

The United States Meets Germany

A Forum for Young Leaders - Berlin, November 10th – 14th, 2008



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“Managing the new agenda of common values and of differences will keep putting the Euro-Atlantic relationship to the test. However, debates on individual issues cannot shake the bedrock of transatlantic friendship and solidarity”

~ Dr. Karsten Voigt
Coordinator for German-American Cooperation at the German Foreign Office



Mr. Justin Sikora – Program Director

The United States Meets Germany Forum for Young Leaders

Hailing from the Chicago area, Mr. Sikora completed his undergraduate education in French and history at the University of Tennessee and the Université de Rennes 2. Afterwards, he moved back to Europe living in France, Ireland and Germany, where in the latter he completed his Master of Arts in World Heritage Studies from the Brandenburg University of Technology in Cottbus. Mr. Sikora's many research interests include offsite presentation, heritage interpretation and endangered language education.

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■ Introduction

The Institute for Cultural Diplomacy (ICD) - The Institute for Cultural Diplomacy (ICD) was founded in 1999 to address the growing need for cultural diplomacy in the international environment. Originating in New York, the organization's main base for activity is now Berlin, Germany.

The ICD has two main areas of focus: the research and the promotion of cultural diplomacy. Research is conducted to better understand the history of cultural diplomacy, the range and diversity of cultural diplomacy initiatives being conducted today, and the areas for development in the field. Up-to-date, accessible information on cultural diplomacy can also be found through our online media service – Cultural Diplomacy News.

In addition to research, the ICD has developed a number of bilateral and multilateral programs which help to promote cultural diplomacy in three ways: Firstly, the programs educate the participants about the field of cultural diplomacy. Secondly, the programs require the participants to interact and debate with a multi-cultural group of individuals, and therefore improve their cultural diplomacy skills. Finally, by supporting follow-up initiatives the ICD is able to ensure that the programs have a far reaching effect on the communities of the participants.

What is Cultural Diplomacy? Cultural Diplomacy has been described by Joseph S. Nye as "a prime example of 'soft power,' or the ability to persuade through culture, value, and ideas, as opposed to 'hard power,' which conquers or coerces through military might."

The ICD understands Cultural Diplomacy not only as the conducting of international relations by governments through the use of soft power, but also as the exchange of cultural values and beliefs at all levels of society, by all actors. In both cases, culture represents not only a system of beliefs and values that each side should seek to understand and be sensitive too, but in many cases also provides a medium (such as sport, art, and music) through which this interaction can take place.

The Need for Cultural Diplomacy - The process of globalization, together with the rise of the internet, communication technology and the ready availability of low-budget transport, is increasingly bringing different cultural groups into contact with each other both physically and virtually. To improve communication and to prevent misunderstanding and conflict it is important to ensure that such interaction is constructive, peaceful, and based on effective dialogue, understanding and trust.



In addressing these problems, the traditional, top-down approach to international and inter-cultural relations can be optimized by increasing the emphasis on constructive dialogue between governments and representatives. This approach can also be supported and complemented by initiatives that raise inter-cultural awareness and understanding at all levels, and which help to build support at the grass roots of society. Cultural diplomacy is therefore an increasingly important tool in today's environment.

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■ Cultural Diplomacy in the USA-Germany Bilateral Relationship



The State of Relations - US and Germany have a deep and complex relationship rooted in a history of mutual economic, political and cultural exchange. From mass immigration to world war to strategic partnership, there has always been a strong interaction between the two cultures. According to the German Foreign Office, 23% of Americans claim German descent, and German remains the third-most widely studied language in American schools. The effects of such a cultural influence have been profound upon American society, customs and even language over the four hundred years since the first German immigrants landed in the US. American influence in Germany has also been great, particularly in the domains of music and media. That being said, many recent events have placed the German-American relationship in a new light, highlighting important differences between their cultures.

Public opinion reflects more the recent disagreement over issues such as climate change and the “war on terror” than the long-term strategic and economic partnership. A recent Gallup Poll found that only 8% of Germans approve of the performance of the current leadership in the US; even lower than the approval rating of the US administration in Iran and Palestine, at 22% and 12% respectively. A number of recent opinion polls show that only a minority of Germans (31% according to the Pew Global Attitudes Project) perceive the influence of the US as a positive force in the world. Such numbers indicate that there is plenty of room for improvement, and it is clear that the respective populations would like to develop stronger ties with each other. In January 2008, the British Council presented survey results showing that 75% of Germans would like to see closer relations with North America, and according to a Gallup poll, 62% think that the outcome of the US presidential election “will make a difference to Germany.” The discrepancy between the acknowledged need in Germany for a strategic partnership with the US, and a generally negative public opinion towards the same country, highlights the importance of increased intercultural understanding between both nations.

The US and Germany are leading members in many international organizations including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Group of Eight (G8). Participation in the G8 has been tainted in particular by conflicts over commitment to climate change. In reports compiled by the World Wildlife Fund and financial service provider Allianz, the US scored at the very bottom of the eight countries in reducing emissions and developing environmentally friendly energy sources. Such statistics damage the general perception of the United States, especially in countries where the environment is an important political issue. By comparison, the United Nations has noted that Germany has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by around 17% from 1990 to 2004, and has been at the forefront of renewable technologies. Serious questions remain, however, about the country’s position on other environmental issues, in particular with regard to the relaxation of regulations on the coal industry.

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In economic terms, Germany is one of the chief trading partners of the US, having received three times as much American investment as China over the last ten years. Germany has also invested heavily in the US, with investments totaling about 233 billion euros - 29% of all German direct foreign investment - according to the Progressive Policy Institute. The recent downturn in the US economy, however, has encouraged reflection on this exchange. In June, the Pew Global Attitudes survey found that 72% of Germans believe that the US economic influence has had a negative effect on their own economy.

Relations hit a low point in 2003 as the US commenced military action in Iraq, much to the disappointment of many of its European allies, particularly Germany. Tourism between the two countries declined markedly at this time though numbers have been steadily on the rise ever since. According to the US Department of Commerce, about 1.9 million American tourists spent \$5.9 billion (USD) in Germany in 2007, making it the sixth most popular destination for Americans worldwide. Similarly, 1.52 million German tourists spending \$5.2 billion (USD) were recorded in the same year, up by 15% since 2006, the highest growth rate in tourism to the US by any country in this period. The increase in tourism indicates a warming of relations at the grassroots level even if political and ideological differences remain.

The Need for Cultural Diplomacy between the United States and Germany

Governments, international organizations and businesses have long recognized the need of understanding how to work with diverse groups of people from around the globe, while creating a basis for mutual cooperation and trust. Though they undertake such initiatives without necessarily using the terminology "cultural diplomacy", the concepts remain the same. Surveys based on international public opinion, like those quoted here, form the basis of political decisions and policy making. "Cultural ambassadors" form an important arm to supplement the work that important organizations like UNESCO undertake. Businesses employ departments focused on Corporate Social Responsibility to not only maintain their own image, but to address the challenges of operating in different countries with diverse cultures. All of these examples are some form of cultural interaction that has been deemed a necessary component of relations with differing peoples.

In seeking to bring the United States and Germany closer together and to facilitate improved cooperation and agreement on issues such as the use of military force abroad and the environment, cultural diplomacy can play an important role. Cultural diplomacy is able to help because it can encourage understanding between Germans and Americans at all levels – from the grass roots to the political. If the citizens of these countries are better able to understand the reasons behind the stances and the behavior of each other, they are more likely to cooperate in a constructive manner. Such an improvement in relations can have an impact on issues such as tourism, the success and sustainability of treaties, and can help to strengthen economic and business relationships.



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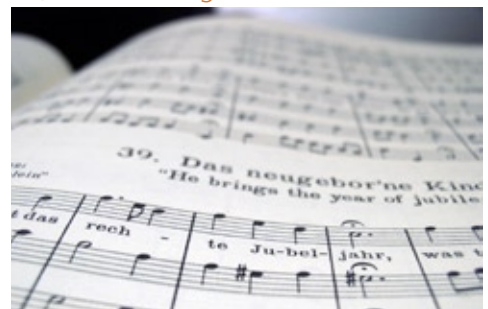
Examples of Cultural Diplomacy between the United States and Germany



There are many examples of previous cultural exchange between the United States and Germany. One of the most successful efforts was the Amerika Haus program (American House) that was started after World War II in Germany to bring American values, culture and friendship to a recent enemy. These institutions provided not only a welcome venue to learn and discuss current events, but also allowed America to portray itself in a redeeming light. Unfortunately, many of the America Houses closed down when the organization in charge of them, the United States Information Agency, was dissolved in 1999. This closing of these houses left a large gap, and along with it an abandonment of facilities dedicated to expounding American cultural ideals and encouraging bilateral exchange.

Academic and educational exchanges such as those offered by the Fulbright Commission are a testament to the depth of the German-American cultural relationship that still remains. One of a host of American cultural diplomacy efforts launched at the beginning of the Cold War, the Fulbright Commission aimed both to expose Americans to foreign cultures and education, and to bring foreigners to the United States for the same purpose. This worldwide program was estimated to have educated nearly 300,000 students by its fiftieth anniversary in 1996. In the Academic Year 2007-2008, 78 U.S. students were awarded Fulbright scholarships to Germany. While the long-term success of an exchange program such as that offered by the Fulbright Commission cannot be measured quantitatively, it has undoubtedly created a large alumni community more aware of the culture in the respective countries. Former U.S. Fulbright scholar James F. Tent, however, has noted the higher prominence of the Fulbright Commission in Germany than in the United States, observing that the American political leadership has yet to develop as strong a support for cultural diplomacy efforts as their German counterparts.

Germany places a high value on its cultural ties with the United States. The Goethe-Institute, Germany's government-funded but independently operated cultural foundation promotes German language and culture across the world, and operates six branches in the United States alone. These branches in turn sponsor numerous exchange programs designed to bring American students to Germany and promote German language education in the United States. The Goethe-Institute also helps to administer bilateral projects such as the German-American Partnership Program, (GAPP) aimed at high school students. In addition, jointly funded merit-based projects such as the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange aim to encourage intelligent, highly motivated high school students as well as young professionals, to spark an interest in Germany and German-American relations at a young age. American participants in the program study the German language in Germany, and at the end of their stay have the opportunity to address the Bundestag in German, before meeting their German counterparts in Washington D.C. for a conference to discuss the merits of the program. The vibrancy of these programs provides a demonstration of the value of cultural diplomacy efforts in the German-American relationship.



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The Future of Cultural Diplomacy between the United States and Germany

We have observed above the need for cultural diplomacy between Germany and the US, and have also considered examples of current cultural diplomacy initiatives between the two countries. This section of the brochure aims to speculate, in more detail, about the potential future for cultural diplomacy in the relationship in four particular areas: tourism, business, foreign policy and the environment.

The areas of tourism and business, though separate, can be considered together here. We have observed earlier that ties between Germany and the US in both of these areas are relatively strong, but still vulnerable to fluctuations: it is possible therefore to highlight the importance of strengthening and developing ties in this area further. Initiatives that encourage Americans and Germans to be more culturally aware and informed concerning each other will in turn make them feel more comfortable about the prospect of living and working abroad, or travelling there on vacation. Furthermore, while both are economic powerhouses, Germany and the US inevitably conduct business in different ways according to their cultural values. Indeed, business exchanges between the two countries are not difficult to find, this is an area which can be strengthened still, and future initiatives should focus on how cultural values dictate business practice in each country.

The respective foreign policies of Germany and the US are perhaps the cause for the most controversy, as we have seen in the above how contrasting views have caused relations to be strained and have had a significant impact on public opinion. The United States has in recent years been criticized for taking a unilateral approach to foreign policy, in contrast to Germany which is noted for favoring multilateralism. In this area, there is potential for initiatives between Germany and the US that encourage citizens to explore the extent to which cultural values drive foreign policy. A significant change towards the way foreign policy is conducted by either side is unlikely in the foreseeable future. However, if people are able to view the behavior of governments as a product of certain cultural beliefs and historical events this makes them better able to understand and appreciate decisions and behavior. On a higher level the result is more constructive negotiations, while at the lower level public opinion should be less likely to experience sudden drops.

Finally, one can focus on the environment as an area in which cultural diplomacy between Germany and the US can help. Similar to the theory outlined above concerning attitudes to foreign policy, initiatives that allow citizens to consider the reasons behind differing views on the environment and environmental policies would help to increase constructive dialogue on this issue. One can also look at specific examples and suggest that the US may benefit from an in depth consideration of Germany's attitude towards the environment, and how this manifests itself in everyday life (the relative popularity of recycling, for example).



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For the contrasting approaches to foreign policy taken by the US and Germany to be understood and brought closer together for future bilateral agreements to be truly successful, the interaction between the two nations at all levels must be based on the principles of cultural diplomacy.

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■ The USA meets Germany Program

Program Overview - USA Meets Germany: A Forum for Young Leaders (USAMG)



While a number of high-profile institutions have contributed valuable studies of the political and economic relationship between Germany and the US, the cultural side of the relationship has regrettably received less attention. It should hardly be surprising then that most recent symposia and conferences about the transatlantic partnership have focused on economics, politics (particularly NATO and the OECD) and historical analysis of German migration to the US. Though the historical perspective of Germany's cultural influence is clear enough, what has become of the country's hold on the American public today? Do Americans view Germany as a main partner and in what capacity? How much do Germans know of the real America, in contrast to the America that may be presented in the media?

It is in this context that the ICD will host The United States Meets Germany: A Forum for Young Leaders, to examine the state of the transatlantic relationship today and its future prospects, particularly in the field of cultural diplomacy.

The USA Meets Germany program is designed with the intention of bringing together young, influential people from both sides of the Atlantic in order for them to gain insight into cultural diplomacy, exchange ideas and experiences and learn from influential players already working in the field. Participants will develop contacts on both a social and professional level, and participate in challenging discussions. The Forum will therefore produce a dynamic, informed group of Young Leaders who are aware of the potential for cultural diplomacy and have the necessary resources to organize their own initiatives. It is hoped that these participants might cooperate on independent initiatives together in their future. Ultimately the USAMG Forum will improve understanding between the US and Germany, and improve future cooperation and exchange between the two countries.

The Forum will not merely focus on the relationship on a political and economic level, but will offer a wider cultural and social context within which the bilateral relationship between the US and Germany can be considered. This focus will enable Young Leaders from a wide range of backgrounds to exchange personal and professional experience, and learn more about areas of interest to complement their own. The USAMG Forum will offer a new light in which participants, speakers and associates of the program will be able to consider their work, both current and future.

The curriculum of the Forum has been developed to provide the participants with clear examples of how cultural diplomacy has been and is being used in different areas and by a range of different actors. Participants will benefit from insights and presentations from leading figures in the fields of international relations, business, academia, and the media. These will be followed by question and answer sessions, group analysis, and discussions of the case studies. This structure encourages critical consideration of how the examples considered may be transferred to the relationship between the US and Germany.

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Participants will consider a wide variety of issues related to cultural diplomacy between the USA and Germany, including:

- An introduction to cultural diplomacy and the history of German-American cultural relations
- The role of American sports in Germany and the success of specific programs in this area
- The interaction of German and American popular culture
- A high-profile panel discussion on globalization through the internet, and the effect of cyber culture upon the transatlantic relationship
- An analysis of how indigenous food and drink is marketed and presented in the two countries
- Music, visual and performing arts and their potential as a tool for intercultural exchange
- Problems and stereotypes in German-American perceptions of each other, and potential solutions

The USAMG Forum will provide that participants with a valuable insight into a diverse field with enormous potential.

In addition to helping the participants' academic and personal development, the USAMG program will work to provide the Young Leaders with the knowledge, skills and network they need to successfully organize their own cultural diplomacy initiatives following the completion of the Forum.

The USAMG Forum will give participants the opportunity to explore how their work, both current and future, can help have a positive impact not only on a local or national level, but also at the international level. The ICD also hopes that the participants will be inspired to develop their own projects in their own fields, and in doing so help foster links between local and national organizations, and those based in the other country. In doing this, USAMG participants will work toward achieving a better understanding, closer relationships and more cooperative ties between the US and Germany.



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Benefits of the United States Meets Germany Forum

What are the short and long-term benefits of the program for the participants, their local communities, and their nations? The USAMG Forum intends to provide the participants with:

- An **awareness and understanding of cultural diplomacy**; the ability and determination to improve inter-cultural dialogue; a wide and diverse network that will support them in future.
- While the conference will have immediate short-term benefits, exposure to cultural diplomacy in theory and practice being central, as well as, the raised awareness of US-German relations, an even greater significance of the program will emerge over the long term. The ICD intends to create a ripple effect that will allow the ideas developed during the five days to spread much further. The participants will take what they learn from the Forum back to their local communities.

There are three distinct ways that the USAMG Forum will ensure sustainable, long-term progress.

- **Leadership Initiatives:** Ambitious Young Leaders can potentially have a significant positive impact on the US-Germany bilateral relationship. It will therefore be an integral part of the program that the Young Leaders are asked to develop their own leadership initiatives to contribute to improving inter-cultural relations and understanding. Following ICD Forums, we encourage participants to maintain contact with each other and with the ICD, and to build on the experiences and ideas shared during their week together. To accomplish this, we provide an information packet containing the necessary materials and support for participants to develop and execute their own initiatives upon returning to their home countries. This includes a framework on how to implement program ideas, contact potential stakeholders, obtain grants, develop marketing strategies, as well as how to cooperate with governments and local officials. Participants will have the opportunity to present their initiatives to a wider audience at the ICD Annual Conference, featuring alumni from other ICD Forums and events.
- **Book Publication:** After completion of the Forum, participants will have the opportunity to write an article, based upon a topic covered during the event, for release in the ICD book "Case Studies in Cultural Diplomacy" in early 2009. Research may be based on a previous experience, or on relevant examples from participants' host countries applicable to the field of cultural diplomacy. In these case studies, contributors and other interested parties will be able to view what approaches have so far been effective in their implementation, and how such models could be used as a basis for future collaborations and success in the field of cultural diplomacy.
- **Network:** The USAMG Forum experience does not end with the conclusion of the week-long course, but continues beyond the program as participants gain access to ICD's extensive global network, including participants from previous Young Leaders Forums. In addition, the participants will be eligible to attend subsequent programs and the various ICD Academy courses including the inaugural Black History Month in February 2009.

USA Meets Germany is much more than a one-week study tour. It represents a unique opportunity to establish a meaningful, sustainable project that will not only make a difference in improving inter-cultural relations, and the awareness of this around the world, but also ensure that participants have the tools and contacts necessary to achieve such goals.

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Why Berlin?

"The greatest cultural extravaganza that one could imagine" ~ David Bowie



Berlin represents an excellent location for the USAMG Forum due to its vast array of resources to learn from and be inspired by, and its status as a centre of inter-cultural interaction within Europe.

Politicians, businessmen, and artists live side-by-side, cultures from all over the world interact and cooperate with each other in their daily lives, and the defiant traces of socialism in the former East Berlin are just a short train journey from the dazzling skyscrapers of Potsdamer Platz. Berlin is, as Bowie described, a 'cultural extravaganza'.

The city has a unique spirit, one imbued upon it by history and fate, and one that demonstrates the important and potential for inter-cultural interaction in the modern world.

As the capital city of Europe's largest economy, the home of three prestigious universities, and a city bubbling with diverse culture and art, Berlin has lots to offer the participants, who will be given the opportunity to take advantage of this unique city.

Components

Seminars - A range of seminars will be held during the week that will inform the participants about a particular element of cultural diplomacy as it relates to the US - Germany bilateral relationship. Speakers at the seminars will include leading figures from the business, political, academic, diplomatic, non-governmental, sport, art and media sectors.

Workshops - Workshops are a necessary complement to seminars for three reasons. Firstly, they offer the participants the opportunity to take part in structured discussions on the subjects they have learned about in the seminars. Secondly, they allow the Young Leaders to learn from each other – each Young Leader will have an experience and perspective that is unique to them. Finally, the group discussions in these workshops help the Young Leaders to learn about their respective backgrounds, develop personal networks, and plan potential leadership initiatives to take place after the Forum.

Podium Discussions - The week long Forum will include high profile podium discussions, where a speaker, or panel of speakers, will discuss a relevant topic in front of a larger audience (including the Young Leaders). The purpose of these events is not only to give the participants more exposure to expert speakers, but also to raise awareness for the program in general, giving other stakeholders the opportunity to learn more about the Forum, and allowing the Young Leaders to expand their networks.

The Locations - The locations for the USAMG Forum will include the German parliament, the German Foreign Office and the Berlin Town Hall. The Forum will also include a number of historical and cultural field excursions that will allow participants the opportunity to find out more about Berlin. Guided tours to focal points of inter-cultural dialogue will be complemented by behind-the-scenes visits to German institutions, group dinners, and ICD-organized parties, taking the Young Leaders to the heart of Berlin's music, art and cultural scenes.

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Participants of the Forum

USA Meets Germany: A Forum for Young Leaders is open to applicants from both the USA and Germany (there will be twelve participants from each).

If you have at least two years of university education, and would like to be considered as a participant in the Forum, please complete the online application form (see link below) no later than 15.10.2008.

http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/index.php?en_program_usamg_applicationform

Once submitted, applications will be reviewed by the selection committee. If selected to participate you will be required to transfer the tuition fee (195 Euros) to reserve your place. Participants are responsible for covering the cost of their transport, accommodation and meals. If you have any further questions regarding participation, please contact us via email at: usamg@culturaldiplomacy.org



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■ Partnership Opportunities

Financial Support - As a not-for-profit organization the ICD relies on private donations and sponsorship from both individuals and organizations to support the work that we are doing. Such contributions are not only invaluable in helping to provide the resources for our work, but as symbols of support for our activity give us extra motivation to continue and to grow. We ensure that our partners are fully recognized for their help in all marketing and advertising material, and pride ourselves on developing long-term relationships.

To find out more about how you can partner with the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy, or support the USA Meets Germany Young Leaders Forum in particular, please contact us at usamg@culturaldiplomacy.org



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■ A selection of our previous locations

- British Council Berlin
- Deutsche Bank, Berlin Headquarters
- Deutsche Welle
- German Foreign Ministry
- Institute for Cultural Diplomacy
- Parlamentarische Gesellschaft Restaurant of the Reichstag
- Paul-Löbe-Haus of the German Parliament (Deutscher Bundestag)



icd - institute for cultural diplomacy

