

B – BUG

No. 155
+ 156

14 – 17
May
2026

Istanbul

3 **Program**

7 **Insights into
Istanbul**

11 **Speakers**

28 **Information**

Thu 14/5

The Bank Hotel
Istanbul

- 16:30 Reception in the lobby of The Bank Hotel
- 17:30 Welcome to Istanbul
Michael Schwarz, Managing Director, BBUG

Beate Ando, Senior Programme Manager, BBUG
- 18:00 **Insights into Istanbul¹**
Anadolu Kültür
Derin Yoksulluk Ağı (Deep Poverty Network)
Hrant Dink Foundation
Istanbul Barosu (Istanbul Bar Association)
- 20:30 Dinner The Bank Hotel Istanbul

Fri 15/5

Salt Galata

- 8:45 Welcome remarks and introductions to the programme
Michael Schwarz, Managing Director, BBUG
- 9:30 Speed networking
- 10:30 Coffee break
- 11:00 A different Türkiye is possible: the approach of the main opposition party
Serkan Özcan, Deputy Chairperson, CHP
- 12:00 Turkey 360°

On Turkey as a middlepower
Dr. Günter Seufert, Author and Founding Head of the Center for Applied Turkey Studies

On Foreign Policy
Prof. Dr. Ayça Ergun, Professor of Sociology and a Board Member of Center for Black Sea and Central Asia (KORA), Middle East Technical University (METU)

On the mood of Turkish youth
Dr. Berk Esen, Associate Professor, Sabanci University
- 13:15 Lunch break

¹ Visits to and discussions with relevant NGOs in small groups.

Continued
Fri 15/5

- 14:00 Stabilization and growth – navigating Turkey's economy in challenging times
Mehmet Şimşek, Minister of Treasury and Finance, Republic of Turkey
- 15:00 Coffee break
- 15:30 Group input²
- 16:30 German-Turkish relations
Sibylle Katharina Sorg, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Republic of Türkiye
- 17:30 Turkey's economy – cooperation, competition and strategic balancing
Dr. Derya Göçer, Associate Professor, Middle East Technical University (METU)
- Ahu Serter**, TÜSIAD Board Member and President of Future Industries, Entrepreneurship and Investment Roundtable
- 19:00 Transfer to the restaurant
- 20:00 Dinner
Restaurant Koco, Caferağa, Moda Cd. No:171, 34710 Kadıköy/İstanbul

Sat
16/5

Salt Galata

- 9:00 Reporting on Turkey and the region
Julia Hahn, Turkey Correspondent, Deutsche Welle
- Katharina Willinger**, Correspondent and Head of foreign bureau Istanbul and Tehran, ARD
- 10:00 Group Inputs
- 11:00 Coffee Break

² Group inputs are presentations by participants with a 10-minute impulse followed by a 20-minute discussion

Continued
Sat 16/5

- 11:30 Group Workshop
- 12:30 Lunch
- 13:30 Art, architecture and identity
Excursions in three groups:
Tarabya Cultural Academy,
Dr. Jeanette Neustadt-Grusche, Artistic Director
- The cultural and political significance of sacred buildings:
Çamlıca-Moschee, **Prof. Dr. Gencer Özcan**, Department of
International Relations, Istanbul Bilgi University
- In stone carved witnesses of German presence in Istanbul,
Prof. Dr. Christoph K. Neumann, Director, Orient-Institut
Istanbul
- 18:00 Film screening "Yellow Letters" and discussion with
Enis Köstepen, Co-scenarist
The Seed, Emirgan, Sakıp Sabancı Cd. No:42,
34467 Sarıyer/İstanbul
- 20:45 Dinner
The Seed, Emirgan, Sakıp Sabancı Cd. No:42,
34467 Sarıyer/İstanbul

Sun
17/5

Salt Galata

- 09:00 The future of the Middle East
Prof. Dr. Volker Perthes, Senior Distinguished Fellow, Stiftung
Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP)
- 10:30 Coffee break
- 11:00 Closing remarks, evaluation, debrief
- 12:00 End of programme

„Life can't be all that bad,' I'd think from time to time. 'Whatever happens, I can always take a long walk along the Bosphorus.“

Orhan Pamuk

Anadolu Kültür

Depo Istanbul
Lüleci Hendek Caddesi No.12
Tophane 34425, İstanbul,
Türkiye

Anadolu Kültür was founded as a not-for-profit cultural institution in 2002 by Osman Kavala. Individuals from various fields of the art world, the business world and civil society came together to support the production and sharing of culture and art in cities across Turkey and abroad. Anadolu Kültür continues its activities with the belief that cultural and artistic exchange will help develop mutual understanding and dialogue and overcome regional differences and prejudices, and that a broader cultural life will elicit a discussion of concepts such as citizenship, identity and belonging.

Anadolu Kültür's vision is the dream of a society that has managed to shed its prejudices, that finds nourishment and enrichment through differences and where cultural diversity is not perceived as a source of

conflict but wealth. Anadolu Kültür aims to build bridges between different ethnic, religious and regional groups by sharing culture and art, supporting regional initiatives, emphasizing cultural diversity and cultural rights and consolidating inter-regional collaboration.

Derin Yoksulluk Ağı (Deep Poverty Network)

**Ergenekon Mahallesi
Papa Roncalli Sokak 116 Kat 3
Daire 2
Şişli, İstanbul**

Deep Poverty Network is a solidarity and research network. Its roots date back to the Çimenev Science and Arts Center in Harbiye/Elmadağ quarter of İstanbul, founded 2016 by Hacer Foggo, who has long worked as a journalist and activist in the fields of urban poverty and human rights, together with volunteers working on children's rights. Since November 2020, the center has continued its activities as the Şişli Municipality İnönü Neighborhood House.

In 2018, The Open Space Association (Açık Alan Derneği) was founded in 2018 in İstanbul

by the coordinators, workshop facilitators, and volunteers of Çimenev. Its aim is to carry out activities that enhance the capacities of primarily young people, as well as women and children from diverse social, economic, and cultural backgrounds, in areas such as education, civic awareness, social entrepreneurship, and technology. It also seeks to create a social innovation ecosystem that enables individuals and institutions engaged in production, research, and development to share innovative experiences and sustainable solutions, contributing to social and economic development and strengthening collaboration.

Based on the experiences and observations from Çimenev workshops and the field, a group of researchers, sociologists, psychologists, and journalists in 2019 established the Deep Poverty Network (DPN) to study deepening poverty, reveal its dimensions, conduct human rights monitoring, and open poverty up for discussion as a human rights violation.

In March 2020, due to measures taken to combat the pandemic, the Network launched a Solidarity Campaign in order to meet the urgent needs of individuals working in precarious daily jobs, those who were dismissed, placed on unpaid leave, or living in poverty. It developed a system through which supporters can directly deliver food, basic care products, diapers, and baby formula to households via an online market. Since March 18, 2020, DPN has provided and continues to provide support to more than 3,000 households across over 160 neighborhoods in 32 districts of İstanbul.

Maintaining continuous and active communication with individuals experiencing deep poverty and with the field, DPN conducts human rights monitoring alongside its solidarity campaign, brings the multidimensional nature of poverty into discussion, makes it visible, and aims to carry out advocacy activities with public institutions and local governments.

Hrant Dink Foundation

23.5 Hrant Dink Site of Memory
Halaskargazi Caddesi, Sebat
Apartmanı, No: 74/1
Osmanbey 34371 Şişli,
İstanbul, Türkiye

Hrant Dink Foundation is an organization established following the 2007 assassination of Hrant Dink, a prominent Turkish–Armenian journalist, in order to "carry on Hrant's dreams, Hrant's struggle, Hrant's language and Hrant's heart". Among the organization's specific goals are to monitor hate speech in Turkey, to study history from a non-nationalist perspective especially using oral history, build relationships between Turkey, Armenia and Europe, to conduct projects on cultural heritage, to carry out projects and activities on minority rights, to shed light on the past and improve democratization and human rights in Turkey.

The Foundation defines the development of a culture of dialogue, empathy and peace as the basis of all its activities, which concentrate on the following areas:

- working toward equal opportunity among children and young people, and supporting their creativity

- ensuring that cultural diversity is recognised as a richness and differences are acknowledged as a right
- developing cultural relations among the peoples of Turkey, Armenia and Europe
- supporting Turkey's democratization process
- supporting efforts to write histories devoid of nationalism and racism
- gathering articles, photographs, and documents about Hrant Dink.

Hrant Dink Foundation undertakes multifaceted activities in these areas, such as publishing books, creating archives, organizing film, music, visual arts, dance and literature events, organizing awareness raising events on human rights, hate speech, minority rights and giving awards in memory of Hrant Dink.

Istanbul Barosu (Istanbul Bar Association)

Asmalı Mescit
34430 Beyoğlu,
İstanbul, Türkiye

Istanbul Bar Association was founded on April 5, 1878, and has a long professional and institutional history. Since its establishment, it has operated at different times within courthouse facilities and various other venues, and it continued its role centered on professional representation and the right to defense throughout the Republican era. Istanbul Bar Association is regarded as one of the largest bar associations not only in Turkey but also in the world. For this reason, every move it makes attracts wide attention both within the legal profession and in public debate.

Today, Istanbul Bar Association stands out not only as the professional organization of lawyers, but also as a strong institution defending principles such as the rule of law and the right to a fair trial. In recent years, its relations with the government have at times been tense; in particular, the lawsuit filed against the bar's leadership and the statements by international legal organizations criticizing the process indicate serious disagreements between the bar and the government.

In October 2024, constitutional law scholar Prof. Dr. İbrahim Kaboğlu was elected president of the bar. After a statement made by the bar in late 2024, a criminal case was filed against Prof. Dr. İbrahim Kaboğlu and his team. The prosecutor's office investigated the statement on allegations of "spreading propaganda for a terrorist organization" and "publicly disseminating misleading information." Then, with the indictment dated January 14, 2025, a request was made to remove Kaboğlu and the mem-

bers of the executive board from office and to elect a new leadership.

The main rationale in the case was the allegation that the bar's statement and the leadership's stance exceeded the limits of purpose set out in the Attorneys' Act. The bar argued the statements should be seen within the bar associations' public responsibility, freedom of expression, and the right of defense. On March 20, 2025, the court decided to remove the executive board from office; however, reports also noted that the decision was open to appeal and would not be enforced before becoming final.

At the beginning of 2026, it was reported that the criminal case ended in acquittal for Istanbul Bar Association President İbrahim Kaboğlu and the members of the board. The process therefore moved along two separate tracks: one the civil case concerning the removal of the bar leadership, and the other the criminal investigation.



Speakers



Prof. Dr. Ayça Ergun

Professor of Sociology and a Board Member of Center for Black Sea and Central Asia (KORA) at Middle East Technical University (METU)



Ayça Ergun is a professor of sociology and a board member of Center for Black Sea and Central Asia (KORA) at Middle East Technical University (METU). She works at Global Academy as a senior researcher. She received her PhD. from the Department of Government at the University of Essex. Her research interests include state-society relations, democratization, nation and state building, civil society in the South Caucasus, Turkish foreign policy in the South Caucasus, regionalism and regional cooperation in the Wider Black Sea region, Azerbaijani-Turkish relations, internationalization, soft power, international higher education, qualitative methodology, fieldwork and social impact assessment.

Her articles appeared in Europe-Asia Studies, Nationalities Papers, Third World Quarterly, Turkish Studies, Work, Employment and Society, Journal of European Integration, Journal of International Relations, Journal of Church and State, Journal of Developing Societies, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Field Methods and Electoral Studies.

She is the editor of three volumes; Turkey in Eurasia, Endeavors and Encounters” (with Mustafa Aydın), Routledge, (forthcoming 2026), Security and Cross-Border Cooperation in the EU, the Black Sea region and the Southern Caucasus, NATO Science For Peace and Security Publication Series E: Human and Societal Dynamics-Vol. 77, IOS Press (co-edited with Hamlet Isaxanlı) (2013) and Black Sea Politics: Political Culture and Civil Society in an Unstable Region (with Ayşe Ayata and Işıl Çelimli), IB Tauris (2005). She has worked as a researcher, consultant, team leader and project coordinator in national and international projects supported by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK), the European Commission (including 6th and 7th Framework Programme for Research), the Science for Peace and Security Programme (NATO), the UNDP, the World Bank, the Council of Europe and the IOM.

Dr. Berk Esen
Associate Professor,
Sabancı University



Dr. Berk Esen is Associate Professor of Political Science at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Sabancı University, Turkey.

He received his PhD in Government from Cornell University in 2015 and was an IPC-Stiftung Mercator Fellow in the Center for Applied Turkey Studies (CATS) at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs.

His research interests include the political economy of development, party politics and authoritarian regimes with a focus on Latin America and the Middle East. His research has appeared in academic journals such as *Party Politics*, *Journal of Democracy*, *Third World Quarterly*, *Government and Opposition*, *Armed Forces & Society*, *PS:*

Political Science & Politics, *South European Society and Politics*, *Journal of Near East and Balkan Studies*, *Mediterranean Politics*, *Middle East Journal*, *Turkish Studies*, and *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*.

Dr. Esen is the author and editor of three books on Turkish politics. He is the recipient of the Sakıp Sabancı International Research Award for his work on democratic backsliding in Turkey and Hungary, as well as the Turkish Science Academy Young Scientist Award (BAGEP).

Dr. Derya Göçer

Associate Professor, Middle East Technical University (METU)



Derya Göçer is an associate professor at Middle East Technical University (METU) in Ankara. Her research focuses on Turkish foreign policy and regional transformation in the Middle East, including the political and security dynamics and social movements.

She also examines China's economic engagement with Turkey and the Middle East and its political economy implications. Increasingly she focuses on infrastructure as well as trade as a dimension of these bilateral and regional relations.

Julia Hahn

Turkey Correspondent,
Deutsche Welle



Julia Hahn is a TV journalist and presenter. Since 2018, she has been based in Istanbul as Turkey correspondent for Germany's international broadcaster Deutsche Welle (DW), where she covers a wide range of topics – from politics and social justice to economic developments and regional affairs – for television and digital platforms.

Before her assignment in Turkey, Julia worked in Berlin as a news anchor, reporter, and editor for DW.

She holds a Bachelor's degree in Communication and Social Sciences from the University of Erfurt in Germany and Boğaziçi University in Istanbul. She earned her Master's degree in Comparative and International Studies from ETH Zurich, specializing in civil war and conflict research.

Julia is an alumna of the German National Academic Foundation and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation's journalism school, and completed DW's multimedia traineeship (Volontariat).

Enis Köstepen
Producer and Editor



Enis Köstepen studied international trade and sociology at Boğaziçi University, as well as anthropology at the New School for Social Research. In 2001, he became one of the founding editors of Turkey's leading film magazine, *Altyazi*, as a member of a cinephile collective. In 2007, he co-founded Bulut Film with two of his *Altyazi* colleagues, Yamaç Okur and Nadir Öperli, and director Seyfi Teoman (1977–2012). Between 2007 and 2013, Bulut Film produced seven independent features. Enis is an EAVE (2011) graduate.

From 2013 through 2021, he worked at the Istanbul-based human rights NGO Hafıza Merkezi as the project development and fundraising coordinator. In 2019, he and the editorial board of *Altyazi* founded the *Altyazi* Cinema Association to expand the magazine's activities beyond publishing to include actions supporting freedom of expression in filmmaking and film culture actors under economic and political risk.

Two of the last features he produced were *Hold Still* (Berke Baş, 2024), which received the Best Documentary Award at the 43rd Istanbul Film Festival, and *Yellow Letters* (İlker Çatak, 2026), which he co-produced and co-wrote and that received the Golden Bear at the 2026 Berlinale.

Prof. Dr. Christoph K. Neumann
Director, Orient-Institut,
Istanbul



Christoph K. Neumann is the director of the Orient-Institut Istanbul one of Germany's academic research institutes abroad. He received his doctorate in 1992 from Ludwig Maximilian University (LMU) Munich and completed his habilitation in Modern and Contemporary History in 2006. After positions at Charles University Prague, Istanbul Technical University, and Istanbul Bilgi University, among others, he has been Professor of Turkish Studies at the Institute for Near and Middle Eastern Studies at LMU Munich since 2008.

From 2009 to 2016, alongside his professorship at LMU, he held a lectureship at Istanbul Bilgi University. He had already been working in Istanbul from 1993 to 1996, when the Orient-Institut Istanbul was still a branch of the Orient-Institut Beirut. His research focuses on the history and culture of Turkey and the Ottoman Empire. He acts

also a translator for German and Turkish literary texts, as well as co-editor of various Turkish academic journals.

His most recent German-language publication is a history of the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey, published by Reclam Verlag. Christoph K. Neumann currently serves also as Deputy Chairman of the Academic Advisory Board of the Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft e.V. He is a founding member and current board member of the Gesellschaft für Turkologie, Osmanistik und Türkeiforschung e.V.

Dr. Jeannette Neustadt-Grusche

Artistic Director, Tarabya Cultural Academy



Dr. Jeannette Neustadt has been the Artistic Director of the Tarabya Cultural Academy since November 2025. She is responsible for the artistic vision and programmatic development of the Academy as an international residency programme and a space for artistic production, exchange, and critical dialogue at the intersection of art, culture, and contemporary societal debates.

She has been working for the Goethe-Institut since 2011, where she has held a wide range of positions in international cultural relations. Her work has focused on artistic programming, cultural policy, residency formats, and the role of culture in times of digital transformation and geopolitical change.

Most recently, she served as Advisor to the Secretary General of the Goethe-Institut, with responsibility for the Franco-German Cultural Institutes, EUNIC, the Munich Security Conference, and strategic initiatives of the Executive Board.

She holds a PhD in Literary Studies and has a strong curatorial background in contemporary art and interdisciplinary practices.

Prof. Dr. Gencer Özcan

Department of International Relations, Istanbul Bilgi University



Gencer Özcan graduated from Ankara University's Faculty of Political Sciences and received his PhD from Boğaziçi University. He worked at Marmara University (1983-1999) and Yıldız Technical University (1999-2009) before joining the Department of International Relations at Istanbul Bilgi University in 2009 as a faculty member.

He was the Vice President of the Turkish Political Science Association, 2010-2017 and a member of the executive board of the Council of International Relations in Türkiye (2010-2018).

His research interests are diplomatic history, Turkey's foreign and security policy-making process, the military's role in shaping Turkey's foreign policy decisions, Turkey's policy towards the Middle East, and Turkish-Israeli relations. He recently published on Türkiye's foreign policy and the conceptual and disciplinary history of International Relations in Türkiye

Serkan Özcan

Deputy Chairperson, CHP



Serkan Özcan graduated from the Department of Economics at the Faculty of Economic and Administrative Sciences of Middle East Technical University in 1999. Until 2006, he worked as a Specialist at the General Directorate of Banking and Financial Institutions of the Central Bank of the Republic of Türkiye (TCMB).

With a scholarship from the Central Bank of the Republic of Türkiye, Özcan completed his master's degree in Finance at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in the United States. Between 2006 and 2009, he was assigned to the Banking Regulation and Supervision Agency (BDDK), where he conducted studies on monitoring national and international financial developments and assessing their effects on the Turkish financial system.

Between 2010 and 2012, Özcan was appointed Chief Economist at Türkiye Vakıflar Bankası T.A.O.. During his tenure there, he also served as a Member of the Board of Directors of Vakıf Portföy A.Ş.

From 2012 to 2015, Özcan served as Executive Vice President responsible for Economic Research and Strategic Planning and as a Member of the Executive Committee at Odea Bank

A.Ş.. At the end of 2015, he founded his own consultancy company and served as its Chief Executive Officer.

In 2019, Serkan Özcan became one of the founding members of the Future Party (Gelecek Partisi), where he successively served as Head of Treasury and Finance Policies and later as Party Spokesperson.

Between July 2024 and November 2025, he served as Chief Advisor to the Mayor of İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality, responsible for Political and Economic Affairs.

Appointed as a Member of the Executive Board of the People's Republican Party's (CHP) Presidential Candidate Office in July 2025, Özcan was elected as a Member of the Party Assembly at the 39th Ordinary Congress and, in December 2025, was appointed Deputy Chairperson responsible for Institutional Relations and Relations with Political Parties.

Prof. Dr. Volker Perthes

Senior Distinguished Fellow,
Stiftung Wissenschaft und
Politik (SWP)



Volker Perthes (born May 16, 1958, in Homberg/Lower Rhine) is a German political scientist. From 2005 to 2020, he was Director of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (DISI) and Executive Chairman of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP).

From January 2021 to September 2023, he served as Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Head of the UN Mission UNITAMS in Sudan. From October 2023 to March 2024, Perthes headed the independent strategic assessment mission of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI). Since June 2024, Perthes has been a Senior Distinguished Fellow at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP).

He is a sought-after commentator in German and international media on German and European foreign policy, international relations and geopolitics, as well as the Middle East.

Dr. Günter Seufert

Author and Founding Head
of the Center for Applied
Turkey Studies



Günter Seufert is a
freelance author of books
and expert opinions.

In 2023 he left the German
Institute for International
and Security Affairs (SWP) in
Berlin where he worked for
14 years first as research-
er and policy consultant
and later as the founding
head of the Center for
Applied Turkey Studies.

Prior to this, Seufert taught
as visiting associate pro-
fessor at the University of
Cyprus, Nicosia and acted
as the academic director of
the Institute of the German
Oriental Society (DMG) in
Istanbul, today one of the
Max-Weber-Institutes.

For several years he was an
Istanbul-based journalist
for German-speaking print
media and free lance author.
Seufert holds a PhD in
sociology from the University
of Bremen and did post-
doctoral research at the
University of Lausanne.

Ahu Serter

TÜSİAD Board Member and President of Future Industries, Entrepreneurship and Investment Roundtable



Ahu Serter is an industry leader, investor, and transformation professional centered around transforming long-term strategy into tangible and measurable results.

As the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Fark Holding; Farplas, Farform, Faraero, Farplas & Smart Solutions leads a global automotive and industrial manufacturing group operating in Europe, MENA and Asia, consisting of AeroKlas in Romania and Thailand and FarAero, a Turkey-Thailand joint venture.

Fark Labs, founded by Serter, is a strategy and innovation engine on a global scale. Fark Labs; It works as a structure that identifies, prioritizes and quickly implements real opportunities for industrial companies, entrepreneurs and investors. Applying the investment portfolio approach to innovation, Fark Labs; It transforms long-term vision into short-term execution, driving ideas into clear roadmaps, strategic partnerships, and scalable business models. Mobility, industrial technologies, renewable energy, advanced materials and circular systems, and basic needs such as health, water, food and agriculture are the main investment areas that Fark Labs focuses on. Today, he is the Co-Founder of the Future Industries Fund, which aims to accelerate industrial transformation; He is one of the architects of the

TAYSAD-supported Mobility Technologies Fund. Through this fund, it brings together Turkey's automotive suppliers and entrepreneurs to build the future of mobility together.

Serter, one of the pioneers of investment with a gender lens in Turkey, Arya Women Investment Platform; believing that gender balance is not only a social responsibility, but also a strategic value that creates stronger innovation and higher returns. Arya; ARYA VCIF fund with a size of 20 million USD, which invests in startups with at least one female founder, an accredited angel investment network and a global investor community consisting of more than 550 members on four continents, focused on merit, discipline and long-term value creation. He is currently a Board Member at TAYSAD (Vehicle Supply Manufacturers Association) and Enpara, one of Turkey's leading digital banks.

She was shown among the "50 Most Powerful Women in Turkey" by Fortune Turkey; She was awarded the "Entrepreneurial Woman of the Year" award in the category of turnover over 100 million dollars in the USA. She is also the President of the Women's Entrepreneurship Initiative appointed by the Ministry of Industry and Technology of the Republic of Turkey. Ahu Serter is a member of the Board of Directors of TÜSİAD.

Mehmet Şimşek

Minister of Treasury and Finance, Republic of Turkey



Mehmet Şimşek served as the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic and Financial Affairs of Turkey during 2015–2018.

He previously served as the Minister of Finance (2009–15), and as the Minister of Economy (2007–09). He was elected to the Parliament for three terms (2007, 2011, 2015) representing the ruling AK Party.

Mr. Şimşek has formulated the fiscal policy which has helped Turkey recover strongly from the global financial crisis. He has also undertaken far reaching reforms such as simplifying tax regulations, enhancing taxpayers' rights, and reducing the size of shadow economy.

During his 11 years of public service as a minister, Mr. Şimşek was a strong advocate of structural reforms and prudent macroeconomic policies. The country's strong fiscal position and reform efforts have helped Turkey weather multiple (domestic and external) shocks over the past decade. A credit guarantee scheme, enhanced under Mr. Şimşek's leadership, helped the country avoid a recession after the failed coup attempt in 2016.

Mr. Şimşek represented Turkey as a governor at G20, IMF, WB, OECD and IDB.

He has regularly attended several international forums including the World Economic Forum in Davos, and the Bilderberg Group meetings.

Before entering politics, he worked for Merrill Lynch in London for seven years, initially as economist and strategist, and later as the head of Fixed Income Strategy and Macro Economic Research for the emerging EMEA region (2005–2007). From 1998 to 2000, he was a senior economist and bank analyst at Deutsche-Bender Securities in Istanbul. Earlier in his career, he worked on Wall Street for UBS Securities in New York (1997–1998), and as a senior economist at the US Embassy in Ankara (1993–97).

Mr. Şimşek holds a B.S. in Economics from Ankara University and worked as a research assistant in the University's International Economics and Economic Development Department. He also studied in England after being awarded a competitive Turkish State Scholarship. He holds an M.Phil in Finance and Investments from Exeter University. Mr. Şimşek is also a member of the Global Economic Symposium (GES) advisory board.

Sybille Katharina Sorg

Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Republic of Türkiye



2024 –
Ambassador, German
Embassy Ankara

2022 – 2024
Ambassador, Head Europe
Department, Federal
Foreign Office

2020 – 2022
Ambassador, Head
Department for Crisis
Prevention, Stabilization,
Peacebuilding and Hu-
manitarian Assistance,
Federal Foreign Office

2017 – 2020
Ambassador, Commissioner
Relations to EU Member
States as well as Cross-Border
and Regional Cooperation,
Federal Foreign Office

2014 – 2017
Deputy Head Executive Staff
and Deputy Head Office of
the Federal Minister for
Foreign Affairs

2011 – 2014
Head Political Section,
German Embassy London

2007 – 2011
Deputy Head Middle East
Division, Federal Foreign
Office

2004 – 2007
Head Cultural Section,
German Embassy Tel Aviv

2001 – 2004
Deputy Consul General,
German Consulate
General Sydney

1999 – 2000
Spokesperson Federal
Foreign Office for the EU
and Western Europe

1998 – 1999
Organizational Staff,
German Presidencies of the
G8, the EU and the WEU

1996 – 1998
Desk Officer Politics, Press
and Protocol, German
Embassy Dublin

1994 – 1996
Spokesperson Federal
Foreign Office for Africa,
Humanitarian Assistance,
and Legal and Consular
Affairs

1992 – 1994
Training, Federal
Foreign Office

Master's degree in History,
Political Science, and
Journalism, Justus Liebig
University Giessen

Katharina Willinger

Correspondent and Head of foreign bureau Istanbul and Teheran, ARD



Katharina Maria Willinger is a German television journalist and reporter specialising in the Near and Middle East. She is an ARD correspondent and heads the ARD foreign bureau in Istanbul as well as the office in Tehran.

Katharina Willinger grew up in Haßfurt. She studied Islamic Studies and Communication Studies at the University of Bamberg and completed a traineeship at Bayerischer Rundfunk in Munich. Since 2017 she has been a TV correspondent at the ARD foreign bureau in Istanbul, reporting on Turkey and Cyprus. In May 2020 she additionally took over the management of the ARD bureau in Tehran as the successor to Natalie Amiri, reporting from there for all public broadcasters within the ARD network. Her reports are broadcast in programmes such as Tagesthemen and ARD-Brennpunkt, among others. In January 2023 she assumed leadership of the ARD studio in Istanbul.

She has reported on multiple occasions from crisis regions, including from the Syrian-Turkish border in autumn 2019 and during the Turkish border opening towards Greece in spring 2020, when thousands of refugees were stranded in the border region for days. In spring 2023 she reported for weeks on the ground about the devastating earthquake in Turkey, which claimed more than 50,000 lives. Following the fall of long-time Syrian ruler Bashar al-Assad, she travelled with her team to northern Syria and reported from the refugee camps there. She regularly travels to Iran and reports from there, including during the attacks on Israel in autumn 2024 and shortly after the end of the Twelve-Day War in June 2025.

„Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you.“

Ruth Bader Ginsburg

BBUG Executive Board & Trustees

The “Baden-Badener Unternehmer Gespräche e.V.” (BBUG e.V.) are a not for profit association established in 1955.

Today, about 120 of the most important German companies, primarily from industry, make up its membership, including almost all of the DAX-40 corporations as well as a substantial number of medium-sized ‘global players’ of the German “Mittelstand”. Together they represent the backbone of the German economy.

Executive Board

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Helene von Roeder, Member of the Executive Board and Chief Financial Officer, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt (130. BBUG) (Deputy Chair)

Dr. Stephanie Eckermann, Member of the Executive Board, Deutsche Börse AG, Eschborn (149. BBUG) (Treasurer)

Hubertus von Baumbach, Chairman of the Shareholders’ Committee, Boehringer Ingelheim GmbH, Ingelheim (123. BBUG)

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If you have any questions in advance, feel free to reach out to us at any time.

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