

**DR. MAYSSOUN ZEIN AL DIN**

Dr. Zein Al Din is Director of the Academy of International Affairs NRW, Associate Fellow at the Center for Advanced Security, Strategic and Integration Studies (CASSIS) and lecturer at RWTH Aachen University and the University of Bonn. Her research focuses on international relations and the Arab world. She holds a PhD in Political Science, which she obtained at RWTH Aachen University. From 2012 to 2020, she was also responsible for international policy issues in the office of the former Minister President of North Rhine-Westphalia.

**CONSUL GENERAL PAULINE KAO**

Dr. Pauline Kao is Consul General for the U.S. Consulate General in Düsseldorf, covering the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, since 2021. She holds a PhD in law, which she attained at the University of Washington, and has previously studied as a student at the Humboldt University in Berlin. Following that, she served in various diplomatic positions, such as Vice Consul for Economic and Consular Affairs in Tokyo, Assistant Information Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Berlin, Staff Officer for the Secretary of State in Washington D.C., as well as Political Officer at the U.S. Mission to NATO in Brussels. Most recently, before her current posting to Düsseldorf, she was assigned as Public Affairs Officer at the U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai, China.

**PAUL COSTELLO**

Paul Costello holds the position of Senior Program Manager for the US-American German Marshall Fund (GMF) Cities program and is based in Berlin. The Master graduate of the Public Policy program at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin now focuses on democracy work and has previous work experience in sustainability and public diplomacy programs. In addition to leading the GMF Cities program's City Directors of International Affairs (CDIA) Network and the Cities Managing Migration project, he is also involved in other projects of the GMF Cities democracy work.

**HEIKE MAUS**

Heike Maus is Staff Officer at the Office for Communication of the Duisburg City Council, where she has been employed since 1990. In her job she is concerned with the representation of Duisburg in international relations, especially to Eastern Europe and the EU. She speaks German and English, Russian and Lithuanian and majored in history and Russian at the University of Bochum. Additionally, she is one of three members of the board of directors of the Deutsches Blindenhilfswerk e.V. (German organization for aid for the blind).

**MARTIN VAN DER PÜTTEN**

Martin van der Pütten is Head of International Relations and Chief International Diplomacy Officer of the City of Dortmund. In the realm of international relations, he focuses on promoting international cooperation and enhancing the visibility of the City of Dortmund internationally as well as ensuring fair and sustainable development in globalization. To achieve this, he works with the United Nations, Connective Cities and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), among others. Additionally, he drives forward the internationalization of municipal activities.

**THERESA REYMANN**

Theresa Reymann is Senior Project Manager at the City of Düsseldorf in the field of city partnerships and international affairs with the USA, Asia and Africa as well as a speechwriter for the mayor. She studied at California State University San Bernardino, the University of Florida and Ruhr University Bochum and holds a Master's degree in Political Science and Government / American Studies. During her studies, she completed several internships in the field of diplomacy and political science in both Germany and the USA.

**DR. ANNA SHPAKOVSKAYA**

Dr. Anna Shpakovskaya is a postdoctoral research fellow at the Institute of East Asian Studies at the University of Duisburg-Essen. She studied in St. Petersburg, Shanghai and at the University of Duisburg-Essen. She holds a Master's degree in Chinese Philology and a PhD in Political Science. In the course of her career, she has dealt with a wide range of China-related topics. Her current research project is part of a socio-political-economic accompanying research and examines the economic and social significance of the New Silk Road initiative for the city of Duisburg, the Ruhr region and the state of North Rhine-Westphalia.

**DR. NICHOLAS GOEDEKING**

Dr. Nicholas Goedeking is a research fellow at the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS) in Bonn. He conducts research in the field of comparative political economy and focuses on urban climate governance, political economy of climate change and public investment policy. He is currently expert lead of a research program on environmental governance and advises, among others, the German government on effective climate policies and strategies. Goedeking studied at the universities of Durham, Oxford and Berkeley and holds a PhD in Environmental Science, Policy and Management.

**YUNUS ARIKAN**

Yunus Arikan is Head of Global Policy and Advocacy at ICLEI World Secretariat. He holds a Master's degree in Environmental Engineering from the Middle East Technical University in Ankara and has worked as Senior Project Manager at the Regional Environmental Center of Turkey. His current work focuses on implementing climate action mainly on a local level, which is why he was involved in the founding of the Bonn Center for Local Climate Action and Reporting (carbonn). He was also Director of the Secretariat of the World Council of Mayors on Climate Change.

**VIVEK ANAND**

Vivek Anand is Deputy Director in the Ministry of Finance, Government of India and currently a Fellow at the Academy of International Affairs NRW. His research focuses on European governance structures and policy making for the development of an innovation ecosystem for small and medium enterprises, which he was able to pursue as part of a German Chancellor Fellowship from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. His work also includes the promotion of numerous Indo-German and Indo-Spanish cooperation projects in the areas of Open Innovation and Industry 4.0. In addition to a Bachelor's degree in Electrical and Electronics Engineering, he holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Commercial Law.

**MICHAEL KRONES**

Michael Krones is a German television journalist and presenter who worked for the German network Phoenix from 2001 to 2022. He studied political science, German studies, film studies and education in Cologne and Berlin and holds an MA degree. Over the course of his career, he has held positions at numerous renowned daily newspapers and television stations, such as FAZ, ARD and ZDF. Krones is now a lecturer at the University of Bonn and a lecturer at the ARD/ZDF Media Academy for training and further education for presenters as well as a senior partner at the Bureau of Communication in Düsseldorf.