

Report of Activities 2021 to 2023

Overview

The Indo-German Centre for Business Excellence e.V. (IGC), is a think tank, research centre, and network that connects people and organisations interested in business relations between India and Germany. As an academic institution, it is independent and impartial, but always close to the real world.

The IGC was created on 21 May 2021 at Frankfurt School of Finance & Management. It was subsequently inscribed as a registered association under German law ("eingetragener Verein" or e.V.) on 15 July 2021. The Centre was granted charitable tax status ("Gemeinnützigkeit") by the tax authorities on 10 June 2021.

In line with its mission and statutory goals, the IGC fosters a deeper understanding and more robust business ties between Germany and India. We support and engage in research, community-building, student mobility, and leadership development.

This report summarises the Centre's activities from its foundation to the end of 2023. Over two-and-a-half years, the Centre organised and co-organised fifteen online and face-to-face meetings that featured around one hundred speakers.

Membership

Nine members founded the IGC. The Centre's founding institutional members were (in alphabetical order):

- Confederation of Indian Industry
- FrankfurtRheinMain
- Frankfurt School of Finance & Management
- Innoplexus (now Partex)
- Mahindra University

As of 31 December 2023, the Centre had twenty-four members, out of which five were institutional and nineteen individual members.

Annual Conferences

The Centre's flagship event is the Annual Conference, which has taken place three times now in autumn 2021, 2022 and 2023. From the beginning, the idea was to bring together members and the Indo-German business community around different overarching topics. The concept of the Annual Conference calls for alternating locations in India and Germany. After two events in Germany in 2021 and 2022, the 2023 Annual Conference was held in India.

Inaugural Annual Conference

The Inaugural Annual Conference on 11 November 2021 at Frankfurt School marked the official launch of the Indo-German Centre for Business Excellence. The invitation-only event was held in hybrid format because of the restrictions imposed by the still ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Over eighty participants joined in persons and another sixty-five online. The programme included sessions on a wide range of topics affecting Indo-German business relations, from general discussions on the economic outlook for the two countries to more specific talks about healthcare, digitalisation, entrepreneurship, and venture capital.

Speakers and panellists included the German Ambassador to India, Walter J. Lindner; the Indian Consul General in Frankfurt Amit Telang; Puneet Chhatwal, the Managing Director and CEO of The Indian Hotels Company and President of the Indo-German Chamber of Commerce; Soumitra Bhattacharya, President of Bosch Group in India; Bernd Leukert, Head of Technology, Data and Innovation and Board Member at Deutsche Bank; and Amrita Narlikar, the President of the German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA).

Despite a packed schedule, the event left enough time for interaction and networking among the participants during the breaks and the evening reception, which featured innovative Indo-German fusion cuisine.

The event was sponsored by Frankfurt School of Finance & Management, FrankfurtRheinMain and Maier + Vidorno.

Second Annual Conference

On 22 September 2022, the Indo-German Centre for Business Excellence held its second Annual Conference at the Frankfurt School of Finance & Management campus with close to one hundred attendees. The Centre's members, business representatives, members of the Consular Corps, researchers, journalists, and students participated.

Under the theme *Partners in a changing world: Exploring business opportunities for India and Germany*, participants discussed different topics related to the three thematic streams of that year's event:

- Towards a sustainable and green future
- Innovation through startups and entrepreneurship

The Indian Ambassador to Germany, H.E. Mr Parvathaneni Harish, held the keynote address. In his speech, Mr Harish emphasised how both countries could learn and benefit from each other. Whereas India is ahead in areas such as digitalisation, biometric identification, and online payments, his country could benefit from Germany's mid-sized companies ("Mittelstand") to support the "Make in India" programme. Harish said. Hermann Simon (Founder and Honorary Chairman, Simon-Kucher) corroborated his comments during one panel discussing potential cooperation between German mid-sized companies and Indian startups. Simon pointed out that German "Hidden Champions" have little presence in India compared to, for example, China.

Besides six panel discussions, there was ample time for interaction and networking, including a get-together in Frankfurt School's exclusive Campus Lounge with a view over the city's skyline, where participants could enjoy a drink and innovative Indo-German fusion cuisine.

FrankfurtRheinMain, Partex, and ICICI Bank supported the conference as sponsors.

Third Annual Conference

On 13 October 2023, the Indo-German Centre brought its Annual Conference for the first time to India. Mahindra University hosted the Conference on their campus in Hyderabad. More than a hundred participants attended on-site, ranging from students of Mahindra University to business leaders and government representatives for Germany and India.

The theme of the Conference was *Rethinking Manufacturing in India and Germany: Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Growth* and featured panel discussions ranging from inclusive innovation to skill development and exploring a human-centric industry 5.0. Keynote speeches were made by Georg Enzweiler, Deputy Head of Mission, German Embassy New Delhi, Ramesh T K, Managing Director, Ace Micromatic Group, and Kannan Chakravarthy, CEO Mobility, Mahindra Logistics.

The topic, manufacturing, was a timely one given the importance of the sector for both India and Germany. Throughout the day, in all sessions, there was a big emphasis on areas for cross-country cooperation and mutual learning.

Various panels and speeches, covering different topics related to the overall conference theme, filled the day at the convention centre, bringing very interesting perspectives. Panellists included representatives from academia and business, including well-known Indian and German companies like Bayer, Tech Mahindra, Mahindra Logistics, Bosch, Voith, and ZF.

Mahindra University gave us the opportunity to tour their impressive campus during lunch break. The dynamism and speed of expansion are remarkable and very noticeable through the many construction projects going on.

Sponsors of the event were Mahindra University and FrankfurtRheinMain.

Indo-German Business Talk

The Indo-German Business Talk is the Centre's monthly online format. Every month, we choose a different topic pertinent to Indo-German business relations and invite expert guests to share their perspective. Sessions last between forty-five minutes and one hour and feature two to four experts. The audience can ask questions and take part in polls through the interaction platform Slido.

Originally, we streamed sessions via Zoom, requiring a free registration. Recently, we have switched to streaming simultaneously via LinkedIn Live and YouTube to reach a wider audience. Recordings of the sessions are available on the Centre's YouTube channel.

We discussed the following topics in 2022 and 2023:

- Entrepreneurship
- India and Germany: A Greener Automotive Industry
- Women in STEM: Education and Practice
- The Indo-German Investment Landscape
- Industry 4.0 and Smart Cities
- Digital Transformation and Healthcare
- Climate Resilient Food Systems
- Education and Economic Migration
- Approaches to International Security
- Indo-German Digital Cooperation
- Indo-German Relations in 2023

Business Diplomacy Today podcast

The Indo-German Centre sponsors and hosts the Business Diplomacy Today podcast, which addresses contemporary international relations and geopolitics, looking at the issues from a business perspective. While the podcast deals not only with India and Germany, both countries feature frequently. The aim of the podcast's broader focus is to raise awareness for the Centre outside the confines of the Indo-German business community.

The first episode went live in August 2022. By the end of 2023, the team had published twenty-two episodes, which received 3,300 downloads during that period.

Think20

In autumn 2022 India took over the presidency of the G20 group of nations. Sujan Chinoy, Director General of the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Samir Saran, President of the Observer Research Foundation, invited IGC Deputy Chairman Matthias Catón to become Co-Chair of the Think20 task force on *Reassessing the Global Financial Order*.

Think20 or T20 is one of the G20 engagement groups. It comprises distinguished scholars and thought leaders from around the world. Operating independently of national governments, the T20 strives to furnish G20 leaders with policy recommendations rather than promoting specific agendas.

The task force worked mostly virtually over the year, reviewing policy briefs and developing their own findings. Mr. Catón took part in meetings in conjunction with the Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi in March 2023 and the T20 Summit in Mysore in August 2023, where he also spoke on a panel on *Taking Stock: 2030 Energy Outlook and Implications for Global Net Zero Emissions*. In September 2023, the G20 Leaders' Summit of Heads of State and Heads of Government received key recommendations from the task forces.

Other events and activities

Besides the primary activities laid out above, the Centre and its leadership were involved in a series of other events. Some of them were co-organised with partners while at others IGC representatives appeared as speakers or panellists. Below, you can find a selection of events with active participation from the Centre. In addition, Centre representatives engaged with the Indo-German business community through participation in many other events and bilateral meetings in Germany and India.

India-Germany Business Meets

The India-Germany Business Meet is an event organised by the Consulate General of India in Frankfurt. On 7 February 2022, IGC Chairman Nils Stieglitz and Deputy Chairman Matthias Catón took part in the meeting held at the Steigenberger Frankfurter Hof, which was also attended by the newly appointed Indian Ambassador to Germany, H.E. Mr Parvathaneni Harish.

On 26 April 2023, Matthias Catón and Board Member Gunjan Bhardwaj spoke on a panel on trade and investment at the Airport Club Frankfurt. Kasturi Dadhe from our member FrankfurtRheinMain moderated the session.

Campus visit by Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

On 3 September 2022, Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, the renowned Indian spiritual leader, visited Frankfurt School of Finance & Management to deliver a special lecture on meditation, entrepreneurship, and business. He encouraged participants to think entrepreneurially while embracing meditation and a spiritual journey to take care of their mental well-being.

The event was organised by the Art of Living Foundation. IGC Board Members Gunjan Bhardwaj and Matthias Catón attended the event and welcomed Gurudev to Frankfurt.

20th Anniversary Celebration of the Indian School of Business

The Indian School of Business (ISB), one of India's leading Business School, celebrated its 20th anniversary with an event at the Indian Embassy in Berlin on 9 September 2022, hosted by the Indian Ambassador. ISB's Dean Madan Pillutla looked back at the School's accomplishments during the first twenty years of its existence. Afterward, a panel that included IGC Deputy Chairman Matthias Catón discussed Indo-German cooperation in the corporate sector and the role of academia.

International Year of Millets

2023 has been recognised by the United Nations' Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) as the *International Year of Millets*. People grow and sell millets globally, recognising them as a climate resilient and nutritious grain with a historical significance in our kitchens and the way crops are farmed. This is especially true with the need to be more climate resilient, sustainable and foster economic growth.

In partnership with the Consulate General of India in Frankfurt and Alliance Concept, the Indo-German Centre brought the celebration to campus in the second week of May 2023. Each day, a different millet-based dish was available on campus and volunteers provided information on the diversity of cooking with millets and their health benefits.

Global Solutions Summit

As part of his role as Co-Chair of a Think20 task force, Deputy Chairman Matthias Catón, together with fellow Co-Chair Hans Peter Lankes from the London School of Economics, was invited to host a panel on *Making Global Finance Fit for the Climate and Development Challenge* at the Global Solutions Summit in Berlin on 15 May 2023.

The Global Solutions Summit in Berlin provided a valuable platform for leaders from various sectors, including policy, academia, civil society, and the private sector, to come together for two intense days of proposing and debating research-based policy recommendations. With over 100 speakers and 1,000 international, on-site guests, the summit aimed to develop urgently needed global solutions to today's systemic crises. Distinguished figures such as German Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz contributed their insights to the event.

ICICI delegation visit

On 14 June 2023, Sriram Hariharan Iyer, the Head of the International Banking Group, Global Remittances and NRI Services at ICICI, visited Frankfurt School and the IGC. He was accompanied by Devender Maggo, Head - Retail Banking and Remittances, Germany Branch.

Throughout 2023, the Indo-German Centre, Frankfurt School and ICICI were in discussions on how to ensure an easier financial transition for Indian students coming to Frankfurt. Each year Frankfurt School welcomes a large cohort of Indian students, and the three bodies recognise the need to assist in their international move as they continue their education.

The Indo-German Centre and Frankfurt School were happy to welcome a delegation from ICICI to discuss this topic and further and prospects for future collaborations.

India Conference of Wirtschaftsrat der CDU

Matthias Catón gave a keynote address on *Deutsch-indische Zusammenarbeit: Werte- oder interessengetrieben?* in Frankfurt on 14 September 2023 at a conference organized by the Hesse chapter of Wirtschaftsrat der CDU.

Session on the German Supply Chain Diligence Act

On 29 November 2023, the Indo-German Centre and the Consulate General of India in Frankfurt co-hosted an event focussing on the new German Supply Chain Diligence Act. Johannes Weisser from the German-Indian Round Table (GIRT) presented the Act to an audience of Indian business leaders who were attending Fi Europe, the leading global event for food ingredients.

Incredible India Tourism Roadshow

The Indo-German Centre was invited to attend the Incredible India Tourism Roadshow on 5 December 2023 in Frankfurt. Organised by the Consulate General of India in Frankfurt and held at the studios of Radio Frankfurt, the event fostered an exchange of ideas on how to promote India as a destination for German tourists. IGC Deputy Chairman Matthias Catón represented the Centre.

Media appearances

- 28 September 2023: Kein ganz einfacher Markt. Interview with Chairman Nils Stieglitz in GTAI Markets International.
- 11 September 2023: Deputy Chairman Matthias Catón talks with news channel n-tv about the new India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC).
- 19 July 2023: TV interview with Matthias Catón on n-tv Telebörsen about the visit of German Economics Minister Robert Habeck to India.
- 25 February 2023: Deutschland und Indien – wichtige Beziehung mit einigen Problemen. Article on tageschau.de quotes Nils Stieglitz.
- 15 February 2023: Interview with Nils Stieglitz in Manager Magazin.
- 6 December 2022: Matthias Catón speaks with the German TV news channel n-tv about the economic and political relationship between India and Germany.

Corporate Visual Identity

Besides setting up the administrative structures, one of the first steps after the creation of the Centre was to establish a coherent visual identity. The Centre logo features the Indian and German flags. It is available in two variants. Most times, we use the main variant of the logo, which includes the Centre name. The second one is for instances with limited space, or where a square image is required. Both logos are available in full colour and grey scale.

The Indo-German Centre uses Frutiger as its typeface and a primary palette with five colours. You can find a full style guide, including spelling standards, on the IGC website.

Social Media

From the very beginning, the IGC sought to develop an active online presence to reach as large an audience as possible. The cornerstone of the IGC online presence is the website, which is accessible under the URL <https://igc.frankfurt-school.de>. There is also a shorter URL <https://indogerman.center> that redirects there. We use the latter mostly on printed matter and banners because it is easier to remember.

The Centre's LinkedIn page now counts almost 2,000 followers and receives several thousand page views and interactions each year. We use the page not only to announce upcoming events or report news around the Centre but also to share interesting articles covering Indo-German business relations. We encourage all speakers we invite and their organisations to post about events on LinkedIn and tag the Centre page.

We also maintain an email mailing list and we actively encourage our partners and visitors to subscribe to it. Currently, we have over 700 subscribers who receive information about events and other activities.

Our YouTube page currently acts primarily as a repository for the recordings of our Indo-German Business Talk webinars, but starting in 2024, we have livestreamed them directly to that platform.