The Global Diplomacy Lab has established a global ecosystem characterised by mutual accountability, respect and inclusiveness. In order to make this ecosystem and network as sustainable as possible, GDL members created the GDL strategy for the next years and have started to implement it.

Creating Sustainable Impact

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 envisaging 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.

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!
In 2015, the Global Diplomacy Lab was founded to advance more inclusive and agile formats of diplomacy and international cooperation to deal with cross-border and global challenges. By bringing together experts from a wide range of sectors and disciplines, we are tapping into their knowledge and skills, thus forming creative and interdisciplinary communities that could function as a global taskforce on standby.

**Our Starting Point:**
**Traditional Diplomacy**

Diplomacy is defined as the conduct of relations between states by peaceful means, such as negotiation and persuasion.

Traditionally, diplomacy is carried out by government officials – diplomats who negotiate treaties, trade policies and other international agreements. The emphasis is on power and how states can maintain or balance it, in relation to other states. Diplomacy still focuses largely on power as a zero-sum resource, which discourages a more integrative or cooperative approach.

However, the world is changing rapidly. We live in an increasingly complex global environment that is simultaneously becoming both more interconnected and more fragmented. While states remain at the centre of power in the international system, non-state actors, striving for influence, have begun to play a more prominent role. In foreign policy, government-to-government relations alone cannot keep pace with the profound political, economic, social and technological transformations taking place.

**Our Plan:**
**A New Form of Diplomacy**

In this context, an intermediate space has emerged, linking the local with the global. This is shaped by the participation of actors such as local governments, NGOs, foundations, companies and cities, whose activities influence decisions related to international policy. These actors are therefore taking on the roles of non-traditional diplomats. Based on this understanding, we believe that diplomacy must adopt a more inclusive mindset: one which seeks collaborative solutions to shared challenges in a positive-sum game, allowing all relevant parties involved to participate and benefit.

Therefore, GDL is developing a new approach for diplomacy. It utilises innovative methodologies to reconcile the interests of multiple stakeholders and to build trust. It allows governments to operate as sovereign actors and simultaneously leverages the influence and potential of other actors through a new diplomacy track, with the ultimate goal of achieving the SDGs. **We call this approach Diplomacy 4.0.**

The core focus of Diplomacy 4.0 is on linking global and local opportunities and challenges through the various GDL events. To enable all relevant actors to engage in this new form of multi-stakeholder and cross-domain cooperation, a Lab is needed to experiment, to find out what works and what does not – thereby building upon the capacities of participants (individuals and organisations) to engage in this new diplomacy.

**Our Impact**

In their respective work context, individuals and organisations are leveraging the networks and using the formats, methods and lessons learned and developed in the GDL setting, thus bringing Diplomacy 4.0 to fruition beyond GDL.

GDL achieves this by

- creating a diverse community of practice from the fields of diplomacy and government, civil society, academia and business;
- building its members’ capacities, fostering mutual learning and thought leadership, and catalysing action in their respective spheres of influence;
- leveraging the knowledge and experience of its diverse members to develop and pilot innovative solutions for inclusive diplomacy through its Lab approach;
- identifying lessons learned and best practices;
- using this emerging body of knowledge and the capacities of its members to support and advise organisations around the world in addressing their development challenges through innovative methods.
Areas of Impact Creation

While impact always occurs at various levels, GDL focuses on the following areas of impact creation in order to improve effectiveness, efficiency and agility:

- To create impact at the individual level, GDL implements events and activities at regular intervals. It enables all members to enhance their understanding of key global issues, improve their intercultural, interpersonal and discursive leadership and problem-solving skills, stimulate mutual learning and build their capacity to apply innovative methods. GDL also connects the individual with resources and fellow members at a global level.

- To create impact at the knowledge level, GDL invites “challenges”, issues that external organisations may be facing that require help in reframing and/or resolving, and implements advisory projects, such as GDL Lab formats. These involve smaller teams of selected members, working in partnership with the challenge holders. In these projects, members contribute their skills and create knowledge by developing solutions and channelling their learning back into the GDL community.

- To create impact at the systemic level, GDL strives to work with diplomats, governmental and non-governmental institutions. Additionally, the knowledge created by the members contributes to organisational development, diplomatic strategies and conduct at a global level. GDL also provides thought leadership based on the wide-ranging expertise of its members.

Agenda for Change

To achieve and improve its impact:

- GDL, its partners and members work together to engage traditional diplomats as well as their institutions and put them and their needs at the centre of GDL.

- GDL develops methods and processes to measure the impact of all its activities and ensure continuous learning and improvement. All activities implemented in the GDL framework will fulfil a set of standardised criteria which include impact logic, methodology, funding responsibility and relevance with regard to diplomacy.

- GDL provides a platform to bring members together on a regular basis. The goal of this platform is to strengthen the community and improve mutual learning, and also to introduce new projects, such as decentralised Labs, consider lessons learned from ongoing and past activities, and discuss new topics.

- GDL streamlines its governance, decision-making and implementation processes to ensure its efficiency and effectiveness. It regularly evaluates its operation and makes adjustments where necessary and feasible.

As a result, GDL will focus on the following strategic areas over the next five years:

- Developing an Impact Statement
- Achieving sustainable impacts through Diplomacy 4.0
- Enhancing the member-driven approach
- Fostering strong relationships with and among committed partners
- Developing a sound and effective support structure
As a member-driven network, GDL members are central to impact creation. They are supported in their self-managed process to create impact with regard to Diplomacy 4.0 by partners and the GDL Secretariat.
The strategy document was designed via a member-led stakeholder feedback loop including interviews with leading partners and members, surveys and online meetings. In this collaborative process, the GDL worked with the Rotterdam School of Management’s Partnerships Resource Centre at the Erasmus University.

Taking over from the Strategy Group, four working groups are now focusing on implementing specific areas: communication, impact, financial sustainability, and member charter. To join one of the groups, GDL members were invited to submit applications, explaining their motivation and goals—which turned out to be just as diverse as GDL’s members themselves.

Their plan for the Impact Group, wrote one member, is to “listen to all visions, including crazy or utopic ones”. Others delivered a more sober and nevertheless passionate assessment of the tasks ahead: “The Financial Sustainability Group has a job cut out in stating clearly to everyone, including the members, that GDL has no intention in being an ephemeral initiative, but wants to provide a lasting space for specific, essential conversations to be held”.

And finally, others described their planned participation as a way to both thank the GDL and to enrich it even further. “I really would like to contribute to the GDL which has provided an amazing network and new insights in diplomacy, policy making and development”. Another member stated: “I see being a part of the working groups as a way of giving back and helping to improve and expand this experience”.

Theresa Carrington, United States
“I often describe the Global Diplomacy Lab as some of the world’s smartest minds who gather at certain points on the globe to contribute innovative diplomatic solutions to the world’s toughest problems.”

Johannes Braun, Germany
“The GDL has the potential to become an internationally recognized platform for innovative open source solutions in what was previously a rather closed realm of career diplomats, policy-makers and academic think tanks.”
Unaware of how important it would become, the Strategy working group put special emphasis on the context in which the Global Diplomacy Lab works: a rapidly changing world. Their conclusion was that dealing with uncertainty is key when setting strategic goals or establishing an action plan. This resilience proved its worth when, instead of an in-person meeting with more than 50% of the membership, comprising around 150 people from more than 70 countries, everything had to be moved online within the space of one month.

In a virtual pre-Summit programme featuring 21 sessions, GDL members learned what it means to lead inclusive participatory formats online – as they were doing so themselves throughout the programme. They were still striving to develop a more inclusive diplomacy, yet using very different tools and formats from those originally envisaged. Learning from this, a year later when planning for the Summit was under way again, they took a hybrid concept as the basis from the start, facilitating the subsequent necessary transformation into another online-only meeting, the GDL rE-Connect. This event was shorter and included an online concert as well as small self-organised bar camp sessions – this time, the online setting was used very differently to create a moment of connection within the GDL community.

But can a series of online meetings spark engagement? Yes, it can! Some of the new members who joined GDL during the pandemic became elected decision-makers in the governance structure and assumed responsibilities in the working groups that took over the strategy for further implementation.

Each of these working groups focused on a different strategy area: member charter, communication, financial sustainability and impact. With new and established members from different continents and professional fields present in each group, a multiplicity of perspectives was secured. For strategic development, this is important on two levels: process and result. In terms of process, the diversity of perspectives creates tensions as well as a constant opportunity for mutual learning. The results, from member charter to action plan, mirror the diversity of GDL and are truly member-owned.
DIPLOMACY IS MORE INCLUSIVE (DIPLOMACY 4.0)

**Impact**

**Long-Term Outcomes**
- Diplomats and non-diplomats are enabled
- Traditional and non-traditional diplomats are enabled
- Member-driven initiatives, projects, collaborations
- Diplomatic and non-diplomatic institutions are enabled
- Empowering GDL Members
- Creating GDL Knowhow
- Building an Ecosystem

**Short-Term Outcomes**
- Academic and media outputs e.g. articles, papers, podcasts
- Tangible changes in organisations
- Initiatives by members in collaboration with partners and other organisations
- Knowledge about inclusive diplomacy created and disseminated
- Knowledge and other collaborative partnerships with diplomatic institutions
- Building an Ecosystem

**Outputs**
- Fertile ground
- Incubator Labs
- Impact Labs
- Regional Summits
- Internal Engagement
- Publications
- Other Activities
- Cooperative Events
- Expert Network
- Public Relations
- Partner Acquisition

**Actions**
- Fertile ground
- GDL Summit
Building on the GDL strategy, the impact working group set three areas of action:

1. **Empowering its Members for Inclusive Diplomacy**
The GDL provides traditional and non-traditional diplomats with a platform for experimental approaches and innovation. By initiating, developing and implementing joint projects and activities, members not only learn from each other, but also experience personal growth. The members vastly benefit from their diverse backgrounds, when approaching common challenges from their different perspectives.

   In order to empower its members to develop innovative solutions for inclusive diplomacy, GDL generates the following key outputs:
   - building and extending its membership in an inclusive manner
   - providing its members with opportunities to gain policy and methodological knowledge and to experiment with new formats in lab settings
   - supporting its members in developing activities together that tackle real-life challenges

2. **Creating and Disseminating GDL Knowledge**
From its various activities, GDL seeks to generate knowledge, lessons learned and best practices on policies, methods, formats, solutions. GDL disseminates and contributes this knowledge to the global discussion, thereby becoming a thought leader, knowledge partner and an enabler for individuals, diplomatic and non-diplomatic institutions. To this end, GDL creates a body of knowledge for target audiences through the following key outputs:
   - systematically documenting and publishing its results
   - enabling its members to contribute their knowledge, expertise and ideas to wider audiences (e.g. blog entries and GDL inspired publications)
   - supporting them to participate in relevant policy debates (e.g. Bled Strategic Forum)

   - providing platforms and support to its members to engage in communication and PR work to promote knowledge via social media and the website
   - supporting members to provide interested potential partners and other diplomatic and non-diplomatic institutions with GDL policy and methodological expertise as a knowledge partner for inclusive diplomacy.

3. **Creating an Eco-System of Like-Minded Diplomatic Institutions that Promote Inclusive Diplomacy**
GDL specifically supports diplomatic and multilateral institutions in creating an ecosystem that promotes inclusive diplomacy through their own activities and in their interactions. In order to build this ecosystem, GDL generates the following key outputs:
   - showcasing impact examples and better practices to diplomatic institutions
   - establishing GDL as a knowledge partner to initiatives of diplomatic institutions and support including inclusive diplomacy into their training
   - supporting diplomatic institutions to incubate and show case their innovative approaches
The How

How are we working together?
What is our common basis? A difficult question when taking into account cultural, ethical and behavioural differences. Working together at GDL requires a shared commitment to equal rights and opportunities, tolerance and openness. The GDL’s approach is rooted in inclusion, participation, dialogue and discussion-based solutions.

The simple answer is a member charter that presents a set of activities, values and beliefs bringing together an energised group of individuals who are striving to build a more resilient, compassionate and sustainable world. The member charter is aimed at current and future members of the GDL and its partner organisations.

How are we communicating?
How can we explain and share the GDL’s uniqueness, experiences and learning? The GDL communication strategy aims to help the GDL engage with its members as well as the broader public. Its objectives are:

- To inform the public about new concepts of diplomacy and raise awareness of its potential;
- To engage with others by strengthening the efficiency of communication and interconnectedness between GDL members;
- To inspire people to play an active role in making diplomacy more inclusive through new and innovative forms of collaboration.

Capacity building
It is crucial for GDL members to be able to communicate their own messages in a way that makes an impact. In addition, strengthening communication skills is important to improve and support the member-driven characteristic of the Global Diplomacy Lab. Therefore, the GDL regularly organises storytelling, podcasting and social media workshops.

Julia Sattler, Germany
“IT’s important to have an idea of how to approach conflicts and how to deal with disagreement in a productive way. Not in a hateful way, but in a way that looks for solutions.”

Milica Saracevic, Serbia
“When you work with people who think similarly, you don’t grow. We were a very diverse group, with different ideas and working methods. I really learned a lot and enjoyed it.”
The Who

Governance
Over the next years, GDL will further develop its governance by refining the roles, responsibilities and participation levels of all members, partners and other stakeholders. When selecting new members, the Advisory Council will ensure diversity with regard to geographical distribution, expertise, race, gender, ability, ethnicity, socio-economic status and culture.

Financial Sustainability
Financial sustainability is the shared responsibility of partners and members, while leading partners ensure the base-level funding. In the case of events proposed by members, responsibility for funding is shared. This includes external fundraising by both members and partners as well as the acquisition of new funding partners to ensure sustainable growth. Transparency, visibility as well as member and partner engagement lie at the core of the GDL’s financial sustainability process.

Marian Cramers, Belgium
“I hope a next taskforce can start a partner expansion, because I believe the GDL is in need of more diverse and international partners.”

Marian Cramers, Belgium

Why Is It Important to Include Members in the Fundraising?

“When I introduce potential new partners, I have more say in which GDL partners support the organisation and create institutional change. When my leads become funders, I strengthen my personal network and elevate my career.”

“My engagement in the growth process ensures the organisation remains inclusive and sustainable, and that I have a say in how the management of members evolves.”

“Money is oxygen for all the activities I want to implement. A sustainable GDL means I can contribute to diplomacy 4.0 while enlarging my network and gaining new skills.”
I Winter – Berlin, Germany
In early February in Berlin more than 20 GDL members gathered at the dinner table. The facilitators had given each of those present a question in advance: think about your most memorable moment with the GDL. When was it, what happened and why is it so memorable for you? The assignment was to keep the request secret and to find a suitable moment to tell their story during dinner.

That was exactly what happened: they told each other their stories. Sometimes funny, sometimes inspiring and often moving. Stories full of insights, lessons, challenges, surprises. Stories about what they had experienced and learned through the GDL. There was no discussion leader, no chair(wo)man. The group led the conversation together. It was an experience in which all the unique characteristics of GDL came together: the members were leading, there was room for each and every voice, and, by using the potential of the group, an impactful conversation started.

II Summer – Accra, Ghana
In the summer of 2019, in warm and sunny Accra, Ghana, a group of GDL members and representatives of the Secretariat and the partner institutions met for the first time to work on a new strategy. The workshop started with a conversation circle about the value of GDL. Different points of view were discussed, the interesting other perspectives that were brought to the table were heard, the opportunity to exchange challenges and opportunities made use of. Then they were asked to think of a metaphor: which image or story best reflects the meaning of the GDL? One of the participants started talking about a journey, a search for the unknown: it is not about where GDL is going but more about how to get there. It is like building the boat while sailing.

III Fall – Brandenburg, Germany
With one and a half years of virtual meetings behind them, members involved in the strategy process finally met in person in autumn 2021. The serene countryside of Brandenburg, Germany, set the stage for the meeting. The calm lake outside was in stark contrast to the restless energy the GDL members brought to the meeting.

On one afternoon, they all met for a walk through the forest with a local initiative active in community, youth and intergenerational work as well as the integration of refugees. Within the first few minutes, common topics of interest emerged despite language barriers: Do you think we will manage to control climate change? What are you doing to integrate refugees? This is not something we can do alone, so how do you think we can reach (other) decision-makers?

Once again it became clear how important it is to learn from one another, to connect the global to the local and forge links between diplomats, care workers and activists. They all left with the feeling that they are not alone, and that what they do matters. A metaphor for this emerged after the walk: together they prepared butter with herbs they had gathered on the walk. No one was poisoned, and the combined result was not as bitter as its components. It was delicious!
Collaboration Drives Innovation
Stella Pfisterer and Marieke de Wal, Partnerships Resource Center

For over two years, the Partnerships Resource Centre (PrC) collaborated with GDL as its knowledge partner. The joint learning question was: how can cross-sector collaboration be a driver for innovative thinking and practice in developing the future strategy for GDL? The challenge for the PrC researchers was to facilitate a collaborative process.

This appealed greatly to the PrC’s adaptability and willingness to move along with the process. Because although it was clear what should be delivered – a co-created and co-owned future strategy – there was no clear idea about the way forward. In fact, it turned out that participants had very strong and sometimes very different views of what GDL’s strategy should be and how to develop it.

Dealing with uncertainty is key
Early in the process, it became clear that dealing with uncertainty and balancing tensions are crucial. It is unclear what future diplomacy should look like. GDL explores exactly this: what is needed in terms of competences, capacities and resources to formulate the new agenda for collective action? However, exploring these questions is likewise characterised by uncertainty.

Committed GDL members are driven by the conviction that collaboration is necessary to develop new ideas, approaches and methods. But how that should be done is still unclear. In that process GDL deals with at least three tensions.

Doing things differently
Because the way we were thinking and acting is not effective any more, there is a need for new perspectives, additional voices, diverse points of view. But how to mix and mingle them? Bringing together people from various backgrounds and cultures and with different fields of expertise, as GDL does, is an important first step.

Diversity is the basis
Within GDL, members expect to be seen and heard. Inclusivity is key. However, it is not about adding up the individual perspectives; it is about creating a collective new point of view, in which everyone can recognise themselves. A new starting point, based on the variety of inputs.

Process versus impact
Based on the urge to do things differently and building on the variety of perspectives, the focus is often on new methodologies. New ways of interacting, involving head, hands and heart. But the focus on process can clash with the need for concrete results. GDL members also feel an urgency to act.

A balancing act
It is not about choosing one over the other. Striving for concrete impact is not possible without paying attention to the process. And vice versa. The challenge is in the balancing act. By experimenting, by providing and holding space to fully experience these tensions. That was what PrC’s facilitation was all about: an excellent and thorough stocktaking and preparation, stepping back where appropriate, with full confidence in the potential and capabilities of the group.

What Comes Next?
Identifying and developing this approach – building the boat while sailing – was from time to time challenging, but a valuable learning experience for all involved. The final strategy document envisions a Diplomacy 4.0 and embraces a wide variety of ideas that represent the diversity of GDL members and partners. The next step will be to operationalise and execute the strategy within the next years. Members will take ownership and responsibility for this process.

Credit for the GDL strategy and its implementation goes to all GDL members, with a special thanks to all those engaged in the working groups.
coffee break
noun: a short break from work during which coffee or other refreshments may be consumed.
“Many thanks to all GDL members who participated in the comprehensive strategy process! We have learned a lot from the first five years and together we have set the course for the next five years.”
— Ruprecht Polenz, Dean

“As a former parliamentarian, Mr Polenz teaches us the virtue of being patient and valuing the cultivation of relationships from a long-term perspective.”