

Beyond Washington: Understanding the U.S. Heartland

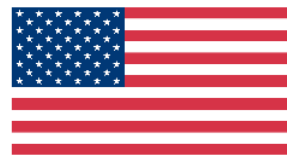
2018 Participant Profiles

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Anne Aulinger has served as a Policy Advisor in the Berlin office of MdB Susann Rüttrich (Social Democratic Party) since 2015, representing the electoral district “Meißen” in the German state of Saxony. Anne is responsible for strategies to promote civil society engagement and combatting right-wing ideology and violence, migration and integration as well as LGBTI*-issues. She supported her MP’s work at the Bundestag Inquiry Committee on the murders by the right-wing terrorist group NSU (2015-2017), where Susann Rüttrich was vice chair.



Prior to this position, she worked and volunteered for the “Network for Democracy and Courage” in Leipzig, an NGO that offers peer-to-peer political education on anti-discrimination and participation.

Anne holds an MA in Social Sciences from the Humboldt-University Berlin, which she obtained in 2016. She focused on social inequality, migration, and anti-discrimination, topics that she seeks to apply in her long-standing practical work as a political educator. In her master thesis, she explored the effects of gender-specific online harassment and the coping strategies of online activists, particularly when dealing with threats of sexualized violence.

Besides spending an Erasmus-semester at Université Libre de Bruxelles, she took part in two fellowship-programs of the NGO “Humanity in Action” during her Masters. The first one was based in Berlin and focused on human rights and minority issues, the latter was a professional fellowship program, in which she worked as a policy assistant in the Brussels office of the “European Network Against Racism” (ENAR).



Bettina Benz has served as the Chief of Staff in the Berlin office of MdB Marie-Luise Dött since 1998, representing the electoral district “Oberhausen/Wesel III” in the German state of Northrhine-Westfalia.

Bettina’s areas of expertise include environmental- and energy topics, SME-based themes, as well as social policy subjects, and media. She participates, inter alia, in the preparations for a joint event with the local job center on an event to reducing long-term unemployment in Oberhausen, the main electoral district of Ms. Dött.

Prior to this position, she served between 1996 - 1998 for MdB Ulrich Schmalz in the former capital of Bonn, where she was responsible for the preparation of the Committee on Tourism and Economics, public relations and for communication with constituents. She has a background in journalism and worked previously for the Badische Zeitung in Offenburg.

Bettina holds an MA in Political Science, as well as in Business Administration and English Philology from the Albert-Ludwigs-University in Freiburg, which she obtained in 1995. During her studies, Bettina also took classes in Economics and studied French at the University of Neuchâtel. After her studies Bettina completed an internship with ZDF, the Germany national television broadcaster in Mainz.

Laura Brehme has served as Political Consultant in the Berlin office of MdB Dr. Frithjof Schmidt since 2017, representing the electoral district “Bochum I” in the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia. Laura’s areas of expertise include foreign policy, especially European policy, security policy and civil defense as well as hacking and disinformation in political opinion formation. As a PhD candidate at the University of Darmstadt, she is also an expert in democratic theory particularly in different models of democratic participation.



Prior to this position, Laura served in the Berlin office of MdB Jürgen Trittin, former Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, where she was responsible for public relations, energy policy and foreign relations. Between 2013 and 2016, she served in the German Head office of Alliance 90/The Greens, where she was in charge with political campaigns, public relations and party organization.

Laura holds an MA in Political Science from the University of Bonn, which she obtained in 2013 with her thesis “The influence of Israeli civil society on Israel’s foreign policy”. She previously studied German Language and Literature, Political Philosophy and Political Science on the University of Greifswald and at the University Sorbonne IV in Paris. During her studies, Laura completed internships with different newspapers and did voluntary work in the field of human rights as well as security policy.



Peter Frigger has been working since 2009 as scientific assistant in the Berlin office of MdB Thomas Nord, representing the electoral district “Frankfurt (Oder) – Landkreis Oder-Spree” in the German state of Brandenburg. Peter’s areas of expertise include the affairs of the European Union. From 2007 to 2009, he was responsible for strategy and elections for the party DIE LINKE in the state of Brandenburg.

Prior to this position, he has been personal assistant of MdB Angela Marquardt, who represented the electoral district of Greifswald in the German state of Mecklenburg Western-Pomerania in the 14th election period until 2002. Peter was responsible for technology assessment and speech-writing.

Peter holds a PhD in political philosophy from the Humboldt-University in Berlin since 2013. In his thesis, he folded the modern discussion about mutual recognition with the ancient master-slave dialectic. He previously studied at the University of Göttingen and received his M.A. for an analysis of the secession wars in Yugoslavia (1991–1995). In the 1980s, he completed a locksmith apprenticeship in North-Rhine Westphalia (West-Germany) and worked as journeyman.

Til Frohmann has served since 2017 as the Chief of Staff in the office of Oliver Luksic MdB, who is the head of the Free Democratic Party (FDP) in the state of Saarland. Til's expertise as political advisor include transportation and infrastructure policy, CO2-regulation for cars (including the Diesel emissions scandal), new mobility solutions such as autonomous driving, e-mobility, digitization of the mobility sector and budget. He supports Mr. Luksic in his position as his party's coordinator for transportation and digital infrastructure.



Prior to this position, he served between 2013-2017 in the office of Thomas Viesehon MdB (CDU), where he also contributed to the legal work for the committee on transportation and digital infrastructure. Til started his parliamentary career at the EU-level, where he advised Monika Hohlmeier MEP in the European Parliament's budget committee in Brussels (Belgium) and Strasbourg (France). He holds a degree in common law from the University of Bonn (Germany) and is specialized in constitutional, public and European law.

Til is a member of the German-American parliamentary staffers group in the German Bundestag. One of his life goals was to spend the holiday season in New York City – which he achieved on his first trip to the U.S. with his wife in 2014. A photograph of a busy street in Manhattan from the 1950s in his office reminds him of this trip every day.



Mihai Ganea has served as parliamentary assistant in the Berlin office of MdB Detlef Müller since 2015, representing the electoral district "Chemnitz" in the German state of Saxony. Mihai's areas of expertise include labour market policies, European Union issues, infrastructure projects, and digitalization. He contributed to research on the Federal Transport Infrastructure Plan, which is a major project impacting the electoral district of Mr. Müller.

Between 2013-2017, he served in the Berlin office of MdB Susann Rührich, representing the electoral district "Meißen", including a 2-year period concurrent with his current position. In that role, he was responsible for labour market policies, networking and communication with constituents.

Mihai holds an MA in Political Science and European Integration from the University of Chemnitz, which he obtained in 2013 with his thesis “The legal concept of the European Union citizenship”. He previously studied International Relations and European Studies at the Babes-Bolyai University, where he obtained his BA in 2010. During his studies, Mihai completed several internships including one in the Parliament of the German state of Saxony and at Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (German Trade Union).

Holding three citizenships (German, Romanian and Hungarian) Mihai lives in Berlin since 2013. He is married and the proud father of a son. In his spare time he enjoys all kind of sports, plays in the Sunday football league and is a hobby tri-athlete.

Matthias Gellner has served as personal advisor in the Berlin office of MdB Uwe Kamann since October 2017, representing the electoral district Oberhausen in the German state of North Rhine Westphalia (NRW). Matthias' areas of expertise include marketing, social media, speech writing, public relation and communication with government and authorities.



Prior to this position, he worked between 2015-2017 for an international advertising company in Cologne, where he was responsible for staffing, sales management and marketing. From 1995-2015 he was Managing Director of his own company in the area of real estate marketing. Matthias holds a degree in communication and rhetoric from the University of Bochum.

Matthias is chairman of the German Mittelstandsforum-NRW since 2016. This association has served as uniform representation of economic, legal and political interests and has been constant in dialogue with politicians, opinion leaders, the public and other lobbying groups to further promote the dynamic development of the German small and medium-sized enterprises.



Eva Haas has served as constituency staffer for MdB Sylvia Gabelmann since July 2018. Prior to that she worked as an intern in Miss Gabelmann's Berlin office. She represented the electoral district of Siegen-Wittgenstein, characterized mainly by heavy industry, is located in North Rhine-Westphalia.

Eva holds a BA in Business Administration from the University of Cologne (2017) and is currently enrolled at University of Siegen in the newly-found MA programme of Pluralist Economics. This MA programme examines and considers economic phenomena from a variety of different approaches and is unique in its application of alternative traditions of thought. It is designed to train students for the currently most urgent questions: globalisation and social justice, as well as climate change and sustainability. Eva is also enrolled for at FernUniversität Hagen for Culture Science (BA). She enjoys doing different

kinds of sports, meditating, and loves spending her time in nature. Eva believes that communities must work together to achieve a better future, which is why she worked different volunteer jobs, the most formative ones being a completed training in the ambulatory hospice service and working in an inclusive project for people with and without handicap. She has no children and has been living with her partner for years.

Gerrit Kettel has been foreign policy advisor to MP Renata Alt since November 2017. He mainly covers issues concerning Russia, Ukraine as well as conflict prevention and has a personal interest in foreign and security policy. Additionally, he is tasked with reaching out to stakeholders such as associations and embassies in Berlin.



Renata Alt's home district of Nuertingen, Baden-Wuerttemberg, is known for its high share of civic engagement as well as prime location for automotive suppliers.

Prior to his position in the German Bundestag, Gerrit worked for the American Chamber of Commerce in Germany. Managing the Transatlantic Aerospace and Defense Committee, he made the case for a stronger defense cooperation on both sides of the Atlantic as well as procuring battle-proven equipment for the German Armed Forces. Moreover, he helped shape the discussion on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership in German media and politics. He has further experience in public campaigning, policy analysis and corporate lobbying.

Gerrit holds a MA in North American Studies from Free University Berlin and the University of Sydney. In his thesis "The War on Terror. Change and Continuity under Bush and Obama," he critically assessed the (lack of) difference between the two Presidents. During his studies, he lived in Australia and the United States, interning among others with the Friedrich-Naumann-Foundation in Washington, DC.



Daniel Kister has worked as a policy advisor in the Berlin office of MP Gülistan Yüksel since 2016. As a social democrat, Ms. Yüksel represents the electoral district of Mönchengladbach.

Daniel's areas of expertise are in the field of tourist industry with a special focus on sustainability. Apart from being responsible for press relations, he works on a wide variety of tasks including research on current political issues, answering inquiries from citizens and general office work.

Prior to this position, he worked for "Teach First Deutschland" – a NGO that tries to overcome educational inequality by providing additional teaching support to schools in socially disadvantaged areas. For two years, Daniel worked in a secondary school where

he taught classes in history, ethics and mathematics and initiated several projects like the school magazine.

Daniel has a background in journalism. He completed a cross media editorial traineeship and worked for different radio stations and newspapers such as the Frankfurter Rundschau and Die Tageszeitung.

As a first-generation college student, Daniel studied "Liberal Arts and Science" at the University College Maastricht and at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Combining both Social Sciences and Humanities, he focused on subjects such as social and economic psychology, international relations, and political philosophy.

Stefan Krabbes lives in Halle (Saale) and since 2015 has been Office Manager of MdB Dr. Gerhard Schick (Alliance 90/The Greens) in Berlin, who represents the electoral district of Mannheim. Stefan is responsible for public relations, social media and press releases, political consulting, project-related topics and communication with the district office in Mannheim. Currently he is researching for the correlation of indebtedness and the election results for populist parties.



Stefan grew up next to the old industrial area of Bitterfeld, where he worked from 2011 until 2015 for two Members of Parliament of Saxony-Anhalt in their district offices. Economically and structurally, Bitterfeld and Mannheim have to fight with job relocations and their consequences for the population.

He studied Political Science and Sociology at the Martin-Luther-University in Halle (Saale) from 2014 until 2016. In October 2018 he will continue at the Fernuniversität Hagen, alongside his work.

In addition to his job, he is a blogger and is interested in the topics of democratic developments in times of digitization and how social cohesion has to be organized by politics. Stefan is member of the organization "Fearless Democracy", a network of communication experts, fighting for a civil society without hate in the internet.



Steffen Krug has served as an economic assistant in the Berlin office of the head of the budgetary commission of the German Bundestag MdB Peter Boehringer since 2017, representing the electoral district Amberg in the German state of Bavaria. Steffen's areas of expertise include budget negotiations as well as finance and monetary policies. He contributed to the successful passing of the 2018 German federal budget.

Prior to this position, Steffen has worked as an independent wealth protector in Hamburg. Between 2005 and 2008, he developed an

investment style for the financial crisis and founded the Institute for Austrian Asset Management (IfAAM-Institute) in 2009. Since then, the IfAAM Institute has been putting on dozens of conferences with hundreds of speakers and thousands of attendants and more than a million YouTube followers.

Since 2012, Steffen awards the Roland-Baader-Prize (entrepreneur, “Austrian” economist and former student of F. A. von Hayek in Freiburg) to libertarian entrepreneurs, journalists, and authors. In 2018, it was awarded to the American editor Lewellyn Harrison Rockwell Jr. (Founder of the Ludwig von Mises Institute in Auburn, Alabama). Steffen holds a Master in Economics from the Europa-University-Viadrina in Frankfurt/Oder with his thesis “European integration and the need for institutional reform” in 1998. He obtained his bachelor from the University of Heidelberg in 1994 and participated in an MBA Program at the Ecole Supérieure de Commerce Reims in France in 1995.

Patrick Moss has served as a Parliamentary Advisor in the Berlin Office of MdB Mark Hauptmann since 2017, representing the electoral district “South Thuringia” in the German state of Thuringia in former East Germany. Patrick’s areas of expertise include transatlantic relations, European-Asian trade relations and free trade policy.



Prior to this position, he served in the Economic Council (Wirtschaftsrat der CDU), where he was responsible for coordinating and supporting special projects on national, state and local level, in particular maintaining political contacts and supporting the member recruitment process.

He has a background in international relations and worked previously for the European Academy of Taxes, Economics and Law, as well as for the international affairs department of the BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt.

Patrick holds an MA in Political Science from the University of Münster, which he obtained in 2012 with a thesis about the shift of the United States to the Asia-Pacific region and its implications for Europe. During his studies, Patrick completed internships with the German Embassy in London, the Amerika Haus NRW in Cologne, the German Bundestag and the Transatlantic Dialogue Program of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation in Washington, DC. Patrick is a member in the Association of Parliamentary Staffers on Foreign and Security Policy and plays violin in a symphony orchestra in Berlin.



Michal Petrík has served as a member of Staff in the Berlin office of the Member of the German Bundestag Rüdiger Kruse since 2010, representing the electoral district “Eimsbüttel” in the German state of Hamburg. Michal’s areas of expertise include budget negotiations, funding of transport and digital infrastructure projects, funding of cultural projects, and sustainable development issues.

In last 8 years, Michal was responsible for the formal preparation of many initiative proposals of Mr. Kruse in the Budget Committee summing up hundreds of million Euros, for example relocation of the Allied Museum in Berlin or a new funding for Digital Test Field in the Port of Hamburg.

Coming from Bratislava, the Capital of Slovakia, Michal was awarded International Parliamentary Scholarship of the German Bundestag in 2010 in the office of Mr. Kruse. Prior to his stay in Germany, he obtained MA in International Relations at the University of Economics in Bratislava. Simultaneously, he worked part-time at the Slovak Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family as an Assistant in the IT Department for 4 years. There he gained valuable insights in the mode of operation of the state administrative authority.

Michal is married and has two children. On a voluntary basis, he has been a member of a parish committee in Berlin since 2016. Since 2010 he has been singing in the Choir of the St. Hedwig’s Cathedral in Berlin.

Christoph Radl has served since 2018 as scientific advisor to MdB Dr. Heiko Wildberg, who represents the electoral district of “Südpfalz” in the German state of Rhineland-Palatinate and is a member of the committee on environment, nature protection and nuclear safety.

Christoph’s areas of expertise include environmental issues, particularly water (drinking water, nitrates in ground water, and multi-resistant bacteria in swimming venues). Besides environmental concerns, Christoph also contributed to other projects in Dr. Wildberg’s district like the expansion of the highway B10.



Prior to this position, Christoph served between 2013 and 2018 in the Luftwaffe, where he was a deputy battalion commander in the “Objektschutzregiment Friesland” and later the A1 senior officer in Ramstein. Before that, he worked for the Austrian department of Health in Vienna, where he became certified appraiser for “water for human use”. He occasionally worked for Reinhard Eugen Bösch, a member of the National Council.

Christoph holds a MA in Hydrogeology from the Technical University in Munich with a thesis on “The lime / carbonic acid equilibrium in a porous aquifer contaminated by sodium hydroxide solution” and a geological mapping in southern Brazil (“The Piquiri Syenite”).

Christoph is single and has no children. His hobbies include scuba diving, hunting and skiing. *Beyond Washington* marks his third trip to the US.



Benjamin Reetz has served since January 2018 as a parliamentary advisor in the Berlin office of MdB Olaf in der Beek, who represents the electoral district “Bochum I” in the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia. Ben’s expertise ranges from foreign affairs, trade cooperation, trade policies and development to budget affairs. He contributed to various parliamentary initiatives seeking to stimulate the growth perspectives in least developed and low-income countries through improving the trade relations between the EU and African, Caribbean and Pacific countries as well as through providing basic goods, education and medication in cooperation with international programmes and organisations.

Prior to his current position, Ben worked as parliamentary advisor for the parliamentary group of the Free Democrats (FDP) in the state parliament of the German state of Bremen, where he was responsible for the committee of budget affairs as well as the audit committee on governmental expenditures and the committee of interior affairs. Since he started working as a student assistant to a German Member of the European Parliament in 2011, Ben has acquired a broad and in-depth knowledge of parliamentary systems and their way of functioning.

Ben graduated from the London School of Economics and Political Science in 2015, holding an MSc in the field of Political Science and Political Economy. In his thesis “Bridging the Gap: The Impact of Electoral Rules and Welfare State Spending on Trade Policies in Democratic Countries” he analysed the impact of electoral systems on the design of welfare states and their respective influence on different countries’ openness towards free trade.



Mira Schirrmeister has served as policy advisor in the Berlin office of MdB Dr. Julia Verlinden since 2014, representing the electoral district “Lüchow-Dannenberg - Lüneburg” in the German state of Lower Saxony. Mira’s areas of expertise include energy policies, especially on the energy transition in heating and electricity, gas, fracking and economic policies. She monitored the legislation on fracking for the Green parliamentary group. This legislation has a major impact on the oil and gas industries in Lower Saxony where 95% of Germany’s gas is extracted.

In Julia Verlinden’s office, she is also involved in public relations, speechwriting, and communication with constituents. This includes social media communication, press statements and planning and organizing events, e.g. she recently organized a public expert discussion on the end of fossil gas and the future prospects of the gas infrastructure.

Mira has worked for several other MdBs from the Green party since 2008, mainly in economic and financial policies. Prior to this and in addition to her political work, she contributed to a research project on the future of small and medium family business succession in Berlin between 2011-2013 at the EMF Institute at the Berlin School of Economics and Law. Since 2016, she has been involved in another research project on the future of larger family businesses at the EMF Institute. This research project is supported by the EQUA foundation which granted Mira a scholarship.

Mira holds an MA in Future Science from the Freie Universität Berlin, which she obtained in 2013 with her thesis “Controversial Future – a Discourse Analysis on Utilizing the Fracking Technology in Germany”. She previously studied Political Science at the Freie Universität Berlin and the Università di Bologna in Italy. She obtained her BA in 2008. From 2012 to 2016 Mira was an honorary board member at the Bildungswerk Berlin, an organization which is associated with the Green party and provides political education.

Anika Taschke is Head of the Office of Gesine Löttsch. She works in the office of the electoral district Berlin-Lichtenberg. Because the electoral district is close to the Bundestag, Anika works in the Bundestag office as well. Her main task is to run the Berlin-Lichtenberg office with two other employees, to organize events in that district and to make sure that voters, citizens and neighbors are able to speak to their directly elected Member of Parliament. She also helps people if they need help and if they have serious problems. The major problems in her MdB’s district are currently a large increase in rent prices, difficulty obtaining housing or finding a kindergarten (daycare) place for children. Older constituents also have problems to managing their daily lives with their limited pension payments.



Anika holds a Master’s degree in Political Science from the University of Halle (Saale) and a Bachelor’s Degree in Political Science and Communications at the University of Jena. She did an internship in Berlin and New York City at the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung and worked as a student employee at the office of Gesine Löttsch starting in 2014. She obtained her Master’s degree in 2017, where her focus was on right-wing movements and organizations in Germany and how to deal with them on the state and national level. In her master thesis she analyzed the “not in my backyard”- phenomenon and its consequences on referendums using the example of the old airport space “Tempelhof” in Berlin.

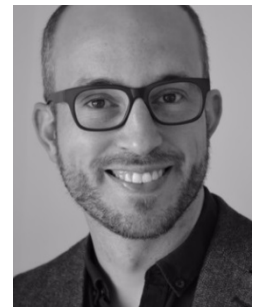
In her free time, she completes a great deal of voluntary social work and is a board member of an organization of survivors of the concentration camp in Mauthausen, Austria.

Cultural Vistas Staff



Steven Washington is a Program Officer at Cultural Vistas where he implements short-term exchange programs to the United States, focusing primarily on the U.S. Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP). In this role, he is responsible for the program management and administration of IVLP delegations consisting of emerging leaders, thinkers and professionals from around the globe and facilitates their exchange of ideas and solutions to international challenges with their American counterparts. Prior to this, he was the Director of Cultural Vistas' Global Career Launch internship program providing short term work experiences for university students from across China. Steven received his M.P.A. from the University of Nebraska's Graduate College and his B.A. in International Studies from the University of Nebraska at Omaha, including studies abroad in both Paris, France and Vienna, Austria.

Will Maier has been the director of Cultural Vistas' European Office in Berlin since 2013. He has worked for Cultural Vistas, a non-profit organization that administers international exchange programs for professionals, since 2005. His positions have included the Director of the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange for Young Professionals (CBYX), Program Manager of the Baden-Württemberg Stipendium Work Immersion Study Program, Program Manager of the Halle Foundation Fellowship, and as part of the International Co-op Program team.



His passion for transatlantic exchange dates back to his time as an exchange student in high school, when he visited Germany for the first time. Will obtained his BA in International Relations, German, and Literature from Franklin University in Sorengo, Switzerland.