

Dr Christian Johann

Director, European Academy Berlin

Christian Johann has led the European Academy Berlin since 2020. He combines running a long-established institution with a clear mission: creating dialogue where it has become difficult, across political divides, between Germany and its neighbours, and beyond Europe.

Leading the European Academy Berlin

As Director and Executive Board Member, Johann is responsible for programmes, staff and finances of the Academy, founded in 1963, including its conference and hotel operations in Berlin-Grunewald. Under his leadership the EAB has substantially expanded its role as a partner of the State of Berlin, extended its work beyond Europe to East Asia, and won new partners among foundations such as the Hertie Foundation, the Heidehof Foundation and the Würth Foundation, as well as companies. This growth came in years shaped by the pandemic, inflation and war on Europe's doorstep.

Dialogue where it has become difficult

As Secretary General, Johann runs the German-Chinese Dialogue Forum and the German-Taiwanese Dialogue Platform, keeping channels open in a tense environment. Under his leadership the EAB also hosts the Czech-German Discussion Forum and the German-Hungarian Forum. In 2026 he joined the Board of Trustees of the German-Bulgarian Forum. A lecture tour to Tokyo and Hiroshima at the invitation of the Goethe-Institut and the Civic Futures project launched a German-Japanese exchange on civic education in 2026.

Public role

Johann is a sought-after moderator and commentator on European integration, transatlantic relations, democracy and civic education. From 2023 to 2025 he moderated the Konrad Adenauer Foundation's Europe Speech at the Allianz Forum on Pariser Platz, with Roberta Metsola, David McAllister and Manfred Weber. He speaks regularly for the Federal Agency for Civic Education, is a member of the DGAP Study Group on European Policy, and served on the national jury of the European Citizen's Prize 2023.

Academic background

A historian of the United States, Johann wrote his doctoral thesis on the middle classes and the American welfare state, 1930 to 1972, under Paul Nolte at Freie Universität Berlin, with fellowships from the Fritz Thyssen Foundation and the German Historical Institute Washington. It was published by Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht in 2017.

Career

since 2020

Director, European Academy Berlin, and Executive Board Member of its association

2021 to 2022

Managing Director, wirBERLIN (non-profit), alongside the EAB

2019 to 2020

Study Commission on Vocational Education in the Digital Working World, German Bundestag

2012 to 2019

Managing Director, Studio2B (social enterprise)

2010 to 2012

Doctoral research in the USA and Germany

2008 to 2010

Deputy Director, The Kennedys Museum, Berlin

Education

North American Studies, Modern History and Political Science, John F. Kennedy Institute, Freie Universität Berlin; PhD in History

Board roles

European Movement Germany, Board

Association of European Houses and Academies (GEEA), Board

German-Bulgarian Forum, Board of Trustees

Schwarz-Rot-Bunt Foundation, Foundation Council

Journal Außerschulische Bildung, Editorial Board

Association of German Educational Centres (AdB), Auditor

Secretary General, German-Chinese Dialogue Forum and German-Taiwanese Dialogue Platform

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