“Whatever we are going to work out here, that is something we need.”

“We know who we are as a Lab and we are learning what we are as a community.”

“We are not just working, but co-creating.”

“This is the design for how we can change diplomacy.”

“Feeling the connection between the members.”
Welcome to the Augmented Reality
There is so much more to see here!
To immerse yourself in Augmented Reality, open your internet browser and go to global-diplomacy-lab.org/publication. Your camera will be activated automatically. Hold it over the AR marker and you’re ready to go!

What is the Global Diplomacy Lab and who is behind it?
The members come from all over the world, speak more than 50 languages and have at least one thing in common: the vision to help shape the future. And they do so with a member-driven and intersectional approach that makes them feel welcome and part of it.

Global challenges need global answers for local implementation. Whether pandemics, climate change, poverty or cross-border conflicts: to tackle the complex issues confronting humanity in the 21st century and to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we need new forms of collaboration. Traditional diplomacy must open up to new voices, perspectives and expertise – from civil society and business, from culture and academia, from North, South, East and West. It is time for what we call diplomacy 4.0: inclusive, agile, innovative. Shaping a vision of this new diplomacy is the mission of the Global Diplomacy Lab (GDL).

To achieve this, the GDL gathers professionals from various fields and all corners of the earth to develop and test new tools of communication and collaboration, to lend its diverse expertise to external actors, and to formulate concrete propositions for change on the ground – from tackling urban violence in Chicago to envisioning new ways to harness Africa’s youth demographic dividend.

The GDL is supported in this mission by the Federal Foreign Office under the patronage of the Federal Foreign Minister as well as the BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt, the Robert Bosch Stiftung, and the German-American Fulbright Commission. Network partners include the Stiftung Mercator, the Rotterdam School of Management and the Global Leadership Academy of the GIZ, to name just a few. Outstanding representatives of the leading partners’ networks have the opportunity to apply for becoming GDL members. In addition, the GDL has cooperated in its various projects with individuals and organisations from a whole range of spheres across the globe and is open to new collaborations and partnerships.

This Is Who We Are

hug
noun: an act of holding someone tightly in one’s arms, typically to express affection.
Gender Diversity
In traditional diplomacy, men tend to outnumber women. Why is this different at the GDL? And does that surprise you at all?

Working Sectors
What professional background do GDL members have?

GDL Members by Numbers: International, Diverse and Multidisciplined

Gender Diversity
- Female: 57%
- Male: 43%

Working Sectors
- Public: 45.4%
- Private: 22.5%
- Civil society/NGO: 18%
- Academia: 15.8%
- Foreign Service
- International Organisation
- Other
- Consulting
- Media
- Technology
- Entrepreneur
- Other

Internationality
The GDL covers more than a third of all countries in the world. Can we become even more?

Members are coming from / living in these countries:
- Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, DR Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Honduras, Hungary, India, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Kenya, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Lithuania, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Syria, The Gambia, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates, USA, Venezuela, Vietnam, Yemen, Zimbabwe
The Elected Advisory Council shapes the direction and the future of the GDL.

While the EAC normally meets and rearranges after new elections, the 2021 Annual Order Meeting had to go digital. But that doesn’t spoil Trinidad Soana, Banu Pekol, Johannes Braun and Cristina Gallegos’ mood!

“The dynamics in a member-driven concept are so diverse. And so powerful.”

Elected Advisory Council: Every Voice Counts

As co-founder of the non-governmental Association for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage and a frequent speaker at international conferences, GDL Member Banu Pekol from Turkey cannot complain about boredom. Nevertheless, she decided to dedicate a significant part of her remaining free time to the Elected Advisory Council, in short EAC, of the Global Diplomacy Lab. “The GDL has had such a positive impact on my life that I wanted to learn more about it and to give something back, in a way”, she says.

The EAC is part of the Advisory Council, which is at the core of the GDL: it conceptualises the labs and shapes the future of the organisation. In addition to the four elected GDL members who make up the EAC, the Advisory Council is composed of one representative of each partner institution, the Dean Ruprecht Polenz, and the Secretariat. The four GDL members, who work on a pro bono basis, are chosen via an online election by all members. This ensures the democratic and member-driven character of the GDL. “The EAC is special because it is elected by the members, representing their vision”, says Baku. “And the fact that it is democratically elected fosters trust in the EAC and makes the members feel that their opinions will be heard.”

Elected members serve on the EAC for up to two years. Past EAC members include Ivana Petrov from Serbia, who joined the GDL in 2015 while serving as an exchange officer in the Training for International Diplomats section at the German Federal Foreign Office. In 2017, she successfully stood in the election for the EAC. “As an active GDL member, I observed how the GDL was developing and how EAC members were committed to shaping the GDL and the labs at the time”, she remembers. “Their activism and enthusiasm were contagious, so my wish was to engage more as well as to have more regular exchanges with GDL members.”

Among many memorable moments, Ivana recalls one experience that she found especially inspiring. “We were in Chicago in 2018, discussing the topic of urban youth violence”, she recalls. “Apart from having our Dean, leading partners, challenge holders, our hosts and partners from Chicago, the Secretariat and GDL members participating, we also had a panel of young advisors from Chicago. These brilliant young people were not only present, but..."
also actively involved, and asked for advice at all stages of the curriculum. Their voice was heard and important to us. This is, to my belief, the only appropriate way to go in the domestic and the international arena – to listen to unheard voices when discussing and deciding about them.”

The EAC, in short, makes sure that every voice counts: the voices of the GDL community as well as the voices of non-traditional stakeholders in the outside world who, in the realm of international diplomacy, are too often overlooked.

We would like to thank all members who have served as Established Members of the Advisory Council since the founding of the GDL: Julia Spinelli, Marty Castro, Ivana Petrov, Elizabeth Maloba, Vivian Valencia, Imran Simmins, Eirliani Abdul Rahman, Diego Osorio, Mome Saleem, Nicola Forster, Matthias Christian Kaufmann, Angelina Davydova.

“Something of which I am proud to be part of.”

“Looking at the world through other’s eyes.”

Elected Advisory Council Members since GDL’s Foundation

Nicola Forster, Mome Saleem, Angelina Davydova, Matthias Christian Kaufmann

Nicola Forster, Eirliani Abdul Rahman, Mome Saleem, Diego Osorio

Vivian Valencia, Imran Simmins, Elizabeth Maloba, Eirliani Abdul Rahman, Diego Osorio, Ivana Petrov

Vivian Valencia, Imran Simmins, Elizabeth Maloba, Ivana Petrov

Ivana Petrov, Marty Castro, Julia Spinelli

Trinidad Soana, Marty Castro, Julia Spinelli, Banu Pekol
On the Road with Nicola Forster
February 2020

GDL
Hi Nicola, where am I catching you right now?
10:22

Nicola Forster
I’m on the transsiberian train somewhere in the middle of snowy Siberia ... 😊
10:23

GDL
Amazing! I hope your train is well-heated 😊
The GDL has been on quite a journey as well. You’ve been with it since the first days, also as a member of the Advisory Council. Do you still remember what your vision, your dream was for the GDL back then?
10:26

Nicola Forster
Good memories! At the so-called “GDL 0” we laid the foundation for the future organisation, deciding it should focus on new forms of diplomacy. We were even thinking of building a special house for innovative diplomacy! 😊
10:33

GDL
Awesome 😊 Looking back, are you happy with what the GDL has achieved after five years?
10:34

Nicola Forster
Yes, for sure. The GDL is the only organisation I’ve come across which is able to bring together forward-looking young folks willing to co-create the diplomacy of tomorrow!
10:39

GDL
Glad to hear that! Do you have a favourite GDL memory from the early days? Something impressive, inspiring or just funny?
10:41

Nicola Forster
I have many great memories … At the third Lab in Berlin, we decided to publish a booklet with our ideas and hand it over to State Secretary Steinlein who was attending our final celebration. The only problem was that we only had two hours to prepare and print it. But we managed to do it! 😄
10:52

GDL
Amazing 😊 You are a politician now, advocating for a new style of politics. Are you trying to bring some GDL spirit into the Swiss political landscape?
10:55

Nicola Forster
I’m trying hard! 😊 As we have direct democracy in Switzerland, it’s easier for citizens to participate in politics than in other countries … So I’m giving it a go!
10:59

GDL
Good luck with that! 😊 Enjoy the rest of your trip … and stay warm! 😊
11:01

Nicola Forster
Thank you!
11:01

Nicola Forster
And GO GDL!
11:01
Only by Respectfully Embracing Our Differences Can We Move Forward

Diplomats section at the German Federal Foreign Office in 2015, which was when I first came into contact with the Global Diplomacy Lab. During the same year, I became a GDL member and dedicated two additional months of pro bono work to supporting the GDL Secretariat.

Why did you apply for an EAC position?

As an active GDL member, I observed how the GDL was developing and how EAC members were committed to shaping the GDL and Labs at the time. Their activism and enthusiasm were infectious, so my wish was to engage more and also to have more regular exchanges with GDL members. I am so deeply honoured and grateful to my fellow GDL members for their support and trust, as well as the opportunity to have served as an EAC from 2017 to 2019.

What have you learned about the GDL as an EAC member?

As a very international community, it is important to listen to each other carefully and to be open to learning from each other. In order to be inclusive, we need patience. Only by respectfully embracing our differences we can move forward – as professionals and private individuals.

What impact did these experiences have on your professional and personal life?

Prior to joining the GDL community, my professional focus was on the European Union and the Western Balkans. My focus has widened significantly within the last years. Several Labs that I participated in around the world and, more importantly, exchanges with fellow GDL members helped me understand numerous international challenges much better. Moreover, I found such dear friends here who are a real treasure in my life.

What’s your most memorable EAC moment?

We were in Chicago in 2018 discussing the topic of urban youth violence. Apart from having our Dean, leading partners, challenge holders, our hosts and partners from Chicago, the Secretariat and GDL members participating, we also had a panel of young advisors from Chicago. These brilliant young people were not only present, but also actively involved and asked for advice at all stages of the curriculum. Their voice was heard and important to us. This is, I believe, the only appropriate way to go in the domestic and international arena – to listen to unheard voices when discussing and deciding about them.
Get to Know the Members

Edna Martinez, Mexico
“Two things most people don’t know about me: I was a champion rock climber in México when I was a teenager and my professional background is psychoanalysis, though most of my career has been spent working in government and developing public policies specially in sustainability.”

Ankit Khanal, Nepal
“Every time I get the opportunity, I enjoy hiking and trekking. So far, I have been to the Annapurna Base Camp, Mardi Himal and Poonhill in Nepal and I would like to trek to many more mountains in Nepal.”

Banu Pekol, Turkey
“I’ve danced for the Catalan “La Fura dels Baus” dance and theatre company, hanging from a construction crane about 50 meters above the ground, wearing the sort of harness they use in CGI filming in action movies. I was only connected to the crane from a link on my belly. One of the best times ever in my life!”

The GDL is known for its member-driven approach. Working with members from all over the world with such a variety of different backgrounds can be challenging from time to time. But the effect it has on the GDL and its networks, the power this way of working creates, is immense. Every single member brings individual experience, skills and ideas to the table with knowledge from both the public and private sector, civil society and academia. But GDL is more than sectors, numbers, countries and networks.
Enthusiasm and Creative Helpfulness

Julie August is a graphic designer and art curator who lives in Buenos Aires. She studied literature and art history in Munich and graphic design in Leipzig.

Julie is known for her enthusiasm and creative helpfulness which she uses often with great spontaneity to implement and graphically support ideas of the GDL—just as she did with the Open Call for participation in the Summit publication and her illustrations of what the GDL means to her.

In addition to her cultural activities, she sees a profound need to participate in social and human rights issues.

As I am human, GDL makes me

learn

to listen to other points of view

care for people and insights

and speak

act

and organize others

“Art can delight, be beautiful, repel, polarise, anger, amaze or remain incomprehensible”

… GDL made me grow

By generating a fertile soil of knowledge, diverse people and open minds

If I were a flower ...

If I were a bird ...

… GDL made me fly

Exploring new areas, getting new perspectives and spreading seeds.

“GDL Makes Me Feel Like” by Julie August

Patrick Liebl is a speaker coach, curator and founder of the 301 words storytelling platform. He regularly trains GDL members in moderating, public speaking and storytelling.

“What has been your general impression of GDL members? They are incredibly committed and motivated. I find that really admirable, especially since they all dedicate their free time to the GDL, on top of their usual jobs and duties. I see how much time they invest and how the issues discussed during the Labs really matter to them. It is important to them to achieve convincing and impactful results, to adhere to high quality standards and to make sure that everyone feels accepted and integrated. They have very high expectations of themselves, sometimes almost too high!

Is there anything you found particularly memorable? Yes, Ivana Petrov’s pitch at the Falling Walls Lab in 2019. The Labs usually focus on natural science and technological innovation, but they also invite speakers from other fields, and Ivana was one of them. She dared to deliver a very different pitch by presenting the GDL and the innovative idea behind it. Her pitch stood out from all the others, and I heard that this was also highlighted in the jury’s discussion.

Has it been a challenge to work with people from so many different geographical, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds? I would prefer to call it refreshing. In any case, every single person is different, and all the different cultural and professional backgrounds at the GDL add to its diversity. I see it as a chance to learn about new perspectives and different topics myself, which has been a very enriching experience.

“They’re incredibly committed”
rainbow
noun, symbolic:
colour spec-
trum that lets
each colour
shine strongly,
beautifully and
individually, yet
shows the beauty
of diversity and
inclusiveness.

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not stated otherwise.
“The members are the strength of the GDL. They come from over 70 countries around the world and serve as traditional diplomats, manage NGOs or work in the private sector. Their different perspectives are important prerequisites for “out of the box” solutions. With a high level of commitment, they voluntarily invest time and energy in working together at the GDL to make the world a better place.”

— Ruprecht Polenz, Dean

“Working with the Dean is a tremendous privilege.”