim: to create a forum for dialogue and shared learning, transnationally.

What impact do you hope Antifascism: Now. and the participating cultural institutions will have in the longer term?

Longer term we are planning approximately 14 destinations in total over the next three years, with a final presentation in the Ludwig Forum in Aachen. The exhibition doesn't "travel" but rather transforms in each place. Each chapter emerges from the local context and has its own thematic focal points. I hope that the complexity of the topic and the strength of alliances will really have an impact: through collective discussion, experimentation, implementation. The project can achieve a lot: it can be a forum for exchange in Eastern and Southeastern Europe – in an area where many stakeholders observe that there continues to be a particular need for this. Munich was a great place to start, as the majority of the project will take place where the topics originate; the impetus should come from there. This also closes the circle on the name: "Antifascism: Now." means that we have to re-define this term for our present moment. "Now" means that it has to happen right now. We can't first spend three years researching; we have to start today, together with a younger generation who bring their own perspectives. A project of this kind would not be possible without the Goethe-Institut, precisely because of its decentralised structure, its local knowledge and its networks. I am very much looking forward to the coming years and to this journey, which will certainly not be straightforward, but which is absolutely necessary. ●

Antifascism: Now. is a multi-year, transnational collaboration between the Munich art gallery Lothringer 13 and the Goethe-Institut. It runs until 2028 and encompasses exhibitions, symposia, residencies and education programmes created decentrally from local perspectives in (South)Eastern Europe. The project begins in Munich and will continue in Athens, Belgrade, Bucharest, Istanbul, Lviv, Tirana and Zagreb before eventually concluding in a group exhibition in the Ludwig Forum in Aachen. It aims to strengthen the position of antifascism as a fundamental democratic responsibility and to create a transnational forum for artistic and social engagement.



Interview by Emrike Knoche, a trainee in the Marketing and Corporate Communications department at the Goethe-Institut head office in Munich.

A LABORATORY OF IDEAS

The second instalment of the Unternehmen – START programme takes up the theme of immersive cultures. Beyond exhibiting the participants' creativity and flair for innovation, their projects reveal desires for societal change.

It's take two for Unternehmen – START, a joint project of the Goethe-Instituts in France and the Institut français Deutschland that aims to promote young German and French entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative industries. Participants receive support in developing and marketing their start-ups, attend sector-specific festivals and benefit from individual coaching and networking with potential project partners and clients in their partner country.

The programme's current iteration, unfolding in multiple stages between October 2025 and July 2026, revolves around immersive cultures. "Immersion" here is understood as plunging into particular surroundings with the help of modern technologies. Immersive art, for example, brings paintings to life or lets viewers become part of the work using extended reality (XR) headsets, similar to how immersive gaming transports players into a virtual world which they can influence through their actions. Immersive experiences stimulate the senses in the same way, using play to make consumers aware that their actions have consequences. This awareness is what filmmaker Elena Wiener and designer Grégoire Clamart hope to strengthen with their new company.

IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE AS A STARTING POINT FOR DIALOGUE

Elena Wiener had the idea for the multiplayer game Merkmal: Radikal! last year, in the lead-up to the German federal elections. As right-wing extremist content piled up on social media, she found she couldn't just sit back and watch, the 34-year-old recalls.

In 2024, she and her partner founded the creative studio Zweisiedlerkrebs, focusing on media formats that grapple with socially relevant topics and on games with impact like Merkmal: Radikal! The Cologne-based studio intends the browser game to be implemented in schools, where it will promote media literacy among young people and make them aware of radical right-wing content on social networks.

"Social media isn't always aggressive; it deliberately plays on sore points," Wiener recognises. Young people who need stability and guidance, she says, are particularly susceptible to apparently simple messaging. By confronting users with various posts and eliciting their reactions, the game aims above all to start a dialogue and show the potential consequences of one's social media conduct.

XR AS IMPETUS FOR ACTIVE CULTURAL MEDIATION

Another young entrepreneur who wants to encourage users to reflect on their actions is Grégoire Clamart, co-founder of the start-up Ykser in Brittany's Saint Malo. He has developed mixed reality modules to help museums and castles present cultural offerings more dynamically. His project does this with XR glasses that help visitors dive into a playful adventure, eschewing the role of passive observer. "If the user doesn't do anything, nothing happens," explains the 33-year-old, whose mixed reality app is being used by various cultural institutions as of this year. Clamart is already sure that he does not want his fledgling company to be limited to France: "My entrepreneurial vision is a European one."

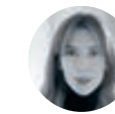
A CATALYST FOR ONGOING DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONALISATION

With networks in multiple European cities, Unternehmen – START can truly catalyse further development and internationalisation for new companies. Over the course of several months, the 12 participants meet potential clients and business partners, including those in charge of digital and immersive art in various museums across Germany and France. Participants also receive individual coaching and attend the industry's most important festivals and networking events. Among these are Bright Festival Connect in Leipzig, dedicated to digital art; Numix Lab in Budapest and Vienna, an international event for cooperation in the realm of digital creativity; and Festival of the Future in Munich, revolving around the newest developments in technology, science and art.

Although this last network event in July 2026 brings the second instalment of Unternehmen – START to a close, Philipp Asbach, the project's coordinator at the Goethe-Institut in Paris, is certain that participants will continue to collaborate with each other and with external partners they met through the programme after its time is up. Over the course of these months, Asbach has witnessed the emergence of something like a "creative economy collective", based on openness, innovative ideas and a desire for change. The 2026–2027 instalment of Unternehmen – START will be dedicated to the craft industry, specifically the textile and fashion sectors, and will once again support 12 young German and French start-ups. ●

"My entrepreneurial vision is a European one."

Grégoire Clamart, project participant



Gina Arzdorf is a freelance culture journalist. Following stints in Strasbourg and Berlin, she now lives in Paris.



Participants in the Unternehmen – START programme, which supports young entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative industries, exchange ideas. Shown from left to right: Elena Wiener, filmmaker and experience designer; Thomas Meckel, media artist and game designer; and Fabio Trotabas, who works at the intersection of art, finance and technology.

ARTISTIC, CREATIVE

AND CRITICAL

Artificial intelligence in the classroom: the Goethe-Institut's global youth competition connects language learning and media literacy, turning reflective engagement with artificial intelligence into a learning experience. Pupils around the world design their own AI artworks – from images to videos and music.

The famed Great Wave off Kanagawa tosses plastic waste back to shore. Androids traverse Ancient Rome. A girl gazes into the filter of her selfie camera and cannot recognise her own face as she stands in front of a shattered mirror. Dreamlike scenes designed by young learners of German at schools in nine countries, coordinated by the respective Goethe-Instituts as part of the global competition KIKUK – Artificial Intelligence Creative and Critical, in partnership with Cornelsen Verlag, the computer and technology magazine *c't* and Facts for Friends, an app that unpacks the latest fake news stories.

WHAT IS KIKUK?

KIKUK is a participatory competition designed for young people aged 14 and above and their teachers. It promotes critical, creative engagement with artificial intelligence in German lessons as well as in projects beyond the classroom. Nine Goethe-Instituts around the globe, from Bosnia and Herzegovina to Brazil, Georgia to Taiwan, piloted the project, in which participants produced their own images, songs and videos with the help of AI tools.

Through workshops, young people got to know the basics of AI and discussed the associated possibilities and risks. They tried out text-to-image generators, AI music and automated video editing. "We used to write rap lyrics in class," Mirela Suljagic-Omerhodzic, a German teacher from Bosnia and Herzegovina, explains. "Now pupils use song generators like Suno or Donna to compose even the music itself." The creative use of AI motivates students and fosters independent working: "They intuitively discover, experiment, question and learn," Suljagic-Omerhodzic says.

Alongside its creative applications, the question of how AI influences our perceptions was also discussed. What can seem real when images, voices and videos can be artificially created? Sylvester Tremmel, editor of *c't* magazine, explains: "Generative AI is not a niche technology only developers use, it also has ramifications for many parts of life." That's why it is so important to develop a critical awareness around it: "Everyone has to decide what they want to hand over to AI and what they'd rather keep."

STAND-OUT SUBMISSIONS

An international jury selected the outstanding contributions from more than 500 submissions. In April 2025, the 30 best teams were celebrated at a prizegiving ceremony and had their works exhibited in the virtual 3D environment GoetheVRsum.

You Sin Nien's entry from Taiwan, which centred around a linguistic misunderstanding, won in the Video category, while *Die große Flucht der Mona Lisa* by Leon Pavlović, Vuk Kisić and Đorđe Obrenović from Bosnia and Herzegovina was the clear winner in the Image category. The team noted: "We tried to present the Mona Lisa in a new way – through emotion and movement. By the end of the project it was clear to us that artificial intelligence can be really useful. The downside is that there are no limits on these models. That makes it easy to forge things and generate fake news."

With their winning song "Rhythmus der Stadt" in the Music category, Dino Spahić, Dani Bošnjić and Ömer Melih Ekinci, also from Bosnia and Herzegovina, captured the atmosphere of life in their home city with the help of AI. "It was very interesting to compare the perspective of artificial intelligence with our perspective on the city of Mostar," Dani Bošnjić said.

KIKUK 2.0

After the competition's successful debut, KIKUK 2026 begins its second round with the topic "My future with AI". Eleven countries from around the world, among them Poland, Morocco, India and the USA, will participate in the project. For the first time, an AI award will be presented to teachers. "It was very important to us to highlight the teachers behind the great works made by these young people," said Stephanie Hafner, who leads KIKUK from the head office in Munich, in cooperation with the Goethe-Instituts abroad. Another new feature will see the national winning teams come together to jointly produce an AI artwork that deals with the question of how artificial intelligence can serve as a bridge between cultures. ●

goethe.de/kikuk



Georg Milz is a Marketing and Corporate Communications Officer at the Goethe-Institut head office in Munich.

Left: As part of the project KIKUK 2.0 – Creative and Critical Approaches to Artificial Intelligence, the AI-generated image *Under the Mask* by a winning team from Taipei illustrates the tension between external masks and inner realities.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE CLASSROOM

How is artificial intelligence changing language learning in the classroom – and what does that mean for teachers and pupils? In the autumn of 2025, as part of an exchange organised by the Goethe-Institut London, teachers from Germany and the UK came together to address the role of artificial intelligence in language lessons. In addition to practical applications, they focused on opportunities, challenges and ethical questions. Their goal: to develop forward-thinking ideas for instruction.



From first ideas for generating vocabulary to a collaborative image: the teaching unit kicked off with short exercises on subjects such as working with vocabulary, then proceeded with an initial introduction to AI tools, including guidance on writing prompts. In the subsequent work phase, pupils used AI for role-playing games, getting feedback on writing processes and generating images. It became clear over the course of the project

that possibilities for AI usage extend far beyond isolated teaching methods; increasingly, broader topics such as the role of the teacher, new responsibilities and preparing schools to use digital tools came to the fore. Many teachers reported that they improved in specific competencies, especially in prompting, and at the same time changed their view of AI. As one teacher put it, “AI is no longer an experiment for me, but rather a didactically directed tool.” Moreover, teachers increasingly see themselves in the role of assisting learning, and this includes helping pupils learn to interact critically with AI.

During the subsequent practical research week, German and British teachers worked closely in tandem, sitting in on each other’s classes, trying out various AI tools and examining their effects on motivation, linguistic output and individual learning. Participating pupils’ responses paint a clear picture: “AI feels like a new friend,” one pupil said of her experience. Others underscored the technology’s supportive character: “I feel more secure when I use AI in role-playing games”; “AI helps me speak more fluently and for longer.”



NEW LEARNING SPACES, NEW EXPERIENCES

Particular emphasis was placed on AI’s potential to provide targeted support to shy or tentative learners, for instance by offering protected space to practice and differentiated feedback, which fosters individual learning processes. Teachers reported enhanced motivation and increased engagement. The quality of pupils’ speech also improved along measures such as detailed descriptions of images and increased use of precise adjectives. Criticism of some aspects of the technology was also voiced: some pupils found AI’s answers too complex or exhaustive, or complained that AI did not always respond appropriately to the given prompts. Technical problems also arose – Wi-Fi and logging in, for example. All in all, participants expressed the desire for a balance between AI-supported segments and traditional work in pairs.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AS A TOOL, NOT AN END IN ITSELF

There is no question that the core principles of teaching require that the implementation of artificial intelligence serves clear educational objectives, rather than being purely driven by technology. It is equally important that AI-supported learning phases are consciously combined with partner and group work; this technology doesn’t replace human interaction, but complements it. The project highlighted the value of open international exchange in addressing the complex questions raised by new technologies. It also underscored just how much interest there is in easy-to-access services for teachers and schools – not out of the pursuit of artificial intelligence as an end in itself, but rather as a springboard for thinking together about the future of education and developing new learning strategies. ●

The Goethe-Institut promotes cultural exchange, education and social discourse. Artificial intelligence is already influencing how foreign languages are learned and taught, and will do so even more in the future. Despite the enormous advances in the realm of AI technologies, learning foreign languages will continue to be highly relevant. Reducing language to a mere method of conveying information, one that could be delegated completely to AI, does not do justice to the complexity and the unique characteristics of successful interpersonal communication. The Goethe-Institut supports a targeted integration of high-quality AI elements which are specifically tailored to learners’ needs – both for in-person instruction and standardised online formats. AI is to be implemented only where it demonstrably enhances teaching. The implementation of AI tools in language classes as well as in preparing and evaluating course material will be an integrated component of teacher training. This will enable our teachers to engage with AI tools in a secure, informed and responsible way while providing them with a deep understanding of these tools’ active and changing role in the language-learning process.



Emrike Knoche is a trainee in the Marketing and Corporate Communications department at the Goethe-Institut head office in Munich.

VOICES FOR UNDERSTANDING

With the 2025 Goethe Medal, the Goethe-Institut honours Osman Kavala, Li Yuan and David Van Reybrouck – three individuals who, through their courage, intellectual depth and cultural engagement, are creating new spaces for dialogue around the world.



“This is how I understand my work: as part of a whole, which is more than the sum of its parts. As an intermediary between West and East, between thinking and feeling. The stranger is not one’s opposite, but rather a mirror in which there is always something new to discover. And the central purpose of language is not speaking, but understanding.” Li Yuan



The 2025 Goethe Medal honours three individuals whose work has an impact that radiates across continents: the Turkish cultural patron Osman Kavala, the Chinese linguist Li Yuan and the Belgian writer and historian David Van Reybrouck. All share an extraordinary dedication to fostering understanding, open societies and cultural exchange – during a time in which global tensions and political upheaval are making the value of such connections especially evident.

Opening the August 2025 ceremony in Weimar, Gesche Joost, President of the Goethe-Institut, highlighted the importance of such attitudes. She emphasised the three awardees’ impressive commitment to championing shared worldviews, and commended their work as the expression of a resilient cultural humanism.

left: The Goethe Medal awardees at the 2025 ceremony: Asena Güal (representing Osman Kavala), David Van Reybrouck and Li Yuan, with, among others, Christina Beinhoff, Head of the Directorate-General for Culture and Society at the Federal Foreign Office; Peter Kleine, Mayor of Weimar; Christian Tischner, Thuringian Minister for Education, Science and Culture; Johannes Ebert, Secretary-General of the Goethe-Institut; and Gesche Joost, President of the Goethe-Institut.

With his literary and academic work, David Van Reybrouck shapes international debates on colonial history, democracy and societal transformation. His books call attention to previously marginalised perspectives and increase people’s awareness of global dynamics and connections. At the ceremony, Annemie Vanackere paid tribute to his ability to shift perceptions and to fuse political sensitivity and narrative power: “He opens up new perspectives and succeeds in getting us to look at the world differently.”

Li Yuan, meanwhile, has been building bridges between China and Germany for many years. As a linguist and scholar of German studies, she has had a significant impact on German teaching in China, and her work encourages a critical engagement with cultural imagery and patterns of perception. As well as promoting understanding between the two countries, it also provides spaces for people to come into contact despite political and system differences. Presenting the award, Clemens Treter said: “Li Yuan tirelessly forges connections between China and the German-speaking world, nurtures young talent and ensures dialogue continues across cultural, political and systemic borders.”

The Turkish cultural patron Osman Kavala, who has been in prison since 2017, remains a central figure of civil society despite his confinement. Through his organisation Anadolu Kültür he supports cultural projects, creates opportunities for exchange and advocates for the rights of minorities. His work shows how culture can establish new space for understanding – even under the most adverse conditions. In her speech, the theatre director Shermin Langhoff underlined this courage: “His great gift is the ability to actually do what is deemed necessary.”

Together, the three awardees embody an attitude that views culture not as a decorative accessory, but as a powerful opportunity for political participation. They offer new perspectives, create spaces where societies can listen to each other and make a key contribution to what Gesche Joost describes as “aesthetic resistance” – the insistence that art and culture can change reality. The awardees’ work unites intellectual depth, artistic

expression and societal responsibility in a panorama of contemporary cultural understanding.

The 2025 Goethe Medal brings to the fore how important such individuals are for global cooperation. Kavala, Yuan and Van Reybrouck demonstrate that cultural dialogue requires not only courage but also – and above all – the readiness to view other perspectives as an asset. In an increasingly polarised world, this makes them invaluable voices for dialogue, openness and cultural engagement. ●



Katrin Figge is a Marketing and Corporate Communications Officer at the Goethe-Institut head office in Munich.



“In view of the pressing problems that trouble us today – wars and other acts of aggression, the condemnation of migration, repressive forms of rule – I consider it more important than ever to advocate and work towards a truly universal humanism.”

Osman Kavala (Image: archive footage, March 2017)



“I dedicate this great honour to everyone who champions a livelier democracy – a democracy that connects and explores, that listens and dares to remake itself, right here, right now. Because it is more under threat than ever; since 1945, it has never been under such pressure.” David Van Reybrouck

Since 1955, the Goethe-Institut has been awarding the Goethe Medal annually as the official decoration of the Federal Republic of Germany. Honouring individuals from all over the world who have done outstanding work to promote the German language and international cultural exchange, the Goethe Medal is the most important award of Germany’s foreign cultural policy. The more than 300 awardees include Daniel Barenboim, David Cornwell aka John le Carré, Ágnes Heller, Petros Markaris, Jorge Semprún, Robert Wilson, Neil MacGregor, Helen Wolff, Juri Andruchowytch, Irina Scherbakowa, Shirin Neshat, Ariane Mnouchkine, Yoko Tawada, Sofia Gubaidulina, Dogan Akhanli and Princess Marilyn Douala Manga Bell. A musical highlight of the ceremony was the premiere of the piece “Floating Water Revisited” for the guqin and mandolin. The new composition, created especially for the awardees, was produced in collaboration with the UNESCO Chair for Transcultural Music Studies at the Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt Weimar under the direction of Tiago de Oliveira Pinto. goethe.de/goethe-medaille

HONoured: THE KLAUS VON BISMARCK AWARDEES

Every year, the Klaus von Bismarck Award recognises outstanding employees who have shown particular professional and personal commitment to the mission of the Goethe-Institut. In 2025, the award went to two longstanding and dedicated colleagues in Brussels and Almaty.



Simone Rudolf is being recognised for her achievements in securing EU funding for the Goethe-Institut. For 16 years, she has had a central role in shaping strategic cooperation with the European Commission and has transformed the EU Liaison Office from a small unit to a recognised partner. “When it comes to EU funding acquisition, showing that you truly believe in a project has a significant impact. It is not simply about using grants to expand our scope of action, but having a sense for what these projects really mean on the ground,” Rudolf says. Under her leadership, major initiatives such as Culture Moves Europe have been instigated, along with a wide range of international cultural cooperations – including in regions affected by crisis. The jury commended her for strengthening the position of the Goethe-Institut as a reliable stakeholder at the European level through her commitment, and for creating new opportunities for global cultural exchange.



Manschuk Eschmurchambetowa is receiving the award for her exceptional loyalty and courage, and her nearly 30-year connection to the Goethe-Institut. Since the early years in Almaty, she has taken on a wide variety of responsibilities – from teaching German to operating the telephone switchboard and working in the administration, a role she has held since 2006. “My love for the German language motivates me. It has been with me since my school days and still brings me joy today. I’m proud to be part of the Goethe team,” Eschmurchambetowa says. Her dedication in times of crisis and her willingness to take on responsibility are particularly valued. During the major unrest in Kazakhstan in 2022, she stood courageously by a colleague in need – despite the personal risk. Additionally, she played a key part in the establishment of the Goethe-Institut in Bischek and continues to support the team there today.

The Klaus von Bismarck Award: Klaus von Bismarck, who was president of the Goethe-Institut from 1977 to 1989, is the founder and namesake of this award. Since 1991, the Executive Committee has honoured two colleagues every year from the global network of the Goethe-Institut.

ON THE MOVE WITH THE GOETHE-INSTITUT

Numerous artists, researchers, cultural workers and politicians from Germany travel all around the world with the Goethe-Institut every year. They convey a contemporary image of Germany abroad and gather new inspiration for their own work. The individuals mentioned here are exemplary of the diverse collaborations in the year 2025.

EDUCATION AND DISCOURSE

Sabine Adler
Aleida Assmann
Arch+
Alhierd Bacharevič
Vladimir Balzer
Davide Brocchi
Max Czollek
Carolin Emcke
Patrick Föhl
Naika Foroutan
Navid Kermani
Steffen Mau
Pollyester

FINE ARTS

Isa Genzken
Carsten Höller
Anne Duk Hee Jordan
Mischa Leinkauf
Emeka Ogboh
Lin May Saeed
Hito Steyerl
Sung Tieu
Julius von Bismarck

FILM

İlker Çatak
Vicky Krieps
Ulrike Ottinger
Christian Petzold
Angela Schanelec
Fabian Stumm
Andres Veiel
Wim Wenders

INFORMATION AND LIBRARIES

Anja Flicker
Leslie Kuo
Elisa Lindinger
Mithu Sanyal
Francesca Schmidt
Arne Semsrott
Hanne Vogt
Thorsten Wiedemann

LITERATURE AND TRANSLATION FUNDING

Marcel Dirsus
Daniel Kehlmann
Anke Kuhl
Khuê Phạm
Sasha Marianna Salzmann
Tonio Schachinger
Christian Stöcker
Jackie Thomae
Senthuran Varatharajah
Uljana Wolf

MUSIC

Ensemble Mosaik
Shuteen Erdenebaatar
Freiburger Barockorchester
Felix Klieser
Helmut Lachenmann
Brigitta Muntendorf
Mary Ocher
Theresia Philipp
Polygonia
Günther „Baby“ Sommer
Mieko Suzuki
Vision String Quartet
Zafraan Ensemble

LANGUAGE

Bartholomäus Bruderschaft
der Deutschen in Lissabon
Dieter Schwarz Stiftung
Petra Gretsch
Hans Hermann Voss-Stiftung
Internationaler Deutschlehrerinnen-
und Deutschlehrerverband
Malgorzata Kupis
Nicolas Mahler
Ana Petravich
Bernadett Veress

THEATRE AND DANCE

Lola Arias
Eva Behrendt
Till Briegleb
Ewa Dziarnowska
Familie Flöz
Gob Squad
Armin Hokmi
Thomas Köck
Anna Konjetzky
Laura Olivi
Moritz Ostruschnjak
Venuri Perera
Kevin Rittberger
Jefta van Dinther

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Encounters between people build trust. They make mutual understanding and respect possible. This past year, Goethe-Instituts around the world once again welcomed figures from the spheres of politics, culture and education.



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7



8



9



10

- 1 Federal Foreign Minister **Johann Wadepuhl** is visiting the Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan in Bangalore as part of his trip to India. He is accompanied by the President of the Goethe-Institut, Gesche Joost.
- 2 The authors **Hadija Haruna-Oelker** and **Max Czolleck** as well as comic artist **Alex Jakubowski** as guests at the German Pavilion at the Kerala Literature Festival in India in January 2026.
- 3 **Armin Laschet**, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Bundestag, and Johannes Ebert, Secretary General of the Goethe-Institut, in November 2025. At their meeting they mainly discussed the international role of the German language and cultural promotion.
- 4 At the presentation of her autobiography "Freedom" in Prague, the former Federal Chancellor **Angela Merkel** also met Anais Boelicke, the head of the Goethe-Institut in the Czech Republic.
- 5 The Vietnamese content creator **Uyen Ninh** is hosting a workshop for language students at the Goethe-Institut in Hanoi, where exchange, storytelling, and networking within the cultural and creative industries are the focus.
- 6 Pritzker Prize laureate **Francis Kéré** at the opening of the new Goethe-Institut in Dakar. The building he designed stands for sustainable construction in a local context.
- 7 Director **Wim Wenders** travels to Hangzhou to present his works as part of a retrospective organized by the Goethe-Institut and to exchange ideas with Chinese filmmakers.
- 8 Producer **Sandra Maischberger** and Asma Diakité, the director of the Goethe-Institut in Singapore, at a discussion about the film "Riefenstahl" (2024) as part of the German Film Festival.
- 9 The author and journalist **Alice Hasters** (right) is taking part in the panel discussion "Black Feminism: Transatlantic Experiences and Contemporary Challenges" as part of the FLIR program.
- 10 As part of the collaboration with German Film for the German Film Fest Madrid, the Goethe-Institut Spain will present a curated film series in June 2025 about the actress and director **Nicolette Krebitz** (left in the image).

GERMANY



12
institutes



51,693
course participants



151,568
exams taken



66
cultural events



3,466,428
visits to country portals

What's on people's minds in the region?

The institutes in Germany are working to further increase the quality of the language courses and cultural events they host. Online classes are also an important part of what they offer. The combination of high-quality language courses that provide certification, the opportunity to participate in current debates in Germany, and contact with interesting people from all around the world provides a necessary counterweight to learning German via an app! Indeed, in-person intensive language courses at Goethe-Instituts in Germany are facing increasing competition from inexpensive, innovative apps and AI-supported programs, which particularly appeal to beginner learners. In 2025, the geopolitical situation and the tough job market migrants faced led to a reduction in the number of language learners from abroad, while our corporate clients and public sector partners were impacted by cuts.

Which moments were particularly memorable?

In July 2025, the summer month with the highest volume of rainfall for years, the Goethe-Institut Munich welcomed young German learners from Qatar, who enjoyed four weeks of an intensive language course and recreational programme with their teachers and were excited about the cool, rainy climate. Since 2015, the Goethe-Institut Bonn has been running the German courses for Afrika Kommt!, an exchange programme training young teachers from Sub-Saharan Africa. Each year, between 30 and 40 fellows come on behalf of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) – as of 2026, there have been 170 participants – and happily leave the institute with their certificates. The staff at the institutes in Germany are very pleased to be supporting these special courses – our doors are wide open!

What projects did the Goethe-Institut launch in 2025?

Staff at the twelve institutes in Germany are constantly in contact with young people and adults from more than 150 countries. These encounters inevitably bring together people with different and conflicting opinions, views and perceptions. To foster constructive dialogue and respectful interaction, the institutes are creating a set of guidelines: based on a needs assessment, a protocol is being developed which will provide employees with guidance on raising awareness of antisemitism and on handling antisemitic incidents robustly. The content of the protocol will also be presented to employees in a workshop tailored to their needs. This project was funded by the Remembrance, Responsibility and Future (EVZ) Foundation.

What's planned for 2026/2027?

The twelve institutes in Germany are taking part in the Goethe-Institut's 75th anniversary celebrations with a language festival for the public in Berlin this June. The event, with the slogan "We have to talk!", highlights among other aspects the fact that our teacher training and language programmes in Germany, as well as at our first branches abroad, constituted the cornerstone of the Goethe-Institute's work internationally and remain a constant to this day.



Dr. Imke Mohr has been Regional Director for Germany since July 2024.



above: Author Leona Stahlmann at **Europa im Original**, a literature event series jointly organised by European cultural institutions in Munich, which provides a platform for discussions about the environment, the climate crisis and ecological issues in contemporary European literature.

below: To celebrate **60 years of the Goethe-Institut Schwäbisch Hall**, the Schwäbisch Hall city orchestra, conducted by Anne Böhme, presented Goethe in Concert in the Hospitalhof's courtyard. The Goethe-Institut, which is participating in the city's cultural anniversary year, has occupied the left wing of the building since 1965.

EUROPE I



24
institutes



53,386
course participants



155,835
exams taken



4,714
cultural events



150,768
library visits



4,591,992
visits to country portals

What's on people's minds in the region?

At the 24 institutes in EU and candidate countries, as well as in territories directly affected by war and crisis, uncertainty and anxiety about the future mark everyday life. Russia's war of aggression is polarising parts of the region. A broad spectrum of positions on Russia, the EU/Europe, the rule of law, migration, human rights and press freedom are shaping politics and the public sphere, while economic pressures such as the cost of living, inflation, emigration and social inequality exacerbate the situation. Young people in particular are facing a lack of prospects.

What projects did the Goethe-Institut launch in 2025?

In the region with the most German learners in the world, the Zukunftschance Deutschlehrer*in project promoted the teaching profession through certification, advanced training and public relations. In our cultural and information work, the focus was on topics such as inclusion in the cultural scene, memory culture, international co-productions and resilience, reflected in projects including the anti-disinformation training programme True Lies (Belgrade) and Heritage in Focus (Athens), a cooperation with the Humboldt Forum Berlin. Externally funded projects were continued, among them Innovation.Media.Minds (West Balkans) - organised in cooperation with the DW Akademie and House of Europe in Ukraine - and enabled us to expand our scope. Providing appealing venues for events and engagement, from the redesigned library in the Goethe-Institut Tbilisi to our leafy courtyard in Prague, was key.

What are the greatest challenges?

Political and administrative conditions make long-term planning difficult. Legal restrictions limit our room to manoeuvre; in many countries, they require us to make tough choices between cooperating with states and supporting civil society actors. Our work in and with Ukraine continues to require immense effort on the part of our dedicated team and local partners.

Which moments were particularly memorable?

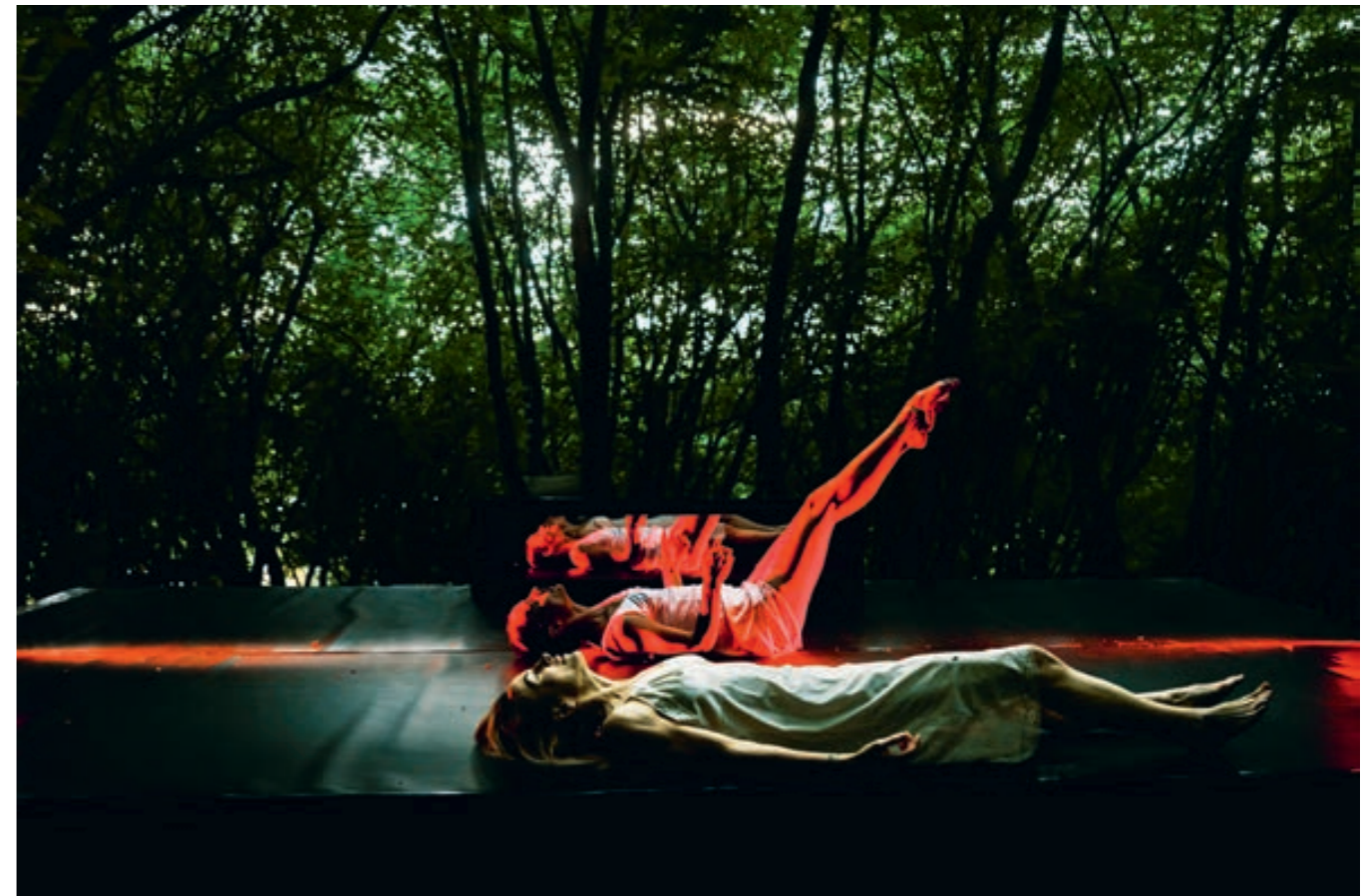
One particularly resonant moment was the awarding of the Goethe Medal to the Turkish cultural patron Osman Kavala, who is currently incarcerated - a powerful signal for cultural freedom and dialogue. Two milestones were the founding of a Goethe-Institut in Yerevan and the opening of a liaison office in Chişinău, the capital of Moldova. The Goethe-Institut in Thessaloniki celebrated its 70th anniversary. Our close collaboration with partners and the audience's positive response show how much our work is valued.

What's planned for 2026/2027?

Even in times of crisis, strong networks distinguish our organisation's work. Together with the Europe II region, we will be highlighting the continent with projects such as Listening; two excellence projects will also begin in 2027: Cosmaudition: Der dekoloniale Klang der Sterne in Yerevan and Aman, Aman, which explores migration between Greece, Germany and Turkey. In February the exhibition Antifascism: Now opened in Munich; in 2026/27, it will tour the region with an extended programme. The Goethe-Institut Budapest will move into new, inviting premises this year.



Sonja Griegoschewski has been Regional Director for Europe I since January 2025.



above: At the **Tarabya Cultural Academy's Summer Festival** in Istanbul, the creative duo Elif Sözer and Zeynep Özden presented the performance "İvi war hier" featuring actor Basma Seiba. The work was funded by the residency's co-production grants.

below: The **Saniao Art Residency**, established by Creative Connections and Creative Compass Georgia, supports young artists in rural areas. In Maghrani, a village in the Georgian region of Dusheti, work has started on a new open-air stage that will serve as a creative space for workshops and discussions.

EUROPE II



28
institutes



15,647
course participants



71,304
exams taken



3,165
cultural events



121,878
library visits



2,225,727
visits to country portals



Dr. Elke Kaschl Mohni has been Regional Director for Europe II since 2025.

What projects did the Goethe-Institut launch in 2025?

In Dublin, Karriere Quantum was all about new technologies, AI and quantum science, giving pupils the chance to learn German and engage with quantum technologies for the first time in a fun and playful way. Technology also proved a hit with young visitors in Lisbon at the opening of Portugal's first robot library, while in Finland Guarding the Baltic Sea made waves with artistic perspectives on nature, transience and climate change. The exhibition *Bells and Cannons* in Lithuania considers the subject of security in contemporary art and shows how militarisation and geopolitical tensions shape people's perceptions of war, security and societal vulnerability. The exhibition *Copenhagen-Berlin: Gateway to the World* at the Nikolaj Kunsthalle offered unique insights into German-Danish cultural exchange. Numerous events commemorating the 50th anniversary of Hannah Arendt's death and the 150th anniversary of Thomas Mann's birth underlined the continued relevance of the two figures – especially for our present moment. The institutes' language work focused on promoting German and attracting and training language teachers, as with *Destinazione Deutsch* in Italy and *Mit Deutsch durchstarten* in the Baltic states. In collaboration with our French partners, we established a centre of excellence for teacher training in Nancy – a milestone for Franco-German cooperation.

What are the greatest challenges?

Much of our work is quiet and consistent, and for this very reason so especially impactful, as it creates trust and strengthens relationships. Describing this impact and providing conclusive evidence of it to others is not always easy. Moreover, it remains challenging to carry out effective cultural and education work in the context of ever tighter budgets and rising structural costs. At the same time, this work, which serves foreign cultural and educational policy aims by building bridges, fostering understanding and representing a diverse image of Germany, is so important right now as a counterweight to societal polarisation and anti-democratic tendencies.

Which moments were particularly memorable?

Wonderful: a week of Radio Bridge with the rbb live from the Goethe-Institut Amsterdam and numerous instances of German-Dutch cultural exchange. Impressive: the commitment to Franco-German cultural exchange on Europe Day in Strasbourg with our president Gesche Joost. Important: the significance of independent journalism for democracy and cultural exchange in Europe at the MediaCon in Portugal. Sustainable: the formal ratification of the first *Deutsch Lehren Lernen* university partnerships, which will promote German as a foreign language in Slovenia.

What's planned for 2026/2027?







The theme of culture and security remains on the agenda. Listening is being developed into a project promoting aesthetic and discursive engagement with liberal values and democracy in Europe. *File not Found* examines digital archives at a time when freedoms are under pressure in Europe and across the world. To generate fresh momentum in German-British cultural relations post-Brexit, the two countries will present the new Creative Industries Prize, an award focusing on electronic music.



above: At the FLIP learning lab *Rewoven Realities_Young Flocks Edition* in the Carnica-Institut in Kranj, Slovenia, young people dived into a creative world fusing sustainable fashion, textile art and performance. The Carnica-Institut, a cultural NGO in Kranj, received European, national and local cultural funding for the project.

below: A look at the exhibition *Kopenhagen-Berlin: Tor zur Welt* in the Nikolaj Kunsthalle, which from August 2025 to January 2026 brought together artistic visions from the two cities. On show were artworks by Ulrik Møller, Tommy Stöckel, Lise Harlev, Vinyl-terror & -horror, Gitte Villesen, Cassie Augusta Jørgensen, Dina El Kaisy Friemuth, Alexander Tillegreen and Deniz Eroglu.

NORTH AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

	18 institutes
	22,102 course participants
	115,999 exams taken
	1,441 cultural events
	153,040 library visits
	2,933,119 visits to country portals

What's on people's minds in the region?

The wars and conflicts in the region leave deep scars and put humanity to the test. Enduring this destructive violence and immeasurable suffering, actively listening to our partners and furnishing future perspectives – time and again we are at a loss for what to say. Creating spaces for frank dialogue and critical self-reflection is becoming increasingly difficult. And yet there is no alternative.

What projects did the Goethe-Institut launch in 2025?

Despite the ongoing wars, we are trying to continue our work where possible. Our host countries' interest in the German language and in educational cooperations has not lessened. The Goethe-Institut is working with education ministries in the region, training teachers and advising on issues relating to the curriculum in order to improve German language lessons and anchor them in state education systems, as with, for example, the 100 Ägyptisch-Deutsche Schulen project. The integration of German lessons into the curriculum at Egyptian vocational colleges enables young skilled workers to access better opportunities in the job market, in their home countries as well as in Germany. Through festivals, residencies and artist engagement, the project Halaqat is posing questions about care and gender, while Un|Controlled Gestures invites choreographers to explore the subject of shock. As part of the Lissa residency programme, artists at the Zentrum für Kunst und Urbanistik in Berlin, meanwhile, are creating works on the topic of liminality.

What are the greatest challenges?

It is rapidly becoming more difficult to fulfil our mission of delivering independent cultural and education work as we did in the past. Multiple crises and political dynamics, uncertainty, fear, concern and vulnerability – such conditions make it hard to create space for open conversations, for truly listening, persevering and asking ourselves uncomfortable questions. Even though we often don't have the answers, we must find new ways forward – in dialogue with our partners around the world.

Which moments were particularly memorable?

It is the people – the artists, pupils, partners, policy-makers – who remain in our minds and give us hope. The exhibition *Postcards from Khartoum*, which became a striking space for collective remembrance in exile, was very moving. The major regional education conference in Tunis in January 2026, the empowerment of young women through Game Changers and the innovative sustainability ideas from Be2aty – Meine Umwelt also made an impression.

What's planned for 2026/2027?

We are continuing our work – with everything we have. The primary focus is not on projects, but on our approach. We will continue to create spaces where honest dialogue is possible, and look for ways forward together with our partners globally. We will deepen our transnational work with communities in exile, as well as our focus on gender, care, digital events and sustainable education work. There is no clearly defined path. But it is our duty to carry on – because there is too much to lose and because the Goethe-Institut, with its unique network, has an important contribution to make.



Lilli Kobler has been Regional Director for North Africa and the Middle East since September 2023.



above: Led by Emma Lewis from Dance On Ensemble, students at the Sharjah Performing Arts Academy take part in a masterclass inspired by "Mellowing". Choreographed by Christos Papadopoulos, the production was staged in the Abu Dhabi Cultural Foundation in November 2025.

below: In August 2025, the Hansen House in Jerusalem hosted an exhibition to mark the fifth anniversary of the **Straight-to-the-Heart Police Force**, a project by artist Idit Kischinovsky. During the Balfour Protests, the initiative deployed symbols of care – heart stickers and conversations – as a poetic response to the escalating conflict and violence.

NORTH AMERICA



12
institutes



11,112
course participants



20,697
exams taken



1,649
cultural events



10,944
library visits



1,126,832
visits to country portals

What's on people's minds in the region?

Donald Trump's second presidency is destabilising, to an unprecedented degree, both the USA domestically and the country's relations with its neighbours and former allies. Many people believe that the oldest democracy in the world is in danger, despite the remaining checks and balances, of impugning its core values. In 2025, the government's pledges and actions exacerbated divisions in the country and the region. Protests were initially slow to take shape but have become increasingly hard to ignore – and yet parts of public life are frozen in a state of shock.

What projects did the Goethe-Institut launch in 2025?

The extensive event series *Among Friends*, which runs until mid-2026, deliberately addresses an audience beyond the large, liberal US metropolises. While its name proposes that we consider ourselves on friendly terms, it invites us to enter into dialogue with one another about our differing values and world-views. In Mexico, a new residency for artists from Central America facing persecution was set up, and in Cuba, despite extremely difficult circumstances, a co-produced dance performance was staged to much acclaim.

What are the greatest challenges?

The upending of politics has led to a marked increase in people's interest in the Goethe-Institut's work in the USA. At the same time, almost everything we do has become more politicised. In every country in the region, we are walking a fine line between politics, education and culture. And we must be aware that many people in North America do not view – or no longer view – Germany and Europe as positive alternatives to their own societies. This affects Germany's ability to attract skilled workers, especially from Mexico.

Which moments were particularly memorable?

The opening of our branch in Houston, Texas, enjoyed a very positive reception. In the USA, Canada and Mexico, young people continue to be enthusiastic about exchange with Germany. In Washington, the Goethe-Institut became a safe haven for the LGBTQ WorldPride parade, an organisation that had become homeless. Above all: all the institutes are positioning themselves in these challenging times as places where open and respectful, but also contentious, discussions can be held.

What's planned for 2026/2027?

We are continuing the series *Among Friends* with about fifty more events; we want to strengthen German-American city partnerships with a special programme, and explore various aspects of democracy during the 250th year of the USA's existence. Starting this summer across the whole region, the *Alle gegen alles* programme will celebrate fifty years of punk and its role in North American and European protest culture. In the USA, Canada and Mexico, the institutes are organising a varied programme of events around the FIFA World Cup, designed especially for schools.



Klaus Krischok was Regional Director for North America from 2023 to March 2026. This April, Wenzel Bilger took over the role.



above: The OtroLado Dance Company led the audience in Havana dancing through conceptual artist Joan Brossa's exhibition *La séptima cara del dado* in the gallery LÍNEA Arte Contemporáneo. The performance produced a dialogue between dance and installation, letting visitors experience the movements at close range.

below: The 30th anniversary of the **Berlin & Beyond Film Festival** began in March 2026 in the reopened Castro Theatre in San Francisco. Featuring 13 films from Germany, among them *Köln 75, Kein Tier. So Wild.* and the documentary *Kreator – Hate & Hope*, it spanned five days. The Vogue Theatre and the SFMOMA Phyllis Wattis Theater, as well as the Rialto Cinemas Elmwood in Berkeley, also hosted screenings. Guests included Mala Emde, Ido Fluk, Charlotte Taschen, Thomas Prenn and Burhan Qurbani.

EAST AND CENTRAL ASIA



11
institutes



16,675
course participants



86,015
exams taken



1,827
cultural events



217,710
library visits



1,612,023
visits to country portals

What's on people's minds in the region?

In East and Central Asia, our work is shaped by marked geopolitical upheaval and increasing restrictions on freedoms: public discourse is under pressure, and people are struggling due to economic insecurity and a lack of clear prospects. Ecological changes, such as the melting of glaciers in Central Asia and air pollution in Mongolia, compound concerns. On the plus side, there is openness to technological progress, and education is highly valued as a gateway to social mobility or pursuing a career abroad. Demographic challenges and the assertion of cultural identity remain dominant issues.

What projects did the Goethe-Institut launch in 2025?

Almaty presented new perspectives with its decolonial SoundLab and a regional dance residency, while Tashkent became a creative and education policy hub, hosting the project GameDev as well as programmes on career guidance and helping prospective migrants prepare for professional life abroad. China and Hong Kong enjoyed the spotlight at the Heidelberger Stückemarkt theatre festival, which featured China as the guest nation, and Taiwan saw youth theatre cooperations extended. Experimental gallery spaces were established at the Goethe-Institut in Japan. Mongolia inspired with art about climate and sustainability. In Korea, the focus was on networks in the field of sound and new music, and Shaping AI sparked debate about the societal implications of artificial intelligence.

What are the greatest challenges?

Political restrictions require carefully curated programmes. In China, the Goethe-Institut works to counteract mutual negative perceptions between Germany and China, emphasising personal interactions. In Japan, the situation is different: Germany's pronounced interest in the country is not reciprocated; Japan shows comparatively less interest in other countries. In Korea, we want to spark curiosity about contemporary German culture beyond the well-known figures. The growing competition we face in Central Asia in the language sector and in the recruitment of skilled workers necessitates effective coordination.

Which moments were particularly memorable?

Moments with personal and artistic resonance linger: in Kazakhstan, a reading about motherhood led to an intergenerational dialogue and the founding of a "working mums' club". During the Lucky Supper Club in Seoul, one participant felt safe enough to share for the first time that she lived with another woman – this left a lasting impression. In China, the Hannah Arendt conversations with author Thomas Meyer had real intellectual depth. In Tokyo, the experimental music scene came together to celebrate aesthetic experimentation, and in Mongolia, the XAOS Festival showcased a young, dynamic cultural landscape.

What's planned for 2026?

With Unruly Mirrors, Almaty is initiating a regional project on discourses around beauty; in Bishkek, the opening of a German-French cultural institute is in the works. Tashkent is launching InfoCheck Central Asia, which will address disinformation and AI. The global tour of Techno Worlds will conclude in Shanghai, while Hong Kong reflects on 200 years of photography in the age of AI. Taipei is hosting a Brecht Forum featuring productions from Germany, Tokyo is developing an event on the aesthetics of the "Berlin underground" years, and with Resurgence, Mongolia is exploring issues of climate and migration. Korea is extending its cooperations in the areas of video and experimental film. In May, the region presented the project Solitude: Loneliness & Freedom at Hebbel am Ufer in Berlin for the Goethe-Institut's 75th anniversary. Goethe-Institut. und Freiheit" im HAU Hebbel am Ufer in Berlin.



Dr. Clemens Treter has been Regional Director for East and Central Asia since autumn 2022. Prior to this he spent six years working at the Goethe-Institut China in Beijing.



above: The performance/installation **Morning Time** was a co-production by Bella Santos, who took part in the Villa Kamogawa residency programme in 2022, and Kyoto-based dancer and choreographer Emi Ogura. The work explores questions of grief and was presented at the Kyoto Art Center in March 2025.

below: The installation **Dragonfly**, part of the project Solitude: Loneliness & Freedom was showcased at the XAOS Festival by the Goethe-Institut Mongolia. It invites visitors to embark on a journey through sound, light and space.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA



15
institutes



17,292
course participants



150,526
exams taken



1,862
cultural events



65,073
library visits



2,427,542
visits to country portals

What's on people's minds in the region?

In many countries on the African continent, the economic situation continues to deteriorate. Steady, long-term employment is rare; casual, unofficial work is the daily reality for many people. Simultaneously, international political developments – including new trade policy tensions – are causing further uncertainty. In parts of the Sahel and West Africa, the threat posed by armed groups has increased rather than abated. The influence of various international actors continues to grow. In 2025, a number of countries saw restrictions on civil rights, repressive measures against protestors and the undermining of freedom of expression.

What are the greatest challenges?

Some of the greatest challenges are censorship, self-censorship and the lack of safe public spaces. The demand for exams and language courses often exceeds existing capacities. Our cultural partners frequently have limited resources, which makes cooperation difficult. Then there are mobility barriers that hinder intra-African cooperation. The project MobiArts, a mobility and exchange programme for artists, aims to counteract this, making creative collaboration possible.

What projects did the Goethe-Institut launch in 2025?

In 2025, the Goethe-Institut South Africa marked its 30th anniversary with a big celebration in Johannesburg. Various programmes were organised as part of the initiative Mein Weg nach Deutschland: for example, the company Emons Logistics recruited trainees from Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire who had completed super-intensive language courses at the Goethe-Institut. The region saw record numbers of people taking language classes and examinations in 2025. The Goethe-Institut Ghana's podcast *Dreaming New Worlds*, which explores the role of artificial intelligence in the African creative sector, became the starting point of a larger regional project, which is taking shape this year. In Addis Abeba, an evening of Sudanese photography and music drew many people from the Sudanese diaspora, while the regional project Network of Belonging supports Sudanese artists who have fled the country with opportunities for exchange, exhibition spaces and local networks.

What's planned for 2026/2027?

The Goethe-Institutes in the region are currently implementing multiple EU-funded projects, including three that started in 2025: the Sub-Saharan Africa Component, in cooperation with the French national agency for international technical help, Expertise France; the Southern Africa Component, together with UNESCO; and the West Africa Component. In addition, we're organising an extensive museum partnership, also in collaboration with Expertise France. In 2026, other regional projects will interrogate, among other topics, the term "cultural exchange", further sharpening its meaning and relevance for international cultural work. In Dakar, following years of construction, a new, architecturally outstanding institute has been opened. It will serve as a key cultural centre for the entire region.









Andreas Ströhl has been Regional Director for Sub-Saharan Africa since 2023. He was Regional Director for North America from 2016 to 2023.



above: A view of the **Goethe-Institut Ethiopia's** multimedia studio, which offers a wide range of services for learning, research and digital production.

below: A visitor views Joel Lukhovi's artwork in the exhibition **The Ties that Bind**, hosted by the Goethe-Institut Nairobi. Curated by Niklas Obermann, it features new works by participants in the mentoring programme Sasa Nairobi and examines the personal and societal issues that shape present-day Kenya.

SOUTH AMERICA

	12 institutes
	17,091 course participants
	24,820 exams taken
	1,788 cultural events
	69,732 library visits
	1,154,849 visits to country portals

What's on people's minds in the region?

The seismic shifts in global politics have left their mark on South America. While the wars and conflicts in Europe seem far away, their effects can also be felt on this continent. The USA's intervention in Venezuela has shown how swiftly unjust totalitarian regimes can disappear. Major decisions again failed to materialise at the 30th World Climate Conference in 2025, though COP30 certainly was a great spectacle. There are high hopes for the free trade agreement between the European Union and the Mercosur states, which provisionally entered into force on 1 May 2026.

What projects did the Goethe-Institute launch in 2025?

The exhibition *Pure Gold* showcased designers with ecologically and ethically sustainable practices and was a great success in Uruguay and Brazil. *Cosmoperceptions of the Forest* drew crowds on the sidelines of COP30, making an impact that could even be felt in the Bundestag. Hannah Arendt's birthday received a fitting commemoration: the theorist enjoyed an early readership and translation in South America and remains highly relevant to this day. In cooperation with the German Federal Employment Agency our programme for vocational training partnerships with schools in Asia and Latin America entered its fourth round; subsequently, many trainees from South America were able to begin their vocational training in German companies in 2025.

What are the greatest challenges?

Language courses are a central component of the Goethe-Instituts' work in the region and are closely linked to their cultural and education policy aims. The declining number of people learning German at Goethe-Instituts in the region is reducing financial margins. Although our activities rest on broader foundations, the language courses are a cornerstone of this work, and these fluctuations cannot be easily offset by other means. As a result, important initiatives are only able to receive very limited funding currently, and every euro has to be carefully spent. That is the new reality for the Goethe-Instituts in the South America region.

Which moments were particularly memorable?

Large numbers of visitors in Montevideo and Curitiba have been a source of solace after the long years during which the Goethe-Instituts could only host smaller events. Trainees who have successfully settled in Germany help difficulties experienced along the way to fade into the background. Satisfied guests who attend the events in our institutes provide us with motivation and support. Letters that confirm to our staff that considering culture and climate together is important and necessary make the tremendous effort of participating in COP30 feel worthwhile.

What's planned for 2026/2027?

After the forest comes the water: in 2026, the findings of an intensive research project on the unequal distribution of water will be presented in Berlin as part of the Humboldt Forum's focus on heritage and property – this will be a highlight of the project, with a follow-up event planned for South America in 2027. 2026 will also see São Paulo host the continent's biggest conference of German teachers, and in 2027 Chile will be the guest nation at the Frankfurt Book Fair – so there are still plenty of events we're looking forward to.



Dr. Matthias Makowski has been Regional Director for South America since 2019. Prior to this he was Regional Director for Southeastern Europe.



above: A dance performance on the rooftops of Mendoza during the 10th Argentinian Congress of German Teachers. Bringing participants and the city together to striking effect, the performance was a particular highlight of the programme.

below: A participant in the artist residency programme *Cosmoperceptions of the Forest* worked in a Guarani community in the Brazilian state of São Paulo. The residency combined creative practice with community knowledge and explored the relationship between humans, the forest and cultural memory.

SOUTH ASIA



10
institutes



24,352
course participants



223,379
exams taken



1,784
cultural events



147,762
library visits



4,850,702
visits to country portals

What's on people's minds in the region?

Many people in South Asia are troubled by recent political upheavals and the drift towards authoritarianism globally as well as in their own countries. Populations, particularly in big cities such as New Delhi and Dhaka, are suffering from extreme air pollution. Thick smog leads to massive restrictions on everyday life and has a serious impact on health. Water shortages and dangers caused by climate change in rural areas also give many people cause for concern.

What projects did the Goethe-Institut launch in 2025?

The region organised several projects on media literacy and the use of new technologies, among them Beyond Bias, which looked at systematic biases and prejudice in AI applications. Journalism Connect brought together young journalists from Germany and India, sparking a wide-ranging debate on the topic of trust in the media.

What are the greatest challenges?

The Goethe-Instituts in South Asia are deeply committed to helping skilled workers develop the language and intercultural skills necessary for the German job market. The huge demand for language courses and for examinations in particular means that these services need to be continuously expanded. Recruiting and training German teachers is one of the main challenges, while maintaining high standards and ensuring exam security also require our close attention.

Which moments were particularly memorable?

Germany's appearance as the guest nation at the Kerala Literature Festival, held at Kozhikode Beach in January 2026, was a great success. The Goethe-Institut Bangalore created a pavilion made entirely out of local materials, in which an extraordinary programme featuring guests from Germany and the region attracted thousands of visitors and addressed diverse audiences. To mark the 50th anniversary of Hannah Arendt's death, the Goethe-Institut in New Delhi curated the symposium *Contemplating the Active Life: Hannah Arendt*, where participants discussed the continued relevance of Arendt's ideas for India. The symposium examined Arendt's work from philosophical, political, artistic and societal perspectives – always with a view to the question of how, in difficult times, we can envision, represent and shape the world together.

What's planned for 2026/2027?

The institutes in South Asia are creating safe spaces for dialogue and exchange: in Dhaka, for example, a space is being set up where young artists can discuss issues of equality, diversity and inclusion. South Asia is rich in biodiversity but faces major ecological, economic and social challenges; the Bio Design Lab South Asia, in cooperation with international partners, is developing innovative ways to use local resources responsibly by connecting traditional regional systems of knowledge with contemporary design.









Marla Stukenberg has been Regional Director for South Asia since December 2022. Previously she spent six years as Regional Director for East Asia.



above: A bird's-eye view of the German Pavilion at the 2026 Kerala Literature Festival, where Germany was the guest nation. The pavilion's architecture provided an inviting setting for visitors to engage with German literature and culture.

below: Mallika Das Sutar performed at the opening of *Assembling Grounds. Praktiken der Koexistenz* at the ZKM | Zentrum für Kunst und Medien Karlsruhe. Developed as part of *Fellow Travellers*, the project was based on the touring exhibition *Critical Zones* and presented new works that reflected on the production of knowledge, technological progress and cultural resistance.

SOUTHEAST ASIA, AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

	12 institutes
	26,669 course participants
	107,948 exams taken
	3,066 cultural events
	170,685 library visits
	11,402,712 visits to country portals

What's on people's minds in the region?

The region is undergoing profound societal changes. In many countries in Southeast Asia, issues of political participation, restrictions on civil liberties, inequality and polarisation shape everyday life. At the same time, there is a great interest, particularly among young people, in education, international networks and the future. Climate change and sustainability are key themes, for instance in projects in Bangkok or artworks in Vietnam. In Australia and New Zealand the focus is on diversity, Indigenous perspectives and societal cohesion.

What projects did the Goethe-Institut launch in 2025?

In 2025 the region concentrated on projects that combined artistic excellence with regional network building and societal impact. Bandung hosted *Seriale Indonesia*, a festival for television and online series; Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City staged theatre productions and concerts that had local connections and international relevance. With *Naturhelden – Gemeinsam. Zukunft. Denken*, Bangkok launched a language project exploring sustainability, and in Manila, *Performance Ecologies*, a platform for contemporary performing arts, was established. Dialogue and discussion were the focus of events in Singapore, while Jakarta established a regional university network that will facilitate cooperation and partnerships.

What are the greatest challenges?

Political and structural conditions greatly impact our work. In Vietnam, delays in obtaining permits are holding up our programmes, while in Myanmar repression and crises make collaboration difficult. In Indonesia, calls to boycott the Goethe-Institut due to Germany's stance on the conflict in the Middle East are affecting our cooperations with partners. In the Philippines, structural problems are hindering projects, and in Malaysia tensions require sensitive mediation. Some of our institutes, including those in Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur, face increasing competition in the language sector, and our libraries in the region are being called upon to provide reliable information in order to counter disinformation.

Which moments were particularly memorable?

Seeing the success of projects left a strong impression: the German Film Festival in Singapore with 1,200 visitors, a screening at the Science Film Festival in Cagayan de Oro attended by 900 pupils, and an artist talk with Siska Aprisia about "(Not) Longing for Home" in Kuala Lumpur. Accessible events such as the German Cultural Day in Sydney and the German Christmas Market in Bangkok, which attracted more than 3,600 and around 20,000 visitors respectively, furthered our engagement with the public. It was also significant that the institutes kept operating during times of crisis, continuing their cultural, library and information work.

What's planned for 2026/2027?

We plan to expand our regional cooperations: Bandung is working with Wacken Bandung on projects encompassing digital art, electronic music and live coding. Other highlights include literature days in Ho Chi Minh City, inclusive events in Hanoi, an artist-in-residence programme in Kuala Lumpur and our book club in Wellington, as well as the Towards Empathy initiative in Myanmar. Our aim is to strengthen innovation, inclusion and networking.



above: Pupils attending the **Akademie für Umwelt und Frieden** in Indonesia plant trees on the grounds of the Balanga Museum in Palangkaraya, Central Kalimantan. In May 2025, 45 pupils and teachers expanded their environmental awareness and explored the connection between conservation and peaceful coexistence.

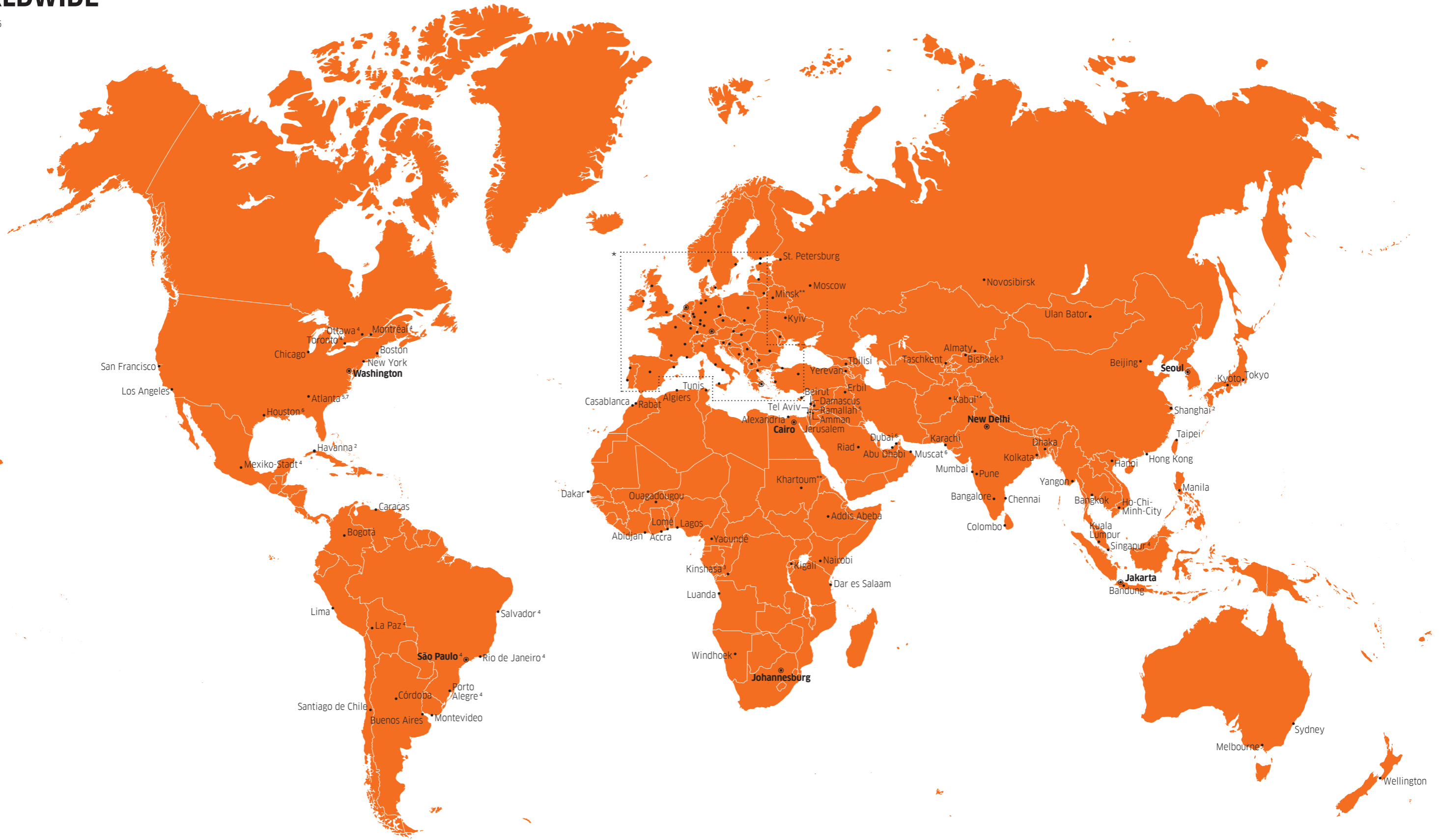
below: A festival atmosphere beneath fairy lights in Bangkok, where a **tropical Christmas market** with music, cultural events and workshops drew around 20,000 visitors and brought a festive energy to the city.



Constanze Michel has been Regional Director for Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand since August 2024.

GOETHE-INSTITUT LOCATIONS WORLDWIDE

As of 31.3.2026



<p>* BELGIUM Brussels</p> <p>BULGARIA Sofia</p> <p>BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA Sarajevo</p> <p>DENMARK Copenhagen</p>	<p>GERMANY Berlin Bonn Dresden Düsseldorf Frankfurt/Main Freiburg Göttingen</p>	<p>Hamburg Mannheim Munich [⊙] Schwäbisch Hall</p> <p>ESTONIA Tallinn</p> <p>FINLAND Helsinki</p>	<p>FRANCE Lyon Marseille³ Nancy Paris Toulouse</p> <p>GREECE Athens [⊙] Thessaloniki</p>	<p>UNITED KINGDOM Glasgow London</p> <p>IRELAND Dublin</p> <p>ITALY Milan Naples Palermo⁵ Rome</p>	<p>CROATIA Zagreb</p> <p>LATVIA Riga</p> <p>LITHUANIA Vilnius</p> <p>LUXEMBOURG Luxembourg¹</p>	<p>MOLDAVA Chişinău</p> <p>THE NETHERLANDS Amsterdam [⊙]</p> <p>NORTH MACEDONIA Skopje</p> <p>NORWAY Oslo</p>	<p>POLAND Kraków Warsaw</p> <p>PORTUGAL Lisbon Porto</p> <p>ROMANIA Bucharest</p>	<p>SWEDEN Stockholm</p> <p>SERBIA Belgrade</p> <p>SLOVAKIA Bratislava</p> <p>SLOVENIA Ljubljana</p>	<p>SPAIN Barcelona Madrid</p> <p>CZECH REPUBLIC Prague</p> <p>TURKEY Ankara Istanbul Izmir</p>	<p>HUNGARY Budapest</p> <p>CYPRUS Nicosia</p>	<p>[⊙] Regional institute [•] Goethe-Institut ^{**} In abeyance</p>	<p>¹ Institut Pierre Werner ² Associated institute ³ Liaison office ⁴ In the form of local corporations ⁵ Franco German Cultural institutes ⁶ Field office ⁷ Partner networks</p>
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At the **Global Working Conference 2025**, 225 executives of the Goethe-Institut from all over the world came together in Munich. The event provided space to further develop the institute's strategic role in light of global upheavals.

REGIONAL STRUCTURE

With 154 institutes, the Goethe-Institut has a presence in 100 countries worldwide. In total, the Goethe-Institut's network encompasses around 1,100 points of contact. These include examination cooperation partners, educational resource centres, German reading rooms, information centres, Goethe-Centres, cultural associations and language centres, as well as residency locations and project spaces .

As of 31.3.2026

GERMANY

- Berlin (1960)
Dr. Manuela Beck
- Bonn (1985)
Anna Dimitrijević
- Bremen (1981)
Gesine von Ribbeck
- Dresden (1996)
Robert Sobotta
- Düsseldorf (1984)
Frank Baumann
- Frankfurt/Main (1983)
Uwe Mohr
- Freiburg (1971)
Kay Hug
- Göttingen (1972)
Anke Kleinschmidt
- Hamburg (2002)
Jan Helfer
- Mannheim (1980)
Dr. Katharina Buck
- Munich [R] (1981)
Dr. Imke Mohr
- Schwäbisch Hall (1965)
Svenja Hecklau-Brümmer

EUROPE I

- Ankara (1957)
Dr. Petra Köppel-Meyer
- Athens [R] (1952)
Sonja Griegoschewski
- Belgrade (1970)
Dr. Christoph Veldhues
- Bratislava (1993)
Dr. Carola Dürr
- Budapest (1988)
Miriam Bruns
- Bukarest (1979)
Markus Huber
- Chişinău (2026)
Matthias Jochmann
- Istanbul (1961)
Mani Pournaghi Azar
- Izmir (1954)
Dr. Anne Schönhagen
- Kyiv (1993)
Fabian Mühlthaler
- Kraków (1992)
Dr. Claus Heimes
- Moscow (1992)
Beate Kolberg

- Nicosia (2011)
Tanja Krüger
- Nowosibirsk (2009)
Beate Kolberg
- Prague (1990)
Anaïs Boelicke
- Sarajevo (2000)
Simone Voigt
- Skopje (2007)
Katrin Ostwald-Richter
- Sofia (1989)
Dr. Kirsten Hackenbroch
- St. Petersburg (1993)
Beate Kolberg
- Thessaloniki (1955)
Ulrike Gasser
- Tbilisi (1994)
Laura Hartz
- Warsaw (1990)
Julia Hanske
- Yerevan (2025)
Dr. Jan-Tage Kühling
- Zagreb (1973)
Dr. Friedrich Dahlhaus

EUROPE II

Amsterdam [R] (1968)

Dr. Elke Kaschl Mohni

Barcelona (1955)

Joachim Bernauer

Brussels (1959)

Dr. Julia Sattler

Copenhagen (1961)

Dr. Barbara Honrath

Dublin (1961)

Noémie Njangiru

Glasgow (1973)

Hanna Dede

Helsinki (1963)

Dr. Irene Bark

Lisbon

(1962)

Dr. Jana Binder

Ljubljana (2004)

Lena Prents

London (1962)

Nicolas Ehler

Luxembourg (IPW)* (1970)

Diane Krüger

Lyon (1966)

Hannah Kabel

Madrid (1957)

Ph.D. Antonia Blau

Marseille (2013)

Hannah Kabel

Milan (1958)

Roberta Canu

Minsk** (1993)

–

Nancy (1963)

Sima Reinisch

Naples (1961)

Dr. Maria Carmen Morese

Oslo (1962)

Jutta Behne

Palermo (1962)

Dott.ssa Heidi Sciacchitano

Paris (1961)

Katharina Hey

Porto (1963)

Dr. Jana Binder

Riga (1993)

Ulrike Würz

Rome (1955)

Dr. Jessica Kraatz Magri

Stockholm (1963)

Judith Mirschberger

Tallinn (1999)

Maren Niemeyer

Toulouse (1962)

Stefanie Neubert

Vilnius (1998)

Anna Maria Strauß

NORTH AFRICA/MIDDLE EAST

Abu Dhabi (2006)

Dr. Claudia Römmelt

Alexandria (1959)

Gihan Zaki (Interim)

Algiers (1963)

Christiane Schulte

Amman (1961)

Dr. Christian Diemer

Beirut (1955)

Anne Eberhard

Cairo [R] (1958)

Lilli Kobler

Casablanca (1960)

Philipp Küppers

Damaskus** (1955)

–

Dubai (2025)

Dr. Claudia Römmelt

Erbil (2010)

Dr. Thomas Lier

Jerusalem (1987)

Dr. Reimar Volker

Khartum** (1964)

–

Maskat (2007)

Dr. Claudia Römmelt

Rabat (1960)

Philipp Küppers

Ramallah (1998)

Sebastian Woitsch

Riad (2020)

Dr. Alix Landgrebe

Tel Aviv (1979)

Dr. Reimar Volker

Tunis (1958)

Andrea Jacob

NORTH AMERICA

Boston (1967)

Rainer Hauswirth

Chicago (1978)

Dr. Leonhard Emmerling

Havanna (2001)

Annesusanne Fackler

Houston (2025)

Dr. Leonhard Emmerlin

Los Angeles (1983)

Luisa Rath-John

Mexiko-Stadt (1966)

Pia Entenmann

Montréal (1962)

Nadja Furth

New York (1969)

Dr. Jörg Schumacher

Ottawa (1962)

Nadja Furth

San Francisco (1967)

Dr. Alexander Behrmann

Toronto (1962)

Nina Wichmann

Washington [R] (1990)

Dr. Wenzel Bilger

EAST AND CENTRAL ASIA

Almaty (1994)

Friederike van Stephaudt

Beijing 1988)

Robin Mallick

Bishkek (2025)

Veronika Lickleder

Hongkong (1963)

Arendt Röskens

Kyoto (2011)

Enzio Wetzell

Seoul [R] (1968)

Dr. Clemens Treter

Shanghai (2003)

Dr. Evelin Hust

Taipei (1963)

Theresa Hümmer

Taschkent (1998)

Barbara Anna Bernsmeier

Tokyo (1962)

Melanie Bono

Ulan Bator (2009)

Leonhard Heydecke

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Abidjan (1971)

Claudia Schilling

Accra (1961)

Maximilian Röttger

Addis Abeba (1962)

Dr. Angelika Eder

Dakar (1978)

Dr. Stefanie Peter

Daressalam (2008)

Mpangi Otte

Jaunde (1961)

Thekla Worch-Ambara

Johannesburg [R] (1996)

Dr. Andreas Ströhl

Kigali (2008)

Anisha Soff-Ochieng

Kinshasa (2015)

Dr. Leonie Schoelen

Lagos (1962)

Dr. Nadine Siegert

Lomé (1961)

Edem Attiogbé

Luanda (2009)

Julia Schreiner

Nairobi (1963)

Cristina Nord

Ouagadougou (2008)

Stefanie Kastner

Windhuk (2016)

Dennis Schroeder

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Bogotá (1957)

Stephanie Maiwald

Buenos Aires (1967)

Friso Maecker

Caracas (2003)

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Córdoba (1967)

Gonzalo Oyola

La Paz (1965)

Isabel Kielian

Lima (1966)

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Montevideo (1963)

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Mona Kriegler

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Dr. Asma Diakité

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Christoph Mücher

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Anna Kalbhenn

Also part of the network:

Franco-German Cultural Institutes

Partner networks: Atlanta (2022),

Palermo (2021), Ramallah (2022)

Key

Institute location (year established)

Institute director

[R] Regional institute

[VB] Liaison office

* Institut Pierre Werner

** In abeyance

LANGUAGE

WE PROMOTE
GERMAN
WORLDWIDE.

256.000



participants attended the language courses offered by the Goethe-Institut worldwide. Most learners study German via in-person courses, but online courses are also very popular, accounting for around 40%. A significant increase in language course registrations was recorded during the reporting year in Togo, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Ethiopia, and the United States.

6.000



Teachers of German as a foreign language participated in certification programs for German language teachers at Goethe-Institutes abroad and in Germany. goethe.de/dll

1,1 MIO



German examinations were taken at Goethe-Institutes and by cooperation partners, 820,000 of which were administered at Goethe-Institutes. 87% of the examinations were taken abroad and 13% in Germany. Almost half of the candidates completed level B1.

700



PASCH schools are supported by the Goethe-Institut. Around 260,000 students learn German at these so-called FIT schools. In total, there are about 2,000 schools in the German Federal Foreign Office's initiative "Schools: Partners for the Future" (PASCH).

6,3 MIO



visits were recorded on the Goethe-Institut's digital learning platform. It offers language courses, exam preparation, as well as professional development programs and youth camps. onlinekurse.goethe.de

456.000



members use the exercises on the "Deutsch für dich" platform. It is the largest free learning platform for German as a foreign language worldwide. goethe.de/deutschfuerdich

CULTURE

WE PROMOTE
INTERNATIONAL
CULTURAL EXCHANGE.

826



book translations into 42 languages were supported by the Goethe-Institut. German works were most frequently translated into English, Italian, and Spanish.

1,1 MIO



visitors were recorded by the 87 Goethe-Institut libraries in 65 countries. In addition to around 550,000 digital and physical media items, the libraries provide space for exchange and interaction.

2.500



cooperations with around 8,400 cultural practitioners, organizations, companies, experts, and civil society institutions took place worldwide.

126



artists participated in residency programmes worldwide, 53 of them in the largest residencies: the Tarabya Cultural Academy, Villa Kamogawa, Vila Sul, and the bangaloREsidency.

2,4 MIO



visitors attended the physical and hybrid exhibitions of the Goethe-Institut worldwide.

22.500



cultural events organised by the Goethe-Institut reached around 6.7 million people worldwide. Particularly well attended were the 55 events of the Colomboscope arts festival, with over 13,000 visitors, and the Science Film Festival, which attracted around 1 million viewers in 20 countries.

GERMANY

WE PROVIDE
INFORMATION
ABOUT GERMANY.

286.000

followers are reached by the Goethe-Institut's TikTok channel Goetheinstitut.Deutsch. In 2025, more than 1 million video views were recorded. Particularly successful were three videos on German examinations, each with over 60,000 views.

7,6

MIO

fans and followers were recorded by the Goethe-Institut worldwide on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. In addition to information on the German language and culture, visitors can also find details about current Goethe-Institut events in Germany.

731

multipliers, experts, and journalists participated in around 63 study tours for international guests.

514.000

loans were made via the "Onleihe" online library portal. The portal was particularly heavily used in France, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Around 1,400 media items are borrowed there each day.
goethe.de/onleihe

420.000

visitors used the "Mein Weg nach Deutschland" web platform, which provides information on working and living in Germany in 30 languages.
goethe.de/meinwegnachdeutschland

116

MIO

visits to goethe.de were recorded. This corresponds to an increase of around 30% over the past three years.

ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2025

A. THE ASSOCIATION - CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENT*

Profit and loss account from 1 January to 31 December 2025

	ACTUAL 2025	ACTUAL 2024	CHANGE
	TEUR	TEUR	TEUR
Sales revenue	153.489	151.629	1.860
Revenue from grants	280.027	278.727	1.300
Income from the release of special items	-1.879	-725	-1.154
Other operating income	7.120	7.418	-298
Change in inventories	-2.060	474	-2.534
Total revenue	436.697	437.523	-826
Cost of materials	-45.926	-42.357	-3.569
Staff costs	-215.124	-215.452	328
Depreciation of intangible assets and fixed assets	-9.734	-10.619	885
Other operating expenses	-163.678	-166.178	2.500
Total expenses	-434.462	-434.606	144
Financial result	109	-89	198
Taxes on income	-362	-674	312
Result after taxes	1.982	2.154	-172
Other taxes	-1.982	-2.154	172
Annual result	0	0	0

The consolidated financial statement of the Goethe-Institut e. V. is a consolidation of the two segments "Equity Capital" and "Public Funds". Thus the statement is not purely an additive view, which is particularly evident in the sales proceeds from language work.

* Based on the auditor's report for the fiscal year and in accordance with the HGB.

B. OWN CAPITAL - EQUITY CAPITAL*

Profit and loss account from 1 January to 31 December 2025

	ACTUAL 2025	ACTUAL 2024	CHANGE
	TEUR	TEUR	TEUR
Sales revenue	67.756	66.354	1.402
Revenue from grants	1.870	1.767	103
Other operating income	1.358	1.525	-167
Change in inventories	-2.060	474	-2.534
Total revenue	68.924	70.120	-1.196
Cost of materials	-13.849	-13.024	-825
Staff costs	-30.603	-27.341	-3.262
Depreciation of intangible assets and fixed assets	-823	-766	57
Other operating expenses	-23.776	-29.027	-5.251
Total expenses	-69.051	-70.158	-1.107
Financial result	159	145	-14
Taxes on income	-12	-52	-40
Result after taxes	20	55	35
Other taxes	-20	-55	-35
Annual result	0	0	0

Revenue and other income in the self-financed segment decreased from TEUR 70,120 to TEUR 68,924. Total expenses declined by TEUR 1,107, from TEUR 70,158 to TEUR 69,051. Taking into account the financial result and after taxes, the self-financed segment closed the financial year with a balanced annual result.

* Based on the auditor's report for the fiscal year and in accordance with the HGB.

C. PUBLIC FUNDS*

Profit and loss account from 1 January to 31 December 2025

	ACTUAL 2025	ACTUAL 2024	CHANGE
	TEUR	TEUR	TEUR
Sales revenue	108.723	106.153	2.570
Grants from the Federal Foreign Office	238.861	243.847	-4.986
Third-party donations	39.296	33.113	6.183
Income from the release of special items	-1.879	-725	-1.154
Other operating income	12.869	16.796	-3.927
Total revenue	397.870	399.184	-1.314
Cost of materials	-44.601	-40.079	-4.522
Staff costs	-184.653	-188.111	3.458
Depreciation of intangible assets and fixed assets	-8.911	-9.853	942
Other operating expenses	-157.342	-158.187	845
Total expenses	-395.507	-396.230	723
Financial result	-50	-234	184
Taxes on income	-351	-621	270
Result after taxes	1.962	2.099	-137
Other taxes	-1.962	-2.099	137
Annual result	0	0	0

The total budget of the public funds segment amounted to KEUR 397,870 in the reporting year. The total revenue is essentially characterised by revenue from language courses, institutional funding from the Federal Foreign Office and project funding from the Federal Foreign Office. The Goethe-Institut achieved earnings of KEUR 108,723 through its own activities in the field of language work as well as income of KEUR 39,296 from third-party donations. Total revenues are offset before interest and taxes by total expenditure of KEUR 395,507. The financial result is chiefly a result of interest on current accounts. KEUR 1,962 were paid as other taxes. Due to shortfalls in financing, the public funds segment closes the fiscal year with the annual result of KEUR 0.

* Based on the auditor's report for the fiscal year and in accordance with the HGB.

ORGANISATIONAL CHART

As of 31.3.2026

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goethe.de/gremien

THAT SOUNDS GOOD!

Goethe-Instituts around the world produce podcasts in different languages exploring a wide range of topics. Opening the eyes, via the ears! Here's a selection.



XAM SA DÉMB, XAM SA TEY

"Xam Sa Démb, Xam Sa Tey" – know your past, know your present. In this French- and Wolof-language podcast, produced by the Goethe-Institut Dakar in collaboration with the Senegal National Archive, listeners can take a deep dive into the history of Senegal.

goethe.de/senegal/xamsademb



TYSKLANDSPODDEN

In Swedish, "Tysklandspodden" means "The Germany Podcast". It invites guests from culture and society who all have one thing in common: their connection to Germany. The podcast has already released 50 episodes, and it is now produced and moderated by Sonja Leister and Ylva Ratjen at the Goethe-Institut Stockholm.

goethe.de/tysklandspodden



GOETHE MAKERCAST

Technology for the ears: in the Goethe MakerCast, host Omar takes his listeners on a journey through the start-up landscape in Egypt and the MENA region. Together with his guests, he unpacks the latest trends in the tech and DIY scenes.

goethe.de/aegypten/makercast



POPCAST

In collaboration with the Bayerischen Rundfunk programme Zündfunk, every month Popcast presents new music beyond the charts in German and English. Over a thousand German musicians have already been featured, with many going on to achieve international recognition and appear at events hosted by Goethe-Instituts and partner festivals across the world. The podcast gives German learners the opportunity to discover language and culture in a playful way. Last year, it released its 200th episode.

goethe.de/de/kul/mus/cas.html

goethe.de/podcasts

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We extend our sincere thanks to the following foundations, companies, institutions and individuals who supported us in 2025.

goethe.de/foerderer

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Through our work, we support the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In 2025, around 7,000 language and cultural programmes took place at Goethe-Instituts worldwide, making a tangible contribution to achieving these goals. Particular focus was placed on Quality Education (SDG 4), Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17), Gender Equality (SDG 5), Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10), and Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16). Programmes that contribute to the SDGs are marked in this yearbook with the SDG logo and the corresponding number.

SDG Text Übersetzung fehlt

“The creative writing workshop the Goethe-Institut organised at the Kerala Literature Festival in Kozhikode has opened up a new, trailblazing approach to creative writing in Malayalam and a previously untapped space within the literature festival. It made a lasting impact on all participants – both in terms of their way of writing and their self-confidence.”

Indian author K. R. Meera on the creative writing workshop she led, together with Shida Bazayr from Germany, as part of the guest nation programme in Kozhikode in January 2026

“Taking part in the Cidade Floresta residency was an opportunity for me to reimagine the city through the diverse realities of the people living in Rio de Janeiro. By bringing together individuals from different areas of the city and the state, the residency invited us to reflect on how the spaces in which we live influence us.”

Renata Siqueira, Director of the Go! Girls initiative, at the residency Cidade Floresta / City as a Forest at the Museu do Açude in the Tijuca National Park, October 2025

“Theatre means freedom and celebrates the human desire for playfulness, even when it results in failure. But above all, theatre – and with it the dramatic arts – is a place for dialogue, and dialogue is the most precious achievement of our civilisation.”

Dramaturg and writer Roland Schimmelpfennig during a discussion at the Gothenburg Book Fair in Sweden, September 2025

“Many thanks to the Goethe-Institut China for providing a space in which the ‘invisible’ becomes visible.”

A participant of the Love Queer Cinema Week on WeChat, November 2025

“The German film festival is a platform for showcasing the outstanding quality of German filmmaking – a historically significant locus of Western film culture that continues to be artistically relevant in global discourses today. With its diversity and depth of content, addressing themes that are both typically German and universal, the festival stands out among Singapore’s great variety of cultural events and film festivals.”

Curator and author Alfonse Chiu on the German Film Festival x KinoFest, October 2025

“One of 2025’s most unforgettable exhibitions was TECHNO WORLDS in Beijing. The origins of techno and Berlin’s cultural energy, combined with works by Chinese artists such as Cao Fei, illustrated in the most striking way the connections between music, subcultures and the city.”

Hulian, visitor to the *TECHNO WORLDS* exhibition presented by the Goethe-Institut in China, December 2025



**Communicating
with the world.**

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**YEARS OF THE
GOETHE-INSTITUT**

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