



GERMANY'S AUSBILDUNG MEETS KOREA

A PARTNERSHIP FOR THE FUTURE





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Marie Antonia von Schönburg

President & CEO
Korean-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Dear Readers,

In a world that's moving fast, the best thing we can do for the next generation is to prepare them—not just with knowledge, but with real skills and real experience. That's exactly what Ausbildung, Germany's dual vocational training system, brings to Korea: a bridge between the classroom and the workplace, between today's challenges and tomorrow's opportunities.

This edition of KORUM, "Germany's Ausbildung Meets Korea: A Partnership for the Future", takes a closer look at how this model is making a difference on the ground. Through strong partnerships between German companies and Korean institutions, young people are gaining hands-on experience in real-world settings—while businesses benefit from a new generation of skilled, motivated professionals.

What stands out are the stories. From the automotive sector to creative fields like floristry, we're seeing Ausbildung in action—practical, collaborative, and full of promise. It's more than a training system. It's a mindset. A shared commitment to quality, to people, and to the future. A testament to the enduring trust and cooperation between Germany and Korea. As you read through this issue, I hope it offers both useful insights and fresh inspiration—for how we can nurture talent, strengthen partnerships, and build a future shaped by skill, collaboration, and mutual respect.

I invite you to explore these stories and see how Ausbildung is quietly, steadily shaping the future—one young professional at a time.



A PARTNERSHIP FOR THE FUTURE:

GERMANY'S AUSBILDUNG MEETS KOREA

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Ausbildung in Korea

Germany's dual vocational training system, Ausbildung, is helping shape Korea's next generation of skilled professionals. In this edition, German Ambassador to South Korea shares how Ausbildung is bridging cultures, boosting career opportunities, and laying the groundwork for deeper economic cooperation. With rising demand for hands-on talent, the time is now to expand Ausbildung beyond the auto industry into high-tech, healthcare, logistics, and more.



Markets & Trends

South Korea's workforce is highly educated—but cracks are showing. Labor shortages, an aging population, and fierce competition for talent are reshaping the market. How is the country responding—and what does it mean for business?



Coffee Break with Swiss Ambassador to Korea

From championing gender equality to uncovering Seoul's hidden gems, the Swiss Ambassador to Korea, H.E. Dagmar Schmidt Tartagli, reflects on her unique diplomatic journey in Korea. In this candid interview, she shares memorable milestones, the importance of supporting Women in Korea (WIR), and the lasting legacy she hopes to leave behind.

Building the Future: Strengthening Korean Ties Through Ausbildung



H.E. Georg Schmidt
German Ambassador to South Korea

In today's rapidly evolving economic landscape, equipping young professionals with the right skills is more critical than ever. Germany's renowned dual vocational training system, Ausbildung, has long been a model of success, seamlessly integrating hands-on industry experience with structured theoretical education. This unique system has not only strengthened our workforce but also significantly contributed to Germany's reputation as a global leader in skilled industries. Through the efforts of the Korean-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KGCCI) and German automotive brands, this invaluable vocational education framework has been successfully implemented in Korea, bridging cultures and fostering economic cooperation between our two nations. Now, as Korea continues to focus on workforce development, the time is right to expand the Ausbildung model to new industries and companies, ensuring more young talents benefit from this proven system.

Power of Dual Vocational Training

Unlike conventional academic pathways, Ausbildung offers a pragmatic approach to professional development. Approximately 70% of the training occurs directly within a company, providing on-the-job training, while the remaining 30% is dedicated to classroom-based theoretical education. This synergy ensures that trainees gain both the knowledge and hands-on experience necessary to meet the evolving demands of their respective industries.

Germany utilizes this program across more than 320 professions, including auto mechanic, baking, dental technician, police officers, banking, engineering, mechatronics, hospitality, sales, and nursing. Approximately 1.2 million trainees participate in dual vocational training programs annually. This breadth of training opportunities has solidified its role in enhancing workforce efficiency and driving industrial progress. This dual approach ensures that students are not only



well-versed in their chosen field but also gain hands-on skills that are highly valued by employers. The program typically lasts between two to three years depending on the professions. By further embedding this model within Korea's economy, we can create a future-ready workforce, empowering businesses with skilled professionals who contribute to industrial growth and competitiveness.

Ausbildung in Korea: Proven Success

In addition to Germany, more than 30 nations worldwide are implementing programs similar to the German dual vocational training. Since its introduction in Korea in 2017, KGCCI's vocational training program, which is called "Ausbildung", has been shaping Korea's vocational training landscape. Initially launched in collaboration with leading German automotive brands such as BMW Group Korea and Mercedes-Benz Korea, the program now includes all major German automobile brands operating in Korea—including Daimler Trucks Korea, MAN Truck & Bus Korea, Porsche Korea, and Volkswagen Group Korea—and is conducted in partnership with five Korean colleges. The results speak for themselves. More than 600 young professionals have benefited from this program, with 270 graduates already successfully completing their vocational training. With around 320 certified instructors guiding trainees across 150 service centers, the program ensures that these future professionals are well-equipped to thrive in a competitive market. In Korea, there are four Ausbildung professions: auto maintenance, car body, painting and service advising. Trainees sign

an employment contract with the official dealerships of German Automobile brands. Under the instruction of DIHK certified trainers, trainees receive on-the-job training (70%) at work and theory-based education from colleges (30%). Excluding the military service period, trainees complete a 36-month-long program with a college degree and Ausbildung certificate. Graduates in the field of automotive maintenance receive an Ausbildung certificate jointly issued by the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DIHK) and KGCCI, a credential that enhances their career prospects both in Korea and internationally.

Expanding Ausbildung Across Industries

While the program's success in the automotive industry is remarkable, the potential for Ausbildung in Korea extends far beyond this industry. With Korea's growing demand for skilled professionals in high-tech manufacturing, engineering, IT, logistics, and healthcare, the Ausbildung model could be a key solution for addressing talent shortages while ensuring sustainable economic growth. I personally had the opportunity to present Berufsbildung certificates to 15 accomplished florists under the AHK Florist Qualification program, organized by KGCCI in collaboration with domestic flower art academies. This initiative, based on Germany's rigorous DIHK vocational training standards, highlights Ausbildung's broad applicability beyond traditional industries.

More companies across various sectors in Korea should explore how Ausbildung can enhance workforce



capabilities and drive sustainable business growth. Key industries such as semiconductors, renewable energy, advanced manufacturing, and smart logistics would greatly benefit from structured vocational training that combines practical, industry-specific skills with academic rigor.

**Beyond Skills:
Strengthening German-Korean Ties**

The Ausbildung program is more than just a skills development initiative—it serves as a vital cultural and economic bridge between Germany and Korea. By fostering close collaboration between businesses and educational institutions, the program not only enhances bilateral economic ties but also helps address critical labor shortage and skills mismatch in key industries. Companies that invest in this system gain access to a well-trained workforce, leading to higher productivity, improved industry standards, and a more resilient business environment.

During my recent engagement with Ausbildung trainees in Korea, I was deeply inspired by their ambition, skills, and dedication to mastering their professions. Meeting these young professionals firsthand reaffirmed my belief

that they represent the future of German-Korean business collaboration. Their enthusiasm and commitment illustrate how this program is not just about acquiring technical and expertise but also about cultivating a globally competitive, future-ready workforce. It is encouraging to see how their training—guided by industry experts—equips them with both technical proficiency and a strong sense of professionalism, setting them up for long-term success.

However, for Ausbildung to reach its full potential in Korea, several critical factors must be considered. The success of Germany’s dual vocational training system stems not only from its structured approach but also from a strong culture of apprenticeships, industry cooperation, and long-term investment in workforce development. While Korea has made significant progress in adapting this model, further expansion requires deeper engagement from both the private and public sectors. As Korea continues to develop its vocational education landscape, encouraging company-led training initiatives and strengthening policy frameworks—such as recognition of the Ausbildung model, financial support for participating firms, and public campaigns—will be key to positioning vocational careers as an attractive choice for the next generation.

In an era of rapid technological transformation, skilled professionals will be the backbone of sustainable economic growth. The Ausbildung program in Korea demonstrates how knowledge exchange and cross-border collaboration can equip young talents with future-ready skills while strengthening German-Korean business ties. Yet, a key challenge remains: overcoming deeply ingrained societal preferences for academic degrees over vocational training. Despite the proven success of Ausbildung in Germany—where many top executives have emerged from such programs—vocational education in Korea often struggles with perceptions of being a secondary option rather than a first choice for ambitious professionals. To change this narrative, Korean companies should actively promote vocational training as a strategic workforce solution, forging stronger partnerships with local colleges and industry stakeholders.

Beyond economic benefits, investing in structured vocational training could also help address broader socio-economic issues, such as Korea’s aging workforce and declining birth rate. By providing young professionals with practical career pathways that offer financial stability and long-term prospects, Ausbildung has the potential to contribute to a more sustainable labor market.

The continued success of this program reflects the dedication of all stakeholders—trainees, businesses, and KGCCI—who are shaping the future of their industries and contributing to the prosperity of both our nations. With the right commitment from businesses, educators, and policymakers, Ausbildung can become a cornerstone of Korea’s workforce strategy, ensuring long-term competitiveness in an evolving global economy.

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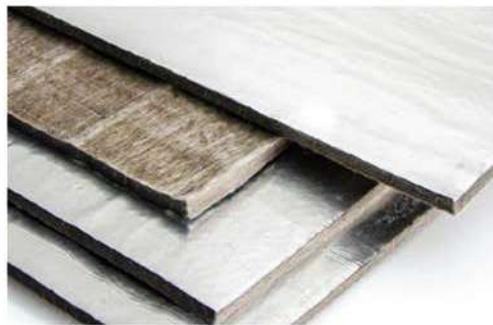
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Beyond Dream Cars to Dream Jobs:

Mercedes-Benz Korea's Journey Toward Sustainable Talent Development



Mathias Vaitl

CEO of Mercedes-Benz Korea



Mercedes-Benz has long been and still is synonymous with the words of “dream car.” Today, as a provider of “dream jobs,” the brand is taking the lead in developing young professionals who will drive the future of Korean society. At the heart of this effort is “Ausbildung,” Germany’s dual vocational training system.

Since 2017, Mercedes-Benz Korea has been running the Ausbildung program in Korea, offering hands-on, career-oriented training for young people. The program offers more than just technical training; it represents a journey that helps trainees grow alongside the brand, cultivating both expertise and pride. Through Ausbildung, Mercedes-Benz Korea fulfills its corporate social responsibility while building a sustainable talent pipeline.

Mercedes-Benz’s goal is to build the world’s most desirable cars. At Mercedes-Benz Korea, this value is not only reflected in the products, but also actively put into practice in its talent development and corporate culture. Ausbildung trainees split their time between real-world service centers and the classroom, acquiring global-

standard skills and professional attitudes as they grow into experts who represent the brand.

I also had the opportunity to experience “Ausbildung” in Germany for two and a half years at a dealership, which deepened my understanding of the Mercedes-Benz brand. That experience continues to shape my leadership and remains one of my most formative professional foundations. Following the philosophy of its German parent company, Mercedes-Benz Korea is nurturing future industry leaders through a curriculum that balances practical relevance and professional expertise.

At Mercedes-Benz Korea, we are dedicated to supporting young people who will shape the future of mobility in the field of automotive technology, empowering them to pursue their dreams with pride and passion through programs like Ausbildung. We will also continue striving to offer Korea’s youth not just jobs, but true “dream jobs.” Ausbildung is more than just a training program; it is an investment in a sustainable future, grounded in the values and philosophy of the Mercedes-Benz brand.



Leading Expansion of Ausbildung A Cradle for Nurturing Global Professional Talents



Sangyun Han
Representative Director of
BMW Group Korea



labor contract with BMW Korea's authorized dealers. Upon completion of the course, they receive a recognized associate's degree and certification from the Korean-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry, along with the opportunity to be officially employed as a junior technician at BMW.

BMW Group Korea, the first National Sales Company (NSC) established by a foreign carmaker in the Korean automotive market, has grown over the past 30 years into a global corporate citizen committed to mutual growth with Korean society. Going beyond its role as an automobile importer, BMW Group Korea has been driving meaningful change through continuous investment, job creation, and support for education, culture, and the arts.

BMW Group Korea places talent development at the heart of its social responsibility efforts. In 2017, in partnership with the Korean-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry, it became the first in the Korean automotive industry to introduce 'Ausbildung'—Germany's dual vocational training system.

BMW's Ausbildung is a three-year program that combines hands-on work experience at dealerships with academic education. It helps students develop into skilled automotive professionals through a comprehensive curriculum covering areas such as vehicle repair, diagnostics, legal knowledge, and environmental regulations. In 2021, a Body and Paint module was added to the program, expanding students' career options within the industry.

Trainees are guaranteed a stable salary through an official

BMW Group Korea has been committed to providing quality education and stable employment opportunities to Korean youth through the Ausbildung program. As of 2024, a total of 457 trainees are in the program and are officially employed by BMW Group Korea's authorized dealers. This pioneering initiative has inspired participation from other German automakers, contributing to the broader adoption and expansion of the Ausbildung system in Korea.

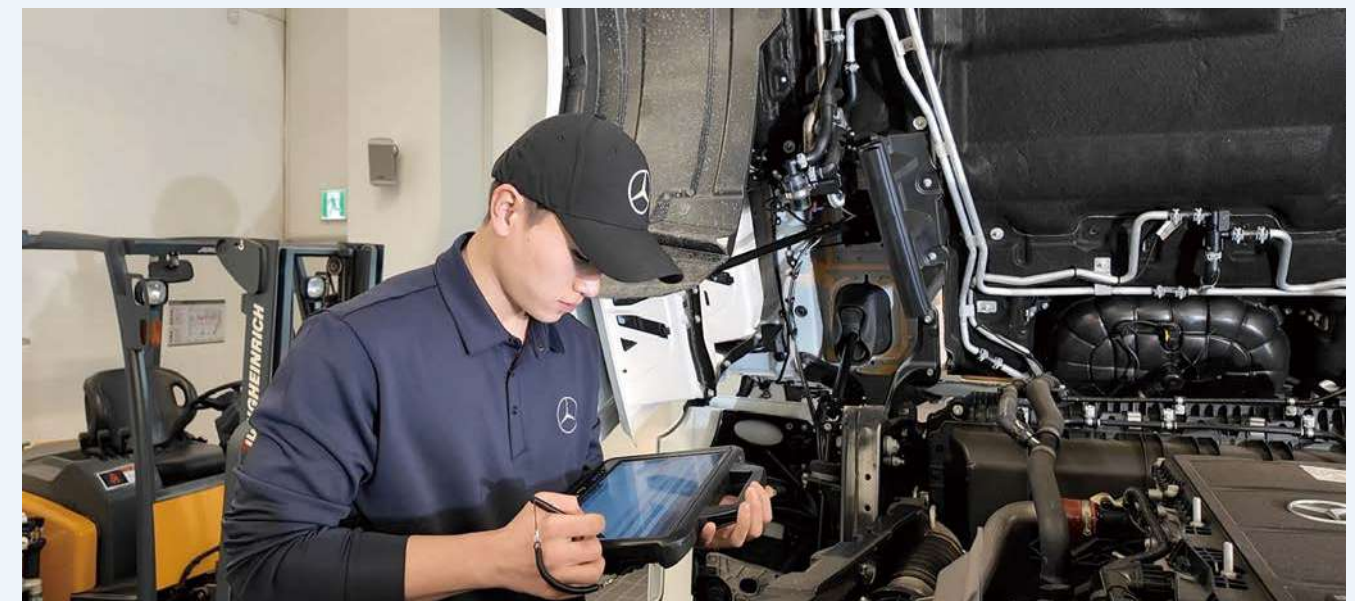
Vocational training is not just about acquiring skills—it serves as an important stepping stone that empowers the younger generation to unlock their potential and make meaningful contributions to society. BMW Group Korea remains committed to supporting young people, helping them harness their abilities through technology and grow into future leaders of the automotive industry.



Expands Ausbildung Program to Meet Growing Demand for Specialized Maintenance Talent



Antonio Randazzo
CEO of Daimler Trucks Korea



Since 2018, Daimler Trucks Korea has participated in the Ausbildung program to cultivate specialized maintenance talent in the commercial vehicle sector. CEO Antonio Randazzo, appointed in 2022, emphasizes talent development beyond traditional recruitment.

Daimler Trucks Korea's plan to open five new service centers this year is set to increase demand for maintenance talent, prompting an Ausbildung program expansion.

Originating from Germany, the Ausbildung program blends theory with hands-on training. Trainees gain practical experience at 17 service centers nationwide, learning advanced technologies such as pneumatic and hydraulic systems under certified Ausbildung trainers.

The 36-month program, an industry-education collaboration model, leads to the internationally recognized Mercedes-Benz Qualified Maintenance Technician certification, enabling global career opportunities within the Daimler Trucks network. It also supports

vocational high school graduates by allowing them to serve as maintenance staff during their military service while retaining their skills. Graduates secure full-time employment at their assigned service centers.

Daimler Trucks Korea remains committed to developing young talent through specialized training in diagnostics and maintenance, offering incentives like overseas trips. The program helps secure skilled technicians annually, improve service quality and brand competitiveness, and contribute to sustainable growth and social responsibility.





Empowering People Beyond Technology:

Ausbildung Model and MTBK's Vision for Future of Commercial Vehicle Industry, Building Expertise Through Structured Training



Peter Andersson
Managing Director of
MAN Truck & Bus Korea



In technology-driven industries, fostering human growth is essential. Since 2018, MAN Truck & Bus Korea (MTBK), the Korean subsidiary of MAN Truck & Bus SE, has been implementing the German-style dual vocational training program Ausbildung, systematically cultivating over 124 skilled professionals in commercial vehicle maintenance. Trainees undergo a rigorous three-year curriculum that not only develops hands-on technical skills but also instills a strong sense of responsibility and professional pride, shaping them into capable and confident specialists.

Recognized Results and Global Attention

Ausbildung plays a vital role beyond technical education—it helps build trust in the brand. Through this program, MTBK has enhanced service quality and customer satisfaction, solidifying its position as a trusted commercial vehicle brand in Korea.

In 2024, an MTBK trainee became the youngest-ever recipient of the prestigious Industrial Meister title in

Korea—a remarkable achievement made possible through structured education and hands-on training. This milestone proves that Ausbildung is a sophisticated model for talent development.

In 2023, German public broadcaster Deutschlandfunk featured MTBK's Ausbildung trainee in a segment highlighting how Korean youth are discovering their potential through technical training. The coverage also emphasized MTBK's program as a successful model for vocational education in Korea.

A People-Centric Vision for the Future

Driven by the belief that when people grow, the brand grows, MTBK continues to pursue value beyond technology—empowering individuals to realize their potential and shaping the future of the commercial vehicle industry together with the people at its heart.



Porsche Korea's Commitment to Ausbildung:

Empowering the Next Generation for a Sustainable Future



Mathias Busse
CEO of Porsche Korea



At Porsche, the pursuit of excellence goes beyond engineering high-performance vehicles — it includes a strong commitment to nurturing talent and embracing social responsibility. In line with Porsche AG's global "Strategy 2030," Porsche Korea views the German-style dual education system, Ausbildung, as a long-term investment in people and society.

As part of its broader social impact initiatives, Porsche AG is implementing the PAVE (Porsche Aftersales Vocational Education) program alongside Ausbildung to realize its "Partner to Society" strategy. This approach goes beyond technical training to address global challenges such as climate change, biodiversity preservation, healthcare disparities, and social inclusion.

At the core of this strategy lie three pillars: Empowerment & Education, Strengthening Local Communities, and Enhancing Quality of Life while Protecting the Planet. Porsche Korea is dedicated to localizing these values by shaping a Korea-specific Ausbildung program. Through this initiative, Porsche Korea aims to support young Koreans in becoming skilled professionals equipped with both technical expertise and a strong ethical foundation aligned with global standards.

For Porsche Korea, Ausbildung is more than a training program — it is a vital part of its sustainable social responsibility efforts and a meaningful investment in the future.

VOLKSWAGEN GROUP
KOREAFostering Global Automotive Tech Drivers
through Ausbildung Program

Till Scheer
President and CEO of
Volkswagen Group Korea



The automotive industry is undergoing an unprecedented transformation driven by digitalization, electrification, and sustainability. In this dynamic landscape, Volkswagen Group's response is clear: we aim to become *The Global Automotive Tech Driver*, guided by our overarching strategy, *Mobility for Generations*.

In alignment with this global vision, Volkswagen Group Korea has been an active participant in the Ausbildung program since 2019 with the aim of cultivating the next generation of skilled professionals. As of 2025, we are proud to have launched our 7th intake. Among those who began the program, 54% have continued on to serve as front-line service experts, reflecting both the high standards and the challenges of the training process. Despite the rigorous process, the program has consistently produced high-caliber professionals equipped for the evolving demands of the automotive industry.

What makes Volkswagen Group Korea Ausbildung program distinctive is its focus on field-based, specialized training that goes beyond conventional technical education. Trainees receive a comprehensive blend of practical and theoretical instruction designed to prepare

them for the evolving demands of the automotive industry. Beyond technical proficiency, we also equip our trainees with essential communication skills with Service Advisor curriculum – by which we empower them to guide customers with professional knowledge and integrity.

We believe that quality outweighs scale. We invest in a select group of high-potential individuals, ensuring each trainee receives the support and resources they need to grow into a well-rounded professionals who are capable of adapting to industry shifts, upholding our brand philosophy, and ultimately delivering meaningful value to customers. These are the future experts we consider to be true automotive tech leaders.



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Breaking new ground

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Blossoming Skills: Ausbildung in Florist Education



Oh Myeon Floral Art School: Where Flowers Become a Profession

Oh Myeon Floral Art School has taken another meaningful step forward in 2025, continuing its long-standing mission to convey values that transcend mere “beauty” through the medium of flowers. Since its founding in 1996, Director Oh Myeon has remained committed to cultivating professional florists with practical competencies demanded by the industry—guided by the school’s educational philosophy of passion, conviction, professionalism, and originality, far surpassing simple skill acquisition.

A major milestone came in 2003 through a partnership with the Bremen Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IHK Bremen), which brought structured German-style florist education—both theoretical and practical—to Korea. This collaboration enabled the launch of programs offering IHK Floral Stylist certification and German Florist Federation (FDF) qualifications. Later, through continued cooperation with the Korean-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KGCCI), the school solidified its reputation as a domestic leader in international-standard vocational training programs.



Introduced in 2019, the AHK Florist Qualification embodies the convergence of Oh Myeon Floral Art School’s philosophy with the dual vocational training principles of Germany. The program provides trainees with core elements of the German vocational system: occupation-centered practical training, structured theoretical

instruction, and industry-led assessment methods. As the official training provider and practical examination center for this qualification, Oh Myeon Floral Art School is at the forefront of globalizing and professionalizing Korea’s florist education.

The program attracts participants from a wide range of backgrounds—actors with artistic sensibilities, employees at German corporations, and professionals from diverse fields—each pursuing the transformation of a floral hobby into a full-fledged career. This diversity underscores the adaptability and scalability of vocational education.

Director Oh Myeon’s own professional journey echoes the vision of the program. Having overcome social bias and achieved recognition in both domestic and international floral competitions, he has long championed the goal of promoting Korean floral artistry on the global stage. His ethos runs deeply throughout the academy’s curriculum, which emphasizes student growth and career development through personalized instruction, expert-led projects, and practice-based learning environments.

Building on this foundation of experience and commitment, Oh Myeon Floral Art School opened ten new shops in 2025, contributing to florist employment and earning recognition as a model for successful industry-linked education.

Looking ahead, Oh Myeon Floral Art School remains dedicated to serving as a bridge between the core values of German vocational training and the evolving needs of



the Korean market. Here, talents who speak the “language of flowers”—where beauty meets function, and emotion blends with technique—continue to bloom.

Lim’s Flower Academy: Where Nature and Floral Artistry Bloom Together

Tucked away in the scenic city of Jeonju, in Jeonbuk State, Lim’s Flower Academy offers more than just floral design training—it nurtures artists who speak the language of nature. With the surrounding landscape as its canvas and muse, the academy guides aspiring florists through an immersive, eco-conscious journey that places nature at the heart of creative expression.

The AHK Florist Qualification, offered through a Korean-style dual qualification with elements of the German System developed by KGCCI is designed to foster true floral professionals. Grounded in the principles of Germany’s renowned dual system, the program integrates hands-on training with theoretical study, encouraging trainees to apply the foundational elements and principles of floral design. Alongside technical skills, participants explore the rich historical evolution of floral art in Europe—learning to distinguish between classical and modern styles and to craft designs that are both trend-conscious and suited to contemporary contexts.

Earning the AHK Florist Qualification represents more than mastery of technique. It reflects a profound

understanding of floral artistry and the creative capacity to move beyond commercial arrangements—embedding one’s personal identity into each design. Such competence opens doors to a range of creative disciplines, including spatial decoration, product development, and artistic expression, positioning graduates not just as florists, but as designers and creators in their own right.

In many advanced cultural societies, flowers are woven into the rhythm of daily life. South Korea is following suit. The spread of unmanned flower kiosks and the growing habit of gifting flowers “just because” are signs of a shifting culture—one where floral appreciation is no longer reserved for special occasions. As artificial intelligence and automation reshape the workforce, floristry stands apart: a human-centered craft that defies mechanization. For those who see flowers not just as objects but as expressions, the role of a professional florist is more relevant—and more essential—than ever before.



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Bridging Skills and Industry: KGCCI Celebrates 4th Ausbildung Graduation



The Korean-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KGCCI) hosted the 4th Ausbildung Graduation Ceremony, in collaboration with BMW Group Korea, MAN Truck & Bus Korea, Mercedes-Benz Korea, and Volkswagen Group Korea, at the Grand Hyatt Seoul on April 24, 2025.

The Ausbildung program, introduced by KGCCI in Korea, combines 70% practical industry training with 30% theoretical education. Upon successful completion, trainees are awarded an official Ausbildung certificate jointly issued by the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DIHK) and KGCCI.

The event began with a speech by H.E. Georg Schmidt, German Ambassador to South Korea, followed by congratulatory remarks from Bo-Young Choi, Head of the Higher Vocational Education Policy Division at the Ministry of Education, Dr. Achim Dercks, Deputy Managing Director of the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DIHK), and Marie Antonia von Schönburg, President & CEO of KGCCI.

H.E. Georg Schmidt, German Ambassador to South Korea, underscored the critical role of industry-academia collaboration in navigating the profound transformation currently underway in the global automotive sector. He stated, "KGCCI's Ausbildung program is more than education—it's a bridge between tradition and innovation, Germany and Korea, and emerging talent and industry leaders. These graduates have mastered the skills that will define the future of mobility and beyond. In an era of rapid technological change, their expertise will drive progress, shaping industries and economies alike."

Dr. Dercks, Deputy Managing Director of DIHK, expressed optimism about the graduates' future, stating, "Today's graduation marks both the culmination of your dedication and hard work over the past years and the beginning of an exciting new chapter in your career journey." He further encouraged the graduates, adding, "Now is the time to put your skills into action and make your mark in the real world of business."



Celebrating the trainees' three-year journey and professional growth, the ceremony honored a total of 58 graduates from BMW Group Korea, MAN Truck & Bus Korea, Mercedes-Benz Korea, and Volkswagen Group Korea (Volkswagen and Audi). Based on evaluations conducted throughout the program, each brand also recognized 'Best Trainee' and 'Best Trainer,' honoring their exceptional performance and dedication.

Among the distinguished graduates were ΔBMW Best Trainee Heon-Jin Ha, Best Trainer Seung-Sun No (both from Samchully Motors/Cheongju) ΔMAN Truck & Bus Best Trainee Gang-U Lee, Best Trainer Sang-Min Kim (both from MAN Truck & Bus Korea/Yongin) ΔMercedes-Benz Best Trainee Do-Gyeom You, Best Trainer Yong-Hoon Oh (both from Motorone/Ilsan) ΔVolkswagen Best Trainee Ji-Seob Jung, Best Trainer Hyeon-Seok Kang (both from Autobahn VAG/Cheonan) ΔAudi Best Trainee Sang-Min Park.

Do-Gyeom You, a trainee from Mercedes-Benz, reflected on his experience, stating, "The Ausbildung program's unique combination of hands-on work and academic learning has been essential to my growth. I aspire to continue developing my expertise and become a leading technician who adds value to the automotive industry. I am especially thankful to my trainer, Yong-Hoon Oh, for his steadfast support and mentorship throughout this meaningful journey."

Young-Jin Kim, Deputy Director of the KGCCI Ausbildung program, emphasized the significance of the trainees' achievements, stating, "The Ausbildung trainees are a true source of pride for all of us, and their future is intrinsically linked to the future of Korean industry. From their beginnings as high school students, they have grown into confident, skilled professionals making valuable contributions in their respective companies." She added, "We kindly ask for continued interest and support to ensure they keep growing and thriving in the years ahead."

KGCCI introduced the Ausbildung program in Korea in 2017, in collaboration with German automotive companies such as BMW Group Korea and Mercedes-Benz Korea. Subsequently, Daimler Trucks Korea and MAN Truck & Bus Korea joined in 2018, followed by Volkswagen Group Korea in 2019 and Porsche Korea in 2021. Currently, five Korean colleges are participating in four different Ausbildung professions – automotive mechatronic technician, car body technician, automotive painter and automotive service advisor. The program has seen impressive growth, with over 400 trainees and 320 qualified trainers currently involved across 150 service centers. A total of 270 trainees have successfully completed the program.



Drive into Your Dream:

Top Trainees Share Their Ausbildung Success

Heon-Jin Ha

1. What motivated you to join the Ausbildung program?

When I was in middle school, I went through a period of great confusion about my future. My parents once told me, "It'd be great if you made a lot of money, but what's more important is to live doing what you love." At the time, I couldn't answer the question of what I truly wanted to do. After giving it some serious thought, I realized that it was cars — something I had loved since I was young but had forgotten while spending time with friends. I wanted to pursue a career related to automobiles. Around that time, I found out that the high school I hoped to attend offered the Ausbildung program, and through this specialized course, I learned that I could become a mechanic technician.

2. What was the most valuable lesson or skill you gained during your training?

To be honest, when I was cramming to get into high school, I thought I could get by with simple memorization. But I was wrong. In a technical field, you can't just memorize—true understanding comes from learning everything thoroughly, from knowing every detail of a component, starting from the fundamentals. That was a major lesson for me. As for a skill I've gained, it's the mindset of "think before you move." Before jumping into action, I've learned to approach tasks thoughtfully, allowing me to find easier, more efficient ways to work and solve problems.

3. How has Ausbildung helped shape your career path?

In preparing for the written and practical exams, as well as the final assessment within the Ausbildung program, I found myself wanting to understand everything about cars—from start to



finish—in order to explain them properly. To do that, I studied using the knowledge platform provided by the brand I currently work for, BMW. Through this, I was able to gain the understanding needed to confidently explain automotive concepts. While I can't say I've achieved something monumental just yet, I did rank first overall in the final Ausbildung assessment, which I believe will be a great asset in my future career in automotive maintenance.

4. What advice would you give to future Ausbildung trainees?

If you have a passion for something and want to dive into that field—just go for it. Once you try it, you'll see just how great this program is. I truly believe it can serve as a fast track toward your career and the dreams you're aiming for. But if you're joining simply because you don't know what else to do, then I'd say: come with a dream. Without taking that first step yourself, you can't expect great results. If you face your fears and put in the effort, you'll find there's nothing left to be afraid of moving forward.

Gang-U Lee

1. What motivated you to join the Ausbildung program?

I learned about the Ausbildung program while studying in high school with the dream of becoming a technician. I was drawn to the program because it allowed me to gain hands-on experience based on theory while combining work and study, which I saw as a major advantage.

2. What was the most valuable lesson or skill you gained during your training?

I found vehicle fault diagnosis to be the most challenging part of the Ausbildung program. While simple tasks like replacing parts or consumables were relatively easy to learn, diagnosis required both theoretical knowledge and practical skills, making it much more difficult. However, I worked hard to improve by learning a lot from my trainer and studying on my own. Although I still have areas to improve, I've developed the skills necessary to diagnose most types of vehicle faults.

3. How has Ausbildung helped shape your career path?

Through the Ausbildung program, I was able to fulfill my dream of becoming a technician and achieve several career milestones in a short period of time, including graduating from college. This experience has equipped me with a high level of technical skills by combining theoretical knowledge with hands-on experience in the field.



4. What advice would you give to future Ausbildung trainees?

Automotive maintenance is not just about disassembly and reassembly—it's a profession that requires practical work based on solid theoretical knowledge. The Ausbildung program offers a great opportunity to learn in a structured and systematic way. I hope you approach it with passion, work hard throughout the training period, and achieve great results.

Do-Gyeom You

1. What motivated you to join the Ausbildung program?

When I first learned about the Ausbildung program, I believed it was even better than the traditional apprenticeship system, which is why I decided to participate.

2. What was the most valuable lesson or skill you gained during your training?

The most valuable lesson I learned was: "If I don't take the initiative, I won't gain anything." With my trainer reassigned and everyone busy, the dual aspect of Ausbildung—learning and working—often felt lacking. As a high school graduate, I mostly handled routine tasks and felt the experience didn't fully match the program's promise. Still, working hands-on with real vehicles excited me, and I realized that traditional lectures weren't my style. To grow, I studied cars independently through Google and forums, learning beyond class materials. At work, I moved from basic part replacements during the day to complex tasks at night. Without this initiative—self-study and voluntary night shifts—I wouldn't have been chosen as Best Trainee.

3. How has Ausbildung helped shape your career path?

Joining my current company through the Ausbildung program has been a great stroke of luck. However, I do believe that college education should be more closely aligned with actual workplace demands. The program introduced me to this company and gave me the opportunity to join it.



4. What advice would you give to future Ausbildung trainees?

The Ausbildung experience depends on your trainer, but more importantly, on your own initiative. If you're not ready to study independently, invest personal time, and commit to five years (including military service), I strongly advise against applying. Don't leave such a formative period to chance or passivity. But if you're self-driven, open to feedback, and passionate about the profession, Ausbildung offers the best environment to grow your skills.

Ji-Seob Jung

1. What motivated you to join the Ausbildung program?

While I was giving a lot of thought to my future career, my teacher shared an official notice about the Ausbildung employment program in our class chatroom. When I read it, I realized it was a unique opportunity to work at a company, attend college, and complete military service requirements all at once. It felt like the perfect fit — allowing me to pursue a job, which I wanted, while also fulfilling my mother's wish for me to attend college. Although I didn't know much about cars at the time, watching my father work as an automotive technician and fix everything around our home inspired me. I decided to apply to the program, hoping to follow in his footsteps.

2. What was the most valuable lesson or skill you gained during your training?

I used to be very introverted, often waiting for others to approach me instead of taking the initiative. However, during my time working at the company, I realized that if I found it difficult to approach others, they likely felt the same about approaching me. This experience helped me change significantly. I learned that when I take the first step and engage comfortably, others naturally respond in the same way.

3. How has Ausbildung helped shape your career path?

Ausbildung marked the beginning of my professional journey and set me on the path to a career in vehicle maintenance. As a high



school student, I struggled with the decision between continuing my studies or entering the workforce. Through Ausbildung, I was able to gain both a college degree and valuable hands-on experience. Had I chosen a different path, I might have continued to worry about academics, but thanks to Ausbildung, I was able to build a strong foundation for my career — and for that, I'm truly grateful.

4. What advice would you give to future Ausbildung trainees?

Many of you are probably thinking a lot about your future careers — take the time you need to consider your path carefully. I believe Ausbildung offers a great opportunity to launch your professional journey. I hope each of you completes the program successfully, and that one day, we'll meet again as supportive colleagues in the field.

Sang-Min Park

1. What motivated you to join the Ausbildung program?

I've always preferred hands-on experience over just studying in a classroom. When I learned about the Ausbildung program, I was immediately drawn to the opportunity to gain professional skills while continuing my education. The chance to grow faster than my peers through real-world training was a big motivation for me.

2. What was the most valuable lesson or skill you gained during your training?

Learning and experiencing the latest technologies firsthand, through a mix of theory and practice, was incredibly valuable. Beyond technical skills, I realized how much mindset matters—taking responsibility and approaching every task seriously completely changes the outcome. It shaped not only my abilities but also my overall attitude toward work.

3. How has Ausbildung helped shape your career path?

At first, five years (incl. military service of 18 months) felt like a very long time. But as I worked toward my goals, the time flew by. Staying focused and engaged helped me develop a clearer sense of what I truly want to do with my career.



4. What advice would you give to future Ausbildung trainees?

Don't become complacent just because you've been accepted into the program—this is only the beginning. Your mindset from here on will determine how much you grow. If you approach even the smallest tasks with responsibility and commitment, it will lead to amazing results.

IMAGINE

LOOKING BACK TOMORROW AND HAVING MADE A DIFFERENCE TODAY.

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Demographic Changes Complicate Search for Skilled Workers

South Korea is not a low-wage location. Additional benefits are common.

The declining working-age population will make it increasingly difficult to find personnel in the future.



Skilled Labor

South Korea has a well-educated workforce. Especially older employees are accustomed to long working hours. However, some sectors face labor shortages.

In 2023, South Korea had around 29 million employed persons—an increase of nearly 280,000 compared to the previous year. The official unemployment rate fell to 2.7%. Unemployment was highest among the 20–29 age group, with the authorities reporting a rate of 5.9%. When including irregular employment and unregistered unemployed persons, actual underemployment is significantly higher across all age groups.

Given the high labor costs, South Korea strongly relies on automation. Many companies are also shifting production to more cost-effective locations abroad and are expanding their operations there.

Highly Educated Workforce

Among the member states of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), South Korea has the highest rate of tertiary education attainment: nearly seven out of ten people aged 25 to 34 hold a university degree. On average, workers are highly educated. Graduates from top universities such as the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST), Seoul National University, Korea University, Yonsei University, and Pohang University of Science and Technology (POSTECH) have a solid theoretical foundation. Practical skills are usually acquired on the job.

Permanent Employees and Men Have an Advantage

The South Korean labor market displays structural imbalances. Regular (permanent) employees benefit from

Strengths of the Labor Market

- Highly qualified and tech-savvy workforce
- Strong work ethic and traditionally high employee loyalty
- Cooperation between AHK and German companies for vocational training

Weaknesses of the Labor Market

- Rising labor costs
- Aging population and shrinking working-age population
- Concentration of talent pool in the Greater Seoul area
- Low labor productivity compared to international standards

strong employment protection and higher wages compared to non-regular employees, which include part-time workers, temporary staff, dispatched workers, or those employed by subcontractors. Regular employment is more common among workers in large corporations and the public sector, offering stable and long-term job security. In contrast, workers in small and medium-sized enterprises are more vulnerable to economic fluctuations.

Women are still underrepresented in leadership positions and, on average, receive significantly lower pay than men. In 2023, the employment rate of women stood at 54.1%, far below that of men at 71.3%. Many female employees continue to leave the workforce after childbirth.

weekly, not daily, basis. Since July 2021, this regulation has applied to companies with five or more employees. Certain industries are exempt from these working time regulations.

Former President Yoon, who took office in May 2022, aimed to increase flexibility in working hours. However, a government proposal to raise the workweek to 69 hours faced strong opposition from labor unions and the public. Especially among younger generations, work-life balance is becoming increasingly important. According to a survey conducted in early 2024, four out of ten respondents expressed a desire for a shorter work week.

An Aging Population as a Challenge

At the end of 2024, South Korea has formally become a “super-aged society,” meaning that over 20 percent of the population are now aged 65 or older. At the same time, the country recorded one of the world’s lowest fertility rates in 2023, with just 0.72 children per woman. As a result, the working-age population is forecasted to shrink by more than 9 million over the next 20 years.

The number of people of working age has already been declining since 2018. Meanwhile, the workforce is aging. Compared to Germany, South Korea already has a high labor force participation rate among older workers. Discussions are underway about raising the retirement age. Labor shortages are already evident, and headhunters report that it is becoming increasingly difficult to find workers with specific qualifications, particularly outside the Greater Seoul area.

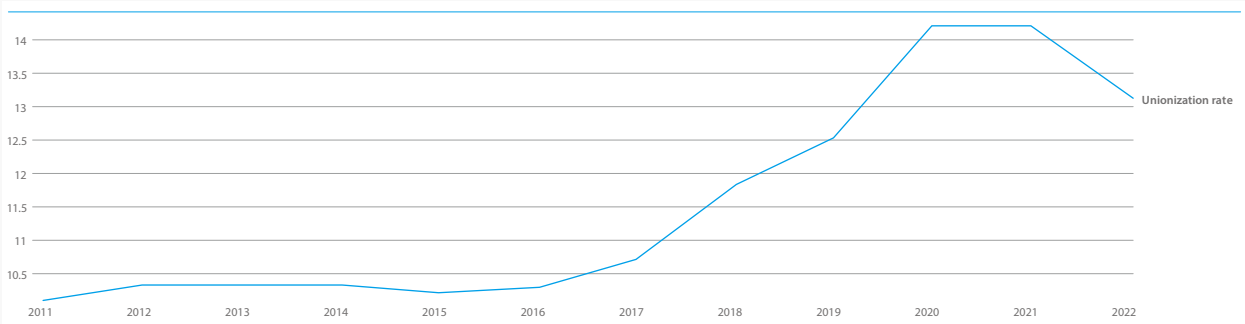
Strong Labor Unions

Labor unions in South Korea are typically company-based and relatively powerful, often leading to strikes during protracted wage negotiations. In 2023, the number of strikes and lockouts rose sharply from 132 in the previous year to 223. Strikes led to a total of around 355,000 lost workdays in 2023. Between 2016 and 2021, union membership rose to a peak of 2.9 million, with an organizational rate of 14.2%. In 2022, the unionization rate fell slightly to 13.1%, just below the level in Germany.

Shorter Working Hours

In 2018, the South Korean government reduced the maximum permissible weekly working hours from 68 to 52. This includes 40 regular working hours and a maximum of 12 hours of overtime. Following a decision by the Supreme Court, the calculation of overtime is now based on a

Unionization Rate in South Korea
as a percentage of the workforce



Source: Ministry of Labor and Employment, 2024

Immigration as a Solution?

South Korea currently follows a highly regulated immigration model, allowing most foreign workers to enter only on temporary and tightly controlled terms. However, due to the declining domestic workforce, the government now sees immigration as a necessity. Smaller companies, especially in manufacturing, construction, and agriculture, face challenges in recruiting enough workers for unskilled positions.

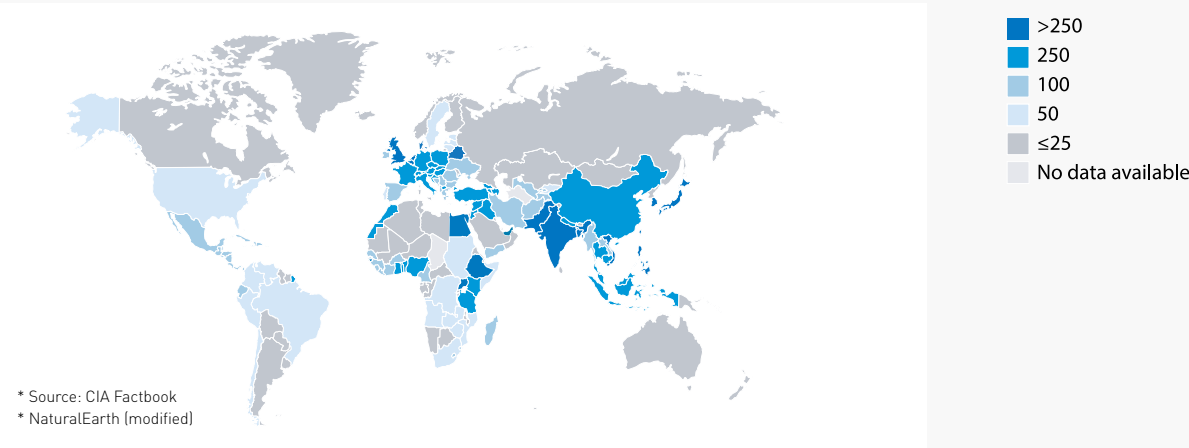
In response, the government more than tripled the annual cap for low-skilled foreign workers in 2024 to 165,000—up from 56,000 in 2021. The program has also been expanded to include new sectors such as food service, hospitality, and

forestry. Due to persistent labor shortages, shipbuilding has long been in focus. While South Korea has traditionally focused on attracting low-skilled workers, the recruitment of qualified professionals from abroad is gaining increasing importance.

South Korea in a Global Comparison

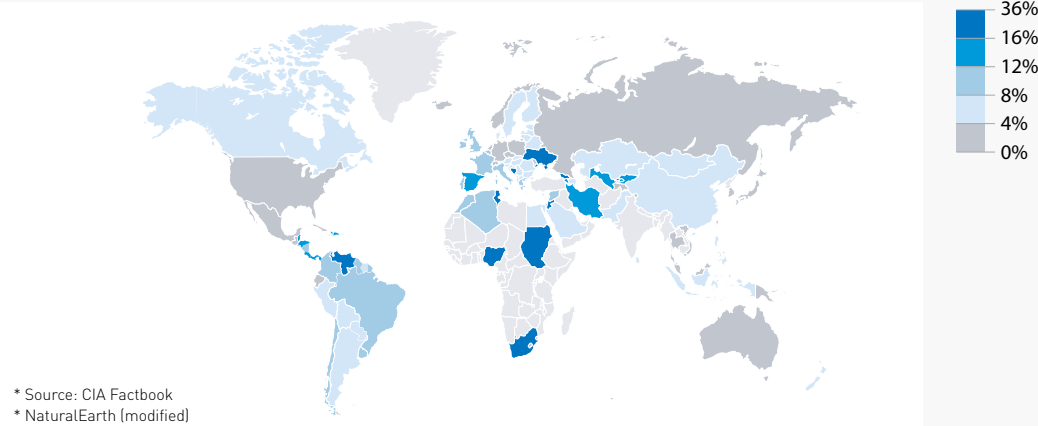
The following map enables a comparison between numerous countries around the world. Please note that the figures shown are based on internationally standardized sources and may therefore differ from the national data mentioned in the text.

1. Population
Inhabitants per square kilometer



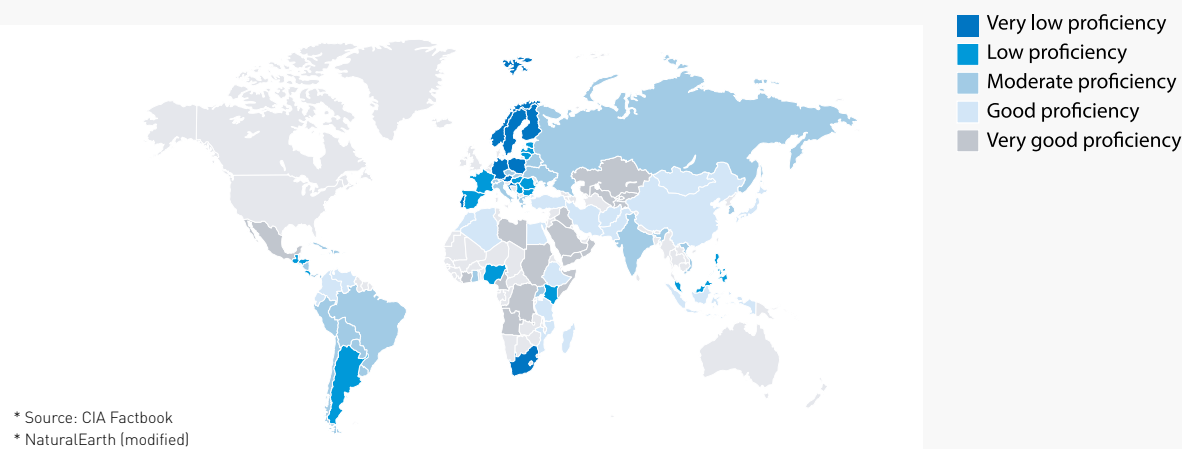
* Source: CIA Factbook
* NaturalEarth (modified)

2. Unemployment
in percent



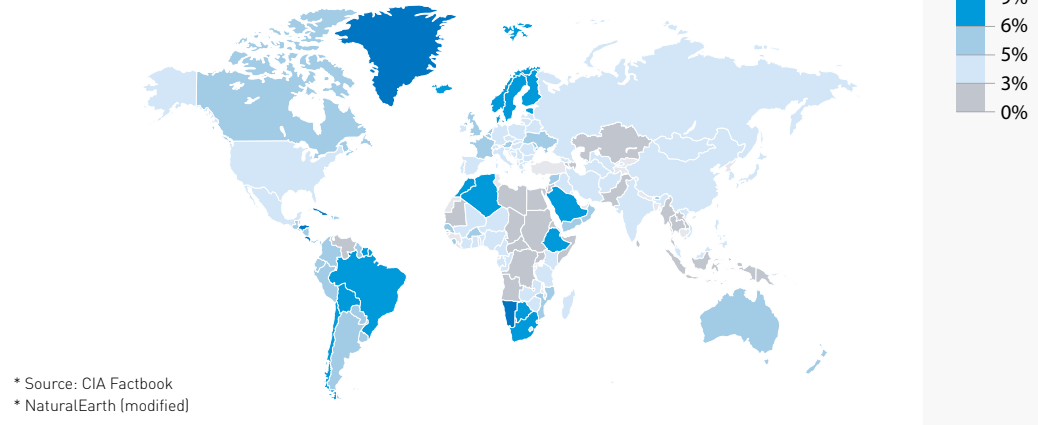
* Source: CIA Factbook
* NaturalEarth (modified)

3. English proficiency



* Source: CIA Factbook
* NaturalEarth (modified)

4. Public education expenditure
as a percentage of GDP



* Source: CIA Factbook
* NaturalEarth (modified)

Katharina Viklenko
Director and Correspondent Korea
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Vocational Training in North Korea, Labor Immobility and the Dream of Advancement in a Politicized Society



“To some extent, North Korea has shown interest in recent years to see and understand other systems of vocational training. The Hanns-Seidel-Foundation several times brought delegations of North Korea to training facilities for dual vocational training according to the German model in China, and once also to Germany, to see how nurse training in Germany works. Political tensions, exacerbated by North Korea’s involvement in the Russian war against Ukraine, make international cooperation in vocational training currently impossible.”

When in 1945 the Japanese colonial rule in Korea ended, also a new educational system had to be introduced. Due to the ideological divide, it was strongly different in North and South Korea, though both immediately got rid of the Japanese-dominated school system. North Korea claimed that the largest part of its population (more than 85 percent) in 1948 was illiterate, though this claim may have been exaggerated to compare the subsequent policies favorably. In North Korea, education reform in earnest started in 1950, but due to the Korean War (1950 to 1953) only afterwards the compulsory universal education system was fully implemented, first for primary schools, then for secondary schools. Also, a new system of tertiary education was slowly built up, with universities (foremost the new Kim Il Sung University), but also colleges and two to three year schools which provided technical education.

This education was and is comparable to vocational training, though a lot of training, in particular in the countryside, such as in agriculture, also took place on-the-job, without additional formal education. Throughout the existence of North Korea, the education system was extended: from seven years of compulsory primary and secondary education in 1958 to nine years in 1967, to eleven years in 1975 and finally in the time of Kim Jong-Un (after 2012) to twelve years. From 1959, education also became state-financed and free, including textbooks, educational facilities and instruction, uniforms and boarding when needed. However, in practice, in particular after the economic decline and mass starvation of the early 1990s often school uniforms, textbooks, and even instruction were either in very poor state or only given for recompensation by students, sometimes in kind.



A run-down “cultural center” in a village run by the Agricultural Workers Union in North Korea in 2003. Here, among others training of farm workers took place. Today, these places of rural educations have mostly been modernized. (© Bernhard Seliger)

Currently, all students go regularly through one year of kindergarten, five years of primary education, and six years of secondary education. Tertiary education, however, i.e., university education, is very limited, mostly

example, all construction is carried out not by private or public companies, but by army units. Equally, hundreds of thousands of soldiers are in fact nothing more than fishermen or farmers in uniform.

Nevertheless, the strong educational aspirations which are so prevailing in Korean society also can be felt in North Korea – like South Korea, North Korea inherited the long tradition of the veneration of learning typical for Confucian societies. Additionally, also the socialist state, built very much upon the lines of the Soviet Union and with the help of Soviet advisors, needed well-educated citizens to build a modern socialist society with a large industrial sector and governed not by markets, but by state planning, thus requiring tons of data to be processed from the factory and farm to the top. This was, differently from South Korea and many Western societies, not done through ever-increasing enrolment in universities. Students were a small elite for various reasons: First of all, the state did not need too many white-collar workers, but rather well-educated blue-collar workers



Training of a school of hotel management in Pyongyang. A hybrid between a university and a vocational training unit, this school prepares the students for a potential role in international tourism in the future. (© Bernhard Seliger)

to the elite in Pyongyang and only very few talented students in the countryside. After finishing school, most students go on to a vocational training school for two years to get basic technical knowledge in specific fields, like agriculture, machinery or other fields. These are the basics for later professional careers at factories or collective farms. However, there is a huge gap in between: most students after vocational training school go for up to ten years (for males) and four years (for females) to the army. There, they sometimes learn additional skills. For

and farmers. In particular, sons of farmers became – unless they were extraordinarily talented – again farmers. Second, students were necessary (as later engineers, teachers, and political leaders), but also dangerous. Most revolts (for example, in neighboring South Korea, and even in China to some extent) started with student movements. Third of all, students were privileged in many ways – most of them did not go to army for ten years, but only absolved a reserve officer training of a couple of months.



Cooking in a school of hotel management in Pyongyang. North Korea wants increased tourism in places like Kalma Beach Resort or Mashikryong Ski Resort. But its international isolation, partly as a sanctioned country, but largely also self-imposed, makes this impossible for now. (© Bernhard Seliger)



A poster showing how remote learning works in North Korea, in a training center at the Central Tree Nursery in Pyongyang. (© Bernhard Seliger)

Nevertheless, opportunities for advancement exist. These included so-called “factory colleges”, teaching workers new skills and techniques without forcing them to quit their jobs, by working part-time and leaving only for short, intensive courses. In farm colleges, rural workers can study to become engineers and assistant engineers; usually, every collective farm has one chief engineer and a dozen or more assistant engineers to lead work teams. Also correspondence courses existed in the past. This can, to some extent, be compared to a dual vocational training system, with training on the job and in school. After the foundation of North Korea, also schools for adult workers who did not go to regular school (due to the war, or non-existing schools in the past) existed, but that system was slowly phased out in the 1990s. New was the introduction of remote learning by computer after the 2010s the North Korean intranet was slowly introduced. The intranet connects libraries, including provincial libraries, companies, universities, research institutions and other public entities and offers the possibility for remote learning. Given the rather difficult transportation in the country, this is extremely important. For example,

as part of an EU-funded program to introduce sustainable forestry management in North Korea, Hanns-Seidel-Foundation cooperated with the Central Tree Nursery to set up a lecture room from 2014 to 2015. The Central Tree Nursery is in the outskirts of Pyongyang and employs many forest workers. Though being close to the center (by car only 30 minutes), there is no possibility for these workers to attend classes in Pyongyang universities. But through the lecture room, they are connected to the universities in Pyongyang and can take classes there.

With the advent of leader Kim Jong-Un in 2012 the importance of science and technology became more important than ever, and new forms of training like the aforementioned training through the intranet (which is not to be confounded with the internet, to which it has no connection) became more widespread. In a way, North Korea’s education system, including the vocational training, can be seen as a successful. However, there are also grave problems, beyond the formal organization of education, and that is the pervasive influence of ideology over content. For university students, more than half their studies – regardless if they are future mathematicians,



A training room for online and offline learning at the Central Tree Nursery in North Korea, which was originally equipped as part of a EU funded project on sustainable forestry management in North Korea. It allows workers at the Central Tree Nursery to take evening classes at universities in Pyongyang or elsewhere. (© Bernhard Seliger)

engineers, teachers or musicians - consists of learning the teachings and ideology of the Kim dynasty and “Juche” philosophy, the prevailing philosophy of Kim Il-Sung, Kim Jong-Il and Kim Jong-Un. And the ideological reliability is the most important criterion for advancement, much more important than any topical skill. At the same time, students, and in particular those not from an elite background, much more desire to become a party member, which means exhibiting ideological firmness, is much more important than any other skill in their job. This is a problem for the whole educational sector and greatly restricts educational freedom and students’ curiosity. Related to this problem, openness for educational outcomes is very much limited in a practical way – by the aforementioned fact that the internet is not available in North Korea, and that textbooks are often outdated and only after a long hiatus incorporate new knowledge not produced in North Korea, but abroad. Today, there is also a growing private educational sector. This concerns mostly the teaching of languages (not unlike in South Korea, where hagwons, private institutes, play an important role for teaching English and other languages), especially in border cities like Sinuiju, where trading with China is a way to become rich.

Given the large part of the workforce in agriculture and industry, vocational training will remain the option

for the largest part of young people to choose. Like in South Korea, the lines between university education and vocational training are blurred, with many vocations (for example, in the hotel business, or nursing) taught in colleges. To some extent, North Korea has shown interest in recent years to see and understand other systems of vocational training. The Hanns-Seidel-Foundation several times brought delegations of North Korea to training facilities for dual vocational training according to the German model in China, and once also to Germany, to see how nurse training in Germany works. Given the shortage of professional nurses in Germany, a revival of the 1960s, when South Korea sent thousands of miners and nurses to West Germany, would be a great idea for North Korea, as well as Germany. Unfortunately, the political tensions, worsened by North Korean involvement in the Russian war against Ukraine, make such a solution impossible for now.

Dr. Bernhard Seliger

Representative
Hanns Seidel Stiftung - Seoul Office
www.hss.or.kr



CSR REPORT

OF GERMAN COMPANIES IN KOREA

Every year, KGCCI releases a comprehensive CSR report that highlights the activities of German companies operating in Korea. This report showcases how these companies engage with Korean society through various Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

The latest edition of the KGCCI's report features examples of CSR activities of 12 German companies in Korea: Armacell, Bayer, Brita, Festo, Henkel, Mercedes-Benz, Merck, RWE, Porsche, Siemens, TÜV SÜD and KGCCI. These examples provide a glimpse into how these companies contribute to the local communities and environment while also striving to achieve sustainable business practices.



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FESTO

Company Profile

 Established in Germany 1925	 Line of Business Automation, Manufacturing
 Start of business in Korea 1980	 Website www.festo.co.kr
 Number of employees in Korea 257	

Meal Serving Volunteering “Thomas’s House”

As part of its ESG campaign, on July 17, 2024, Festo Korea donated 350 snack servings and participated in a meal-serving volunteer activity at ‘Thomas’s House’. Located in Yeongdeungpo, Seoul, Thomas’s House is a free meal center established in 1993, providing daily meals to elderly residents living alone and homeless individuals in the area. Since last year, Festo Korea has been conducting periodic meal-serving volunteer activities at Thomas’s House. This time, the team assisted with serving lunch, cleaning the dining area, washing dishes, and donated snacks for 350 people. Festo Korea plans to continue engaging in various activities that contribute to the local community in the future.



BTS (Booster for Talent's Success) Program

Festo Korea participated as the fifth company in the BTS program organized by the Ministry of Employment and Labor and PERSOLKELLY in January 2024. The program offers practical work experience and one-on-one mentoring to help talented young people with disabilities adapt to the workplace. At the completion ceremony, attended by Minister of Employment and Labor Lee Jeong-sik, participants shared reflections and discussed about creating employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.



Through the BTS program, Festo Korea gained insights into the importance of diversity and is committed to increase the representation of women, foreign employees, and individuals with disabilities in its workforce.

ESG Campaign

Since 2022, Festo Korea has been conducting annual plogging activities involving its whole employees. In early 2024, the company launched a long-term environmental awareness campaign aimed at promoting sustainable practices. As part of this initiative, Festo Korea published monthly environmental newsletters and introduced fun challenges like using reusable cups and walking instead of driving. Additionally, an environmental poster contest for employees and their families was held, with winning designs made into reusable company cups. Through this campaign, Festo Korea aims to increase environmental awareness and demonstrate its commitment to continuous, sustainable efforts, rather than one-time initiatives.





Company Profile

 Established in Germany 1876	 Line of Business Adhesive Technologies & Consumer Brands
 Start of business in Korea 1989	 Website www.henkel.co.kr
 Number of employees in Korea 650	

Henkel Korea's Corporate Garden - Henkel Forest

To mark its 35th anniversary, Henkel Korea created a corporate garden named "Henkel Forest" in Ttukseom Hangang Park, Gwangjin-gu, Seoul. "Henkel Forest" embodies Henkel's values of sustainability, and features young saplings planted in pots made from recycled plastic, showcasing a forest that grows and evolves over time to the public. More than just a green space, Henkel Forest provides a resting place where the local community and nature can coexist harmoniously. As a permanent garden, it carries Henkel's brand heritage and serves as a positive example of addressing the climate crisis and contributing to a carbon-neutral society.



Guide Walker Volunteering for Visually Impaired Participants at Inclusive Walking Event

Henkel Korea participated as Guide Walkers in a walking event with visually impaired individuals, along with other KGCCI member companies. The 'Guide Walker' volunteer activity involves assisting visually impaired participants by serving as their eyes, guiding them along the route. Henkel employees walked side by side with the participants, engaging in meaningful conversations and creating memorable moments together. At the Henkel booth, Henkel's household products with Braille tags for the visually impaired were displayed. The Braille tags, designed to be attached to products with hooks, are engraved in Braille to help distinguish between products such as detergent, fabric softener, and shampoo. Additionally, Henkel donated its mosquito repellent, MyKeeper, as a gift for all participants. Through this volunteer activity, Henkel Korea aims to promote awareness of disabilities and put into practice the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion.




Donation of Children's Book 'Save the Planet'

In celebration of its 35th anniversary, Henkel Korea donated a children's environmental education pop-up book, created with participation from its employees to libraries across the country. Titled "Save the Planet," the book was designed to enhance children's environmental sensitivity in today's world, where environmental issues like pollution and climate change are increasingly critical. The book features artwork by children of Henkel Korea employees, and Henkel staff participated in the book-making process by attaching and inserting three-dimensional elements, completing the project from planning to production. The donated books will be used for children's environmental education, helping to instill a sense of responsibility and awareness about the environment in future generations.






Henkel Forscherwelt in Korea

Henkel Korea is currently engaged in the Henkel Child Scientist World, a science-based community outreach initiative aimed at fostering children's interest and curiosity in science. This program is designed as part of the global science education initiative "Forscherwelt" to enable children to naturally acquire scientific knowledge through STEAM-based activities. It encompasses content related to Henkel's core business areas, including adhesive technologies and consumer brands, while also addressing sustainability. Activities offered include creating gingerbread houses using adhesive made from food, experimenting with the surface tension of milk and kitchen detergents, and making soap using gelatin, providing children with hands-on learning experiences in science. Furthermore, Henkel is dedicated to expanding access to science education content for more children through online live experiments.



Company Profile

 Established in Germany 1886	 Line of Business Automobile Wholesale, Retail, and Import Business
 Start of business in Korea 2003	 Website www.mercedes-benz.co.kr
 Number of employees in Korea 307	

"Mercedes-Benz MobileKids": Children's Traffic Safety Education Program (2014~)

Mercedes-Benz's world's first traffic safety education program for children was introduced in Korea while reflecting Korea's traffic environment and regulations in 2014. It has started to educate children to learn the importance of traffic safety and how to prevent and handle accidents. In particular, the program has been even more effective, reinforced through collaboration with the Ministry of Interior and Safety and the Green Mothers Society by educating over 50,000 children at 812 social welfare centers and elementary schools in the MobileKids program. Additionally, MobileKids leads the promotion of an advanced road safety culture for children through the 'Play the Safety' campaigns, allowing children to learn traffic safety as part of an enjoyable experience that combines a traffic safety drawing contest and various events offering children's perspectives on road safety. Last May, the 8th Play the Safety Campaign was successfully held at Seoul Children's Grand Park, where 600 children and their parents participated with great response.



"Mercedes-Benz Mobile Academy": Academy-industrial cooperation Program (2014~)

Mercedes-Benz Mobile Academy is an academy-industrial partnership program that has contributed significantly to Korea's automotive industry by cultivating future talents. The program helps students in 11 automotive colleges develop solid career paths and become experts in associated fields by providing them with Mercedes-Benz's advanced technologies and global education expertise. Since its launch in 2014, it



has offered a total of 1,319 students with a 1-year course by professional trainers. Throughout this curriculum, students gain knowledge of MB's global expertise and cutting-edge technologies via on and offline education as well as broadening their perspectives through a 'Career Development Workshop'. Furthermore, outstanding students are provided opportunities to visit its German headquarters every year. The program has helped many graduates become successfully employed by Mercedes-Benz's network, continuing their careers in the automotive industry and serving as an exemplary model of a virtuous industry-academy cooperation program for stakeholders. Since 2018, the Mobile Academy has also supported 'Special Lectures' for 1,600 students from technical high schools and institutes, offering insights into the latest trends in the automotive industry and its future, thus actively fostering technical talent and career development.

"Mercedes-Benz All Together": Employee Participation Program for Local Empowerment Project (2014~)

Mercedes-Benz All Together demonstrates a strong commitment to local society by engaging in company-wide employee participation. So far, over 2,000 employees have engaged over 220 volunteer projects, including the renovation of welfare facilities for the disabled, school zone safety enhancements, Kimjang sharing, storytelling for blind children and delivering emergency relief supplies during the pandemic. Additionally, the Committee has been providing educational support to children and teenagers; since 2016, a total of 4.5 billion KRW has been donated across 850 social welfare organizations through the Open Grant and Employee Recommendation Program. Furthermore, 44 Mercedes-Benz vehicles were donated to enhance transportation convenience for the socially disadvantaged, particularly the disabled, allowing for better access to medical, social, and cultural activities. As promised to Korean society in 2014, Mercedes-Benz will continue its commitment to corporate citizenship and local community growth through this program.



News & People

*Please contact members@kgcci.com for any important changes in personnel or business.

BASF Korea New MD



Chris Woo Suk Lee, the Vice President of Business Management Polyamides & Precursors for Asia Pacific has been appointed as the new Managing Director for BASF Company Ltd., South Korea, effective on June 1, 2025.

Since joining BASF Korea in 2000, Lee has held leadership roles across a wide range of business areas within the BASF Group for over 20 years, building extensive global experience and strategic leadership. He has contributed to BASF's sustainable growth and customer-centric innovation by managing various operations across the Asia Pacific region and globally, in countries including China, Switzerland, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Japan.

Throughout his career, Lee has proved his capability by playing pivotal roles in sales, marketing, business management, and product portfolio operations across diverse segments, including process chemicals for paper, performance additives for printing, coatings, and plastics. Most recently, he served as Vice President of Polyamides and Precursors for Asia Pacific at BASF (China) Company Ltd., where he demonstrated agile leadership in responding to complex market demands.

Bosch Korea New Representative



Marco Lusuardi has been appointed as the new Representative of Bosch in Korea and Regional President Power Solutions Korea, succeeding Dr. Alex Drljaca, who served from June 2021 to December 2024.

With over 20 years of experience in the mobility sector, Lusuardi brings a wealth of international leadership to his new role. Since joining the Bosch Group in Stuttgart in 2005, he has held senior executive positions across divisions in China, the U.S., and Germany. Most recently, he led the Compute Enhanced for Commercial Vehicle business unit within Bosch's Cross-Domain Computing Solutions division in Stuttgart.

Prior to Bosch, Lusuardi worked at Ferrari-Maserati Group in Modena, Italy. He holds a Master's degree in Industrial and Management Engineering from the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy.

"Korea is an attractive market with excellent talent, advanced infrastructure, and strong technology," said Lusuardi. "With our innovative products, software, and services, Bosch will continue to create and deliver value to customers in the Korean market."

Heidelberg Korea Ltd. New CEO



Seungjai Lee, a seasoned professional with over 20 years of experience in the fields of Human Resources and Information Technology, assumed the role of CEO at Heidelberg Korea Ltd. on April 1, 2025.

Prior to his appointment, Lee served as Head of HR and IT Manager, where he played a pivotal role in areas such as HR strategy planning, talent acquisition, labor relations, and compliance management. He also significantly contributed to the company's digital transformation through IT project management and the implementation of CRM systems.

Before joining Heidelberg Korea, Lee held positions in IT and planning at CWX Korea and Kim & Chang, where he built expertise in IT infrastructure management, cybersecurity, and project planning.

He holds a Master's degree in Systems Engineering from Soongsil University, where he conducted research on ERP system strategies. With strong problem-solving skills and extensive experience in organizational operations, Lee has successfully integrated HR and IT to drive innovation and growth. As CEO, he is expected to lead Heidelberg Korea into its next chapter of advancement and transformation.



Komos International Co. Ltd., (Faber-Castell Korea) New MD



Jeong Lee has been appointed as the new Managing Director of Komos International Co. Ltd.,(Faber-Castell Korea), effective from May 7, 2025. She brings with her wealth of international and cross-cultural experience, having studied German Language and Literature in Korea and earned a Master's degree in International Commerce from the Graduate School of International Studies at Korea University. Lee spent over four years in Germany, where she built a strong foundation in global marketing and communications. Upon returning to Korea, she worked at a major economic organization, where she played a pivotal role in international cooperation.

Through active engagement with embassies and relevant institutions, she helped Korean businesses expand their presence abroad. Since joining Faber-Castell Korea in 2022 as Marketing Director, she has demonstrated strategic leadership and operational excellence. Her global perspective and effective communication skills have contributed significantly to the company's development, and she continues to lead with a commitment to innovation and brand growth.

KTR Systems GmbH New CEO



KTR systems GmbH, a global driving solution company, appoints **Dongwook Kim** as the new CEO of KTR Korea ltd in March 2025.

He served as the CEO of the NORD Drivesystems Korea for over 20 years, and accumulated global business experience in automation industries, including Geard motor and Gearbox market. In addition to a close response to customer needs, he expressed his determination to pioneer new markets with existing customers by providing solutions optimized for changes and growth in the local market.

Porsche Korea New CEO



Mathias Busse has been appointed as the new CEO of Porsche Korea, effective from October 1, 2024. He is an experienced leader, having formerly held the position of CEO at Porsche Taiwan Motors Ltd. and Porsche Retail Hamburg GmbH. He has over 25 years of international experience in the automotive industry, including the Asian and European markets.

Since early 2022, he has served as Senior Director for the German market at Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles, which is the world's largest market for Volkswagen. Throughout his tenure, he contributed to the company's expansion and its operational efficiency, leveraging his solid foundation in sales and management to elevate brand competitiveness.

Recognized for his outstanding leadership and comprehensive industry expertise, including a deep understanding of the specific dynamics of the Asian market, he is expected to enhance Porsche's brand presence and impact in the Korean market. His strategic vision will play a key role in navigating emerging opportunities, driving further growth.

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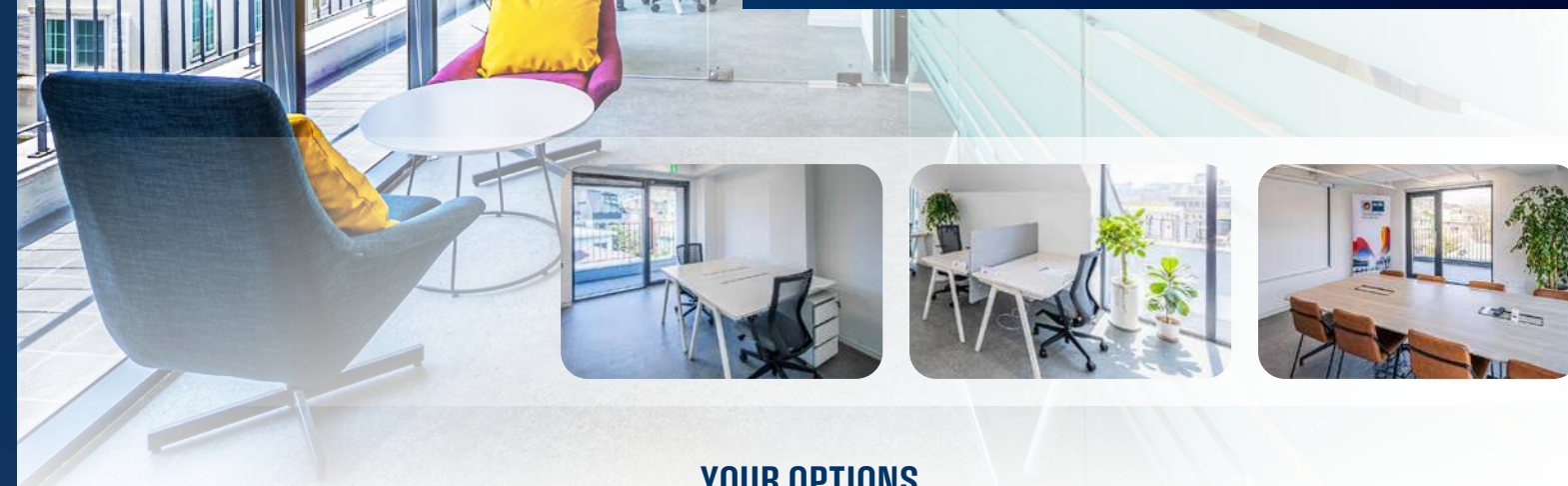
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for Convenient Commute

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Daily Office Cleaning

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New Members

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Coffee Break with Decision Makers in Korea

Interviewee



H.E. Dagmar Schmidt Tartagli
Ambassador of Switzerland to the Republic of Korea

We come across many decision makers in the news, but we often do not have the opportunity to get to know them on a more personal level. Ever wondered what hobbies do they enjoy outside their official duties? What are their interests, passions and experiences? Join us for a delightful coffee break as we get to know H.E. Dagmar Schmidt Tartagli, Ambassador of Switzerland to the Republic of Korea, on a more personal level.



Interview

1. Reflecting on your time in Korea, what did a typical day as the Swiss Ambassador look like? Were there any routines or moments that made your experience here unique?

My days were filled with meetings inside and outside the Embassy. Diplomacy begins with people, and it's through these people-to-people exchanges that interest sparks and partnerships take root and grow. Our Embassy—the “Swiss Hanok”—served as both a platform and a catalyst, sensing and facilitating mutual interest. It was a unique experience to witness this deepening of ties across many fields. Existing partnerships expanded, and new frameworks emerged—often through bottom-up initiatives supported at the institutional level. This dynamic was also reflected in how resources were allocated: a shared commitment across sectors gave the Embassy the capacity—through infrastructure, staff, and budget—to reinforce ties and explore new opportunities.

2. What have been some of the most rewarding and memorable experiences during your tenure in Seoul—both professionally and personally?

A milestone was the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2023, marked by high-level exchanges, a rich cultural program and the signing of an MoU to enhance bilateral research cooperation in life sciences, digital transformation, and quantum technologies.

The signing of the MoU took place as part of our embassy's annual lighthouse event, the Swiss-Korean Innovation Week (SKIW). Every year in May, SKIW is jointly organized by the entire embassy team and stands as a key highlight of our activities, reflecting how our bilateral relations are driven by close collaboration in strategic and forward-looking fields such as science, business, the creative industries, and anticipatory science diplomacy focused on global governance in emerging technological sectors.

Economic, trade, and investment ties have continued to deepen as we approach the 20th anniversary of the



Korea-EFTA Free Trade Agreement in 2026, an occasion to advance necessary efforts toward modernizing its framework conditions. In the arts, vibrant exchanges continue, and the Swiss participation in the Gwangju Biennale and a new MoU with Pro Helvetia is just one example.

To showcase the close cooperation between Switzerland and Korea in the multilateral context, we jointly organized—together with the ICRC, the Korean National Red Cross, KOICA, and with the sponsorship of the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) - an exhibition on the protection of civilians in the digital age. It was held at the Korean War Memorial, while both our countries served together as non-permanent members of the Security Council. The exhibition also commemorated 75 years of the Geneva Conventions and highlighted the theme of Women, Peace, and Security, linked to an official visit by the President of



our Senate. Additionally, Switzerland has contributed to peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula for more than 70 years as a member of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC), its very first military peace operation abroad.

Some of the most memorable moments at the Embassy were shaped by our two exhibitions in our “Madang”, when we opened our Embassy temporarily up to the Seoul public. Spaceless, held in 2022, was a collaboration with Swiss and Korean photographers who reimagined the urban spaces. SOIL, presented this April, explored the deep connection between soil and humanity, based on the book Jeong Kwan Snim – Her Korean Temple Cuisine by the Swiss publisher Echtzeit.

3. Diplomatic roles can be demanding. How did you like to unwind in Korea? Did you develop a favorite local activity, hobby, or hidden gem in the city?

I often enjoyed walking through the city, especially hiking up Mount Inwang behind the Embassy with our dog. From there, you get a striking view of Seoul’s many layers—both modern and historic. I also loved visiting contemporary art and ceramic exhibitions. As for my husband, he found joy in woodworking and attended a carpenter’s workshop not far from our home. Watching the furniture he created, become part of our daily life brought a quiet kind of happiness.



4. You have been a strong advocate for gender equality, including your generous support for the Women in koRea (WIR) Kick-off event. What inspired your commitment to women’s empowerment in Korea, and what lasting impact do you hope to see?

For Switzerland, I was the first woman ambassador to the Republic of Korea, and I am very pleased that my successor will also be a woman. We have come a long way since 1971, when women in my country were only then

granted the right to vote. Gender equality is now a core pillar of Swiss foreign policy. I have witnessed this positive shift firsthand throughout my entire lifetime and remain deeply committed to advancing equal representation as a lasting priority for a more inclusive and just society.



Taking A Closer Look at Our Member Companies

Interviewee



Dominik Wahlig
CEO of Würth Korea

The Korean-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KGCCI) serves as the first contact for German and Korean companies and has approximately 500 member companies from all fields of industry and service. As such, KGCCI takes a closer look by inviting one member company at a time to share the company's insightful stories, meaningful values and vision, thoughts on the Korean market, and many more. For this edition, KGCCI has invited Dominik Wahlig, CEO of Würth Korea.



Interview

1. First of all, could you introduce Würth? What makes your company special?

The Würth Group is the global leader in distributing fastening and assembly materials. In other words, we sell everything that professional craftspeople need to do maintenance and repair work. Founded in 1945 in Künzelsau in the South of Germany as a simple ironware trade shop, the group now operates in over 80 countries with more than 400 subsidiaries. It employs around 88,000 people and, as of 2024, achieved €20.2 billion in revenue and €940 million in profit.

The secret to the Würth Group's success is threefold:

- (1) With more than 150,000 products in our range, we can act as one-stop-shop for our customers, offering them everything they need out of one hand.
- (2) Our top-notch quality products and services add real value to our customers, enabling them to do their job in the best way possible.
- (3) Our direct sales team – we employ around 43,000 sales reps worldwide – in combination with more than 2,700 pick-up shops and e-business solutions ensures





maximum proximity to our customers, making sure that whenever they need support, Würth is there to help.

The basis of this success is a special company culture that promotes employees to think entrepreneurially, that encourages to passionately fight for success and that puts special emphasis on showing appreciation to each other.

2. What industries does Würth Korea primarily serve, and how have you seen these sectors evolve in recent years?

Würth Korea primarily serves the Korean automotive aftermarket. We supply high-quality chemical products, hand tools, protective equipment and workshop solutions specifically tailored for automotive technicians. Our offerings go beyond quality—they improve safety, reliability, and efficiency in repair work.

One key development we see in the automotive aftermarket in Korea is the need for increased professionalization in service offerings by automotive repairshops, a consequence of increasingly complex repair work and stricter safety regulations. This applies to both internal combustion engine and electric vehicles maintenance. For Würth Korea, this represents a great opportunity: we want to become the #1 partner for our customers by helping them in this professionalization journey with an ever-increasing product and service lineup, followed by a denser sales network across the country to be able to serve all repairshops throughout Korea in the most optimal way.

3. How do you view the Korean market, and what is your outlook for your business?

Overall, the Korean market has proven incredibly attractive for Würth. We experience that Korean customers strongly

value our high-quality products and solutions. Thus, we are convinced that if we are able to provide our offering with maximum proximity at reasonable prices, we will not only be able to massively grow our business but also contribute our small part to the professionalization of our customers' businesses.

4. Lastly, could you share with us the future plans and goals of Würth Korea under your leadership?

Primarily, our vision is for Würth Korea to become the most trusted brand among automotive service professionals. To achieve this, we will strengthen our expert product lineup and enhance on-site technical support to provide comprehensive workshop solutions. Further, we are exploring other interesting market segments typically served by Würth worldwide but currently not served in Korea. In the long run, based on the favorable market conditions in Korea, our target is to develop Würth Korea into a top 10, top 20 Würth Group subsidiary.



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Annual General Meeting 2025



KGCCI held its 44th Annual General Meeting (AGM) at the Fairmont Ambassador Seoul, bringing together members and partners for an evening of reflection, recognition, and renewed commitment to strengthening German-Korean

business ties, highlighted by key achievements, dynamic networking, and the honoring of long-standing members and leadership.

KGCCI Economic Outlook 2025 in Busan

In collaboration with the German Embassy in Seoul and Busan Metropolitan City, KGCCI hosted the Economic Outlook 2025 in Busan. This event brought together key voices to explore the future of Korean-German economic ties and Korea's evolving economic landscape.

The event opened with remarks from Marie Antonia von Schönburg, President & CEO of KGCCI, who highlighted the importance of deepening economic cooperation between Korea and Germany. German Ambassador to South Korea H.E. Georg Schmidt provided an overview of the current political climate and bilateral relations, followed by expert insights from Katharina Viklenko (Germany Trade & Invest) and Dr. Charlie Lay (Commerzbank AG) on

global economic trends and industry developments. A dynamic panel discussion featuring Bongki Choi (Cello Square by Samsung SDS Global), Viklenko, and Dr. Lay delved into strategic responses to today's shifting economic environment.



KGCCI Hosts German Business Delegation on Urban Mobility

KGCCI, together with Baden-Württemberg International, co-organized a German delegation's visit to Korea focused on urban intelligent mobility. The delegation visited Seoul AI Hub, Seoul Metropolitan Government & TOPIS, Hyundai Mobis, Korea Transport Institute, and Autonomous A2Z. At Seoul AI Hub, Mercedes-Benz Korea Research & Development, POEN. Co., Ltd., and AUTOCRYPT showcased their innovative technologies, followed by a networking session to foster stronger bilateral relations.



KGCCI Hosts Korean-German Smart City Business Networking

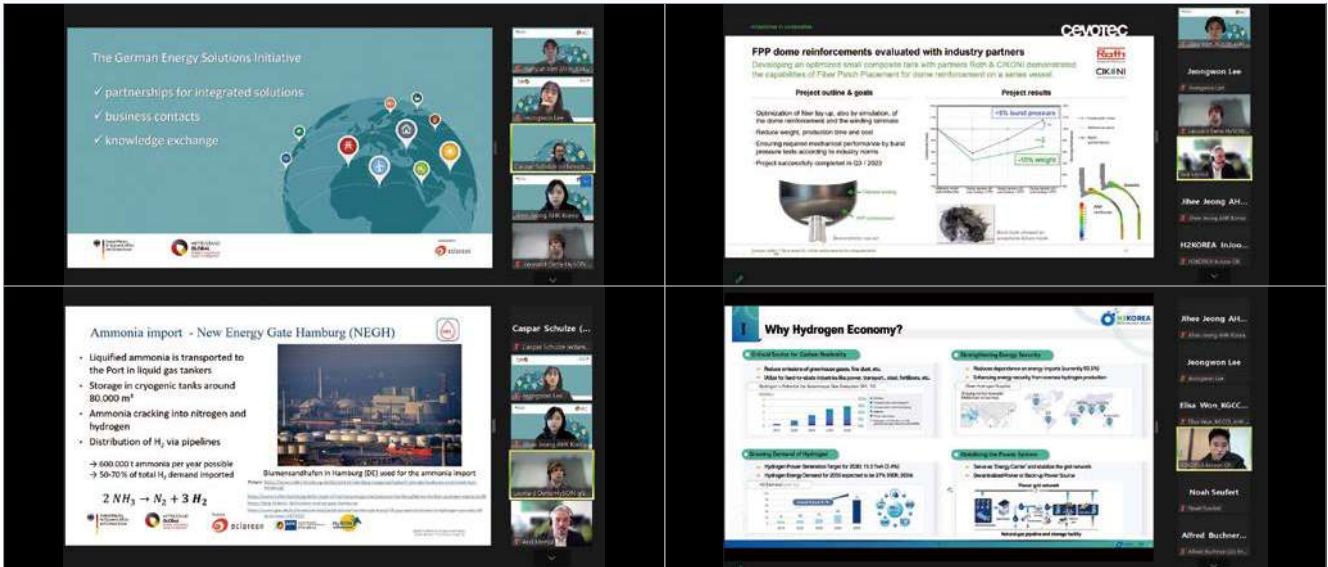
KGCCI, supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy and in collaboration with enviacon International, hosted Korean-German Smart City Business Networking: Exploring New Paradigms in Future Mobility. The program spotlighted emerging business opportunities in the smart city and future mobility sectors. The event kicked off with welcoming remarks by Hoje Woo, Vice President of KGCCI, and Alba Elena Scheffler from enviacon International, followed by German Smart City Market Overview and Future Mobility Outlook by Dr. Olga Schenk from German Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy. Representatives from aolaa-Engineering GmbH, Dronesperhour GmbH, ECOSpeed Mobility GmbH, and Future2 GbR provided presentations on smart city and future mobility technologies, followed by on-site visits and 1:1 B2B meetings with Korean companies to foster collaboration opportunities.



Digital Energy Business Trip to Korea on Storage, Infrastructure, and Application of Green Hydrogen

KGCCI, in cooperation with eclareon GmbH and supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy, organized a digital energy business trip to Korea on “Storage, Infrastructure, and Application of Green Hydrogen.” At the Korean-German online conference, Injoon Oh from H2KOREA and Leonard Dette from HySON

Institut shared green hydrogen policies and tech insights. Eight German companies—2G Energy AG, Archigas GmbH, AVL Deutschland GmbH, BARTEC Benke, Beckhoff Automation, Cevotec, Dräger Korea & Draegerwerk, and HYDAC Group New Technologies—showcased their solutions and explored partnerships with Korean firms.



KGCCI and Korean Ambassador to Germany Discuss APK 2026

Marie Antonia von Schönburg, President & CEO of KGCCI, met with H.E. Sang-Beom Lim, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Germany, for an insightful exchange on the evolving Korea-Germany partnership. Their conversation touched on economic cooperation, investment, innovation, and cultural exchange—with a special focus on the upcoming Asia-Pacific Conference of German Business (APK) 2026 in Seoul. Both sides reaffirmed their shared commitment to making APK 2026 a strategic platform to highlight Korea’s growing significance for German businesses in Asia.



KGCCI Startups & Innovators Networking: NextRise 2025 Preview

KGCCI, in partnership with BMW Group Korea and Korea International Trade Association (KITA), hosted the Startups & Innovators Networking: NextRise 2025 Preview to spotlight collaboration opportunities between German and Korean startups. Julian Klaus of BMW Group Korea highlighted the company’s innovation through startup

collaboration, while Yong-Joon Lee of KITA previewed NextRise and emphasized Korean-German cooperation. Felix Kalkowsky, Vice President of KGCCI, introduced “Korea-Germany Connect”, a new startup initiative featuring the Startup Germany Pavilion and Networking Night at NextRise 2025.



M2M Seminar: Korean Customs Audit Overview

KGCCI, in collaboration with CTL Customs Corporation, co-hosted M2M Seminar titled “Korean Customs Audit Overview & Case Studies” at KGCCI premises. With over 20 member companies in attendance, TaeJoon Lee and Hyesong Yeon, customs brokers at CTL Customs Group, delivered valuable insights into customs audits, highlighting the importance of analyzing customs clearance records and data reviews in today’s increasingly complex global trade landscape.



HRD Training: Win Clients Through Relationships

KGCCI, in collaboration with French Korean Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Australian Chamber of Commerce in Korea, and in partnership with Dale Carnegie Training, co-hosted HRD Training Thursday at KGCCI premises, titled “Win Clients, Keep Clients – Learn to Win with Relationship Selling.” Led by Jungki Hahm, Director & Senior Trainer at Dale Carnegie Consulting Center, over 20 professionals learned hands-on strategies for building long-term client relationships through proven relationship-selling techniques.



PR Circle: Winning LinkedIn Strategies for B2B Success

KGCCI hosted the PR Circle, featuring veteran PR expert Yoonjin Han, Executive Director at Prain Global. Under the theme “Winning LinkedIn Strategies for B2B Success”, over 40 PR, communications, and marketing professionals from member companies explored how

to elevate B2B branding through LinkedIn. The event also included a preview of the upcoming 2025 Joint CSR Harmony Marathon, co-organized with the Seoul Blind Union, reinforcing our shared commitment to inclusion through action.



Asparagus Dinner 2025

KGCCI hosted its annual Asparagus Dinner 2025 at the Grand Hyatt Seoul, opening with remarks by Chairperson Hyun-Nam Park and German Embassy Counsellor Dennis Bloch. The evening spotlighted the upcoming 2025 Joint CSR Guide Walkers on September 7, continuing the tradition of promoting inclusion by walking with visually impaired participants—a meaningful initiative launched

in 2023 to mark 140 years of Korean-German relations. A moving performance by the Feelgrida Choir added a special touch, and the evening concluded with closing remarks from KGCCI President & CEO Marie Antonia von Schönburg, reaffirming the Chamber’s commitment to Korean-German cooperation and inclusive CSR.



KGCCI and Seoul Blind Union Partner to Advance Inclusive CSR

KGCCI signed an MoU with the Seoul Blind Union to strengthen joint CSR efforts promoting inclusion and support for the visually impaired. The partnership includes co-hosting the 2025 Harmony Marathon and expanding impactful CSR initiatives. This collaboration builds on the Joint CSR Guide Walkers events held in 2023 and 2024, which initially began to commemorate the 140th anniversary of Korea-Germany relations. The initiative brought together hundreds of participants from KGCCI member companies to serve as guide walkers—fostering empathy, awareness, and inclusion.



KGCCI and NVISIONS Collaborate on DEI through ‘Dialogue in the Dark’

KGCCI signed an MoU with NVISIONS, operator of ‘Dialogue in the Dark’, to promote diversity, inclusion, and responsible business. As part of the partnership, KGCCI member companies are invited to join Dialogue in the Dark workshops ahead of the 2025 Joint CSR Harmony Marathon. The workshops will prepare participants to serve as guide walkers for the visually impaired while fostering inclusive leadership and advancing DEI in the workplace.



2025 WIR Kick-off & International Women’s Day Celebration

KGCCI and the Embassy of Switzerland in Korea co-hosted the 2025 Women In koRea (WIR) Kick-off and International Women’s Day celebration at the Swiss Embassy. The event featured a welcome by H.E. Dagmar Schmidt Tartagli, Swiss Ambassador to Korea, who highlighted inclusive leadership and diversity as drivers

of innovation. Opening remarks were given by KGCCI Vice President Felix Kalkowsky and WIR Co-Chair Kumjoo Huh, G20 Empower Korea Representative. Honorary guest Yeaji Kim, National Assembly Member, stressed the ongoing fight against discrimination and the need for a more inclusive society.



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Deutsche Bank

Empowering Youth, Strengthening Industry: KGCCI's Ausbildung Team

Interviewee



Young-Jin Kim
Deputy Director of
Ausbildung Team, KGCCI



1. Could you introduce the Ausbildung team and the key responsibilities?

The Ausbildung team at the Korean-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KGCCI) is dedicated to implementing and expanding the German dual vocational training system in South Korea. Our team is composed of professionals with expertise in vocational education, international cooperation, and industry collaboration.

We work in close partnership with German companies in Korea, vocational high schools, partner colleges, relevant Korean government agencies, and the German Embassy in Seoul. Our key responsibilities include designing and managing training programs based on the German dual system, and ensuring their alignment with training standards certified by both the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DIHK) and KGCCI.

The team is also responsible for overseeing the certification of trainers and assessors and delivering training courses as part of the qualification process. Additionally, we organize final assessments in accordance with German vocational training regulations and ensure quality assurance throughout the 36-month training cycle. We actively support both trainees and trainers and promote the program nationwide through various outreach and communication activities.

2. Can you share recent achievements or milestones that the Ausbildung team is particularly proud of?

Originally launched with just a single occupation in the automotive sector, the program has since expanded to include general automotive maintenance specialists, automotive painters, car body technicians, and service advisors.



When the program began in 2017, it involved only two automotive brands. Today - eight years later - it includes all major German automotive manufacturers in Korea. The program currently supports over 400 trainees and 320 certified trainers across 150 service centers nationwide. To date, 269 trainees have successfully completed the program.

In addition, we are proud to be working on the qualification of florists in collaboration with Korean floral academies since 2019.

Another significant milestone is the growing number of success stories among our graduates. For example, one trainee became a certified master technician (equivalent to the German Meister) at an exceptionally young age - an accomplishment rarely seen in Korea, where this title is typically achieved around the age of 40. Another graduate was honored with an award from the Korean Minister of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (MOLIT) at a national technical competition. These cases of rapid professional growth and outstanding practical skills underscore the effectiveness of the program.





3. Could you provide insights into the upcoming projects your team is leading?

We are currently working on several strategic initiatives to strengthen and expand the Ausbildung program in Korea. One of our key upcoming projects is the potential expansion of the program into new sectors. This pilot initiative aims to not only address skilled labor shortages in Korea and Germany but also provide global career opportunities for young talent.

At the same time, we are working with regional chambers and vocational institutions to increase awareness and accessibility of the Ausbildung program outside the Seoul metropolitan area. By reaching out to students nationwide, we hope to make vocational training a more attractive and available pathway across Korea.

4. What role does vocational training play in strengthening economic ties between Korea and Germany?

Vocational training plays a vital role in bridging the skill gap and building a sustainable talent pipeline for German companies operating in Korea. By integrating German training standards into the Korean labor market, the Ausbildung program promotes the recognition of skilled professions within Korean society while maintaining global competitiveness.

Beyond workforce development, the program also fosters cross-cultural and professional exchange. Korean trainees

are educated under the German system and often pursue international career opportunities or further training after graduation. This people-to-people connection enhances bilateral cooperation—not only in trade and investment, but also in education and innovation.

The importance of the program was even acknowledged by the First Lady of Germany, who sent a congratulatory message to the graduates of the 2023 Ausbildung Graduation Ceremony. Each year, the German Ambassador to South Korea personally hands over certificates to every trainee during the ceremony. Several German media outlets have also highlighted the program's success in Korea, featuring interviews with our trainees.

In the long term, dual vocational training fosters mutual trust and supports a sustainable global workforce strategy for German industry abroad. It serves as a model for how the core values of dual education - such as structure, quality, and long-term development - can be preserved while adapting to local contexts.

We have seen that the pace and quality of a trainee's development are directly influenced by the commitment and quality of both the company and the trainer. The Ausbildung program clearly demonstrates that with strong corporate support and dedicated trainers, trainees can grow rapidly and become highly skilled professionals.

If your company is facing challenges in securing qualified talent, why not consider developing your future workforce through the Ausbildung system?

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Empowering Next Generation of Women Leaders: KGCCI Women In koRea Leadership Forum 2025

The Women In koRea (WIR: 'We' in German) women leadership group of the Korean-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KGCCI), in partnership with Macoll Consulting Group and The Executive Center, hosted the WIR Leadership Forum 2025 on June 26 at IFC Forum in Seoul, South Korea. The forum brought together more than 80 women leaders and professionals from businesses, academic, and international organizations to explore the evolving demands of women's leadership in today's dynamic workplace.

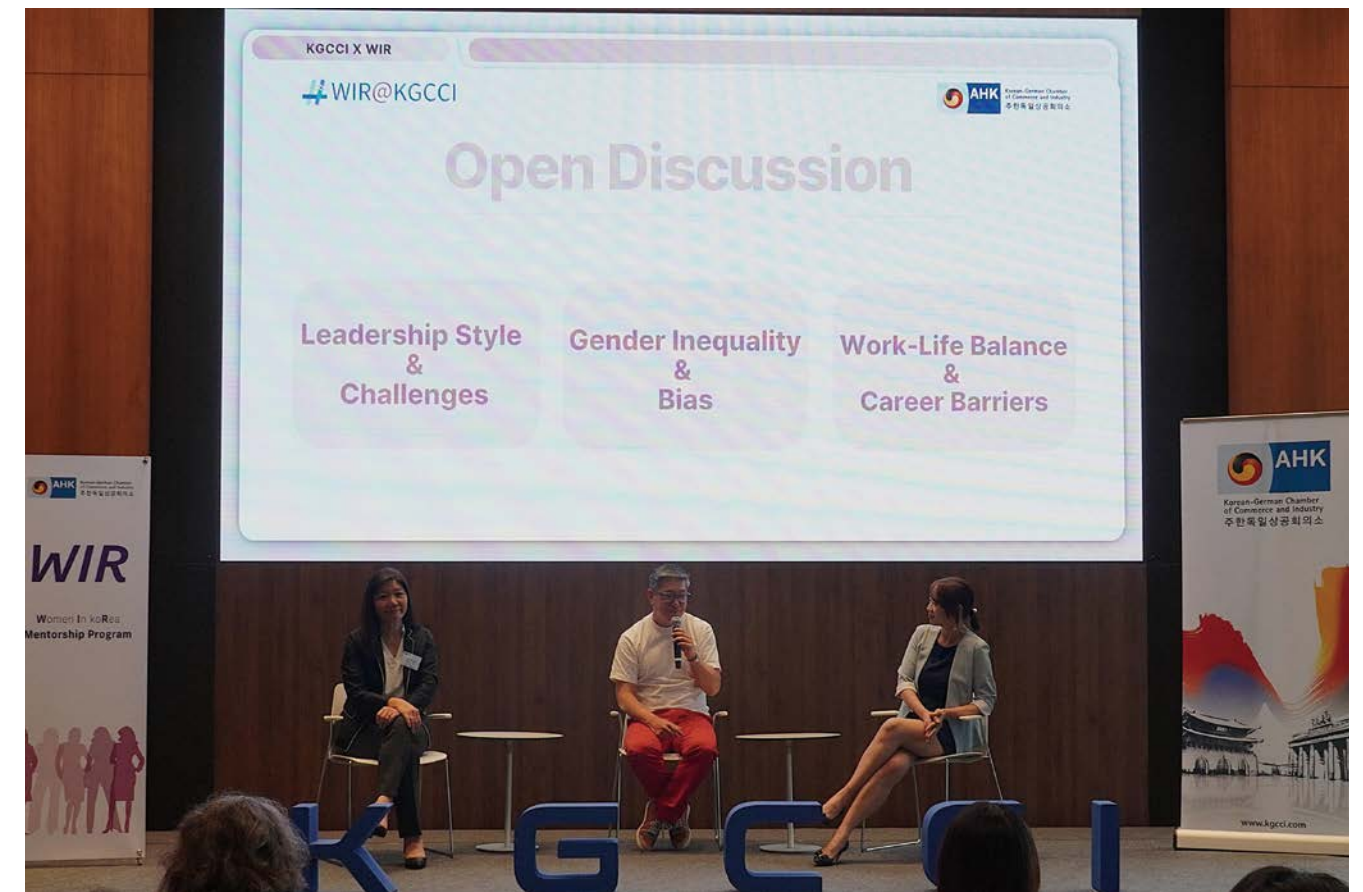
The forum served as a dynamic platform to celebrate the growing influence of women in leadership while fostering meaningful dialogue around inclusive, future-ready strategies. It also reaffirmed the commitment of the KGCCI and its partners to advance gender equity in Korea's business landscape.

Since its launch in 2018, the WIR Mentorship Program has connected over 250 women professionals, offering guidance,

support, and empowerment for future leaders. The 7th edition of the program continues this mission, focusing on building meaningful connections, nurturing leadership potential, and driving positive change across sectors. Expanding its reach and impact, KGCCI recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Sungjoo Foundation, operated by Sungjoo Group, which manages the luxury brand MCM.

The forum opened with welcoming remarks by Marie Antonia von Schönburg, President & CEO of KGCCI and WIR Co-chair, who emphasized the importance of confidence, connection, and emotional resilience in leadership. Her speech set the stage for a trio of compelling keynote talks.

The first keynote, titled "Building Up and Leading with Confidence", was delivered by Cyndi Chao Mackell, Vice President at Siemens Energy. She shared personal insights and strategies for fostering confident leadership in corporate settings.



Carrie Chuang, Regional Director at The Executive Centre, followed with a powerful session on "The Right Approach to Networking and Connecting with People," offering practical tips on building meaningful professional relationships.

Joo-seuk Maing, CEO of FIT Voltaira Group Korea/Vietnam, wrapped up the keynote segment with "Emotional Safety and Accountability," emphasizing the role of psychological safety, feedback culture, and high-performing teams—drawing on experiences from the U.S.-based leadership consultancy Dynamic Results.

An open discussion on "The Future of Leadership—What It Takes to Succeed in Today's Business Landscape" brought all three speakers together in an engaging exchange of perspectives and real-world experience. Audience interaction enriched the discussion, further rooting it in the realities of today's leadership challenges.

"At KGCCI, we don't just want to empower women. WIR goes beyond mentorship—it's about shaping leaders who lead with confidence, empathy, and resilience. Together, we're building a future where those qualities are the norm, not the exception," said Marie Antonia von Schönburg, President & CEO of KGCCI.

KGCCI WIR Group and Mentorship Program

The KGCCI WIR group is a cross-industry, cross-national network that empowers young professional women in Korea to unlock their leadership potential and accelerate value-driven leadership with a focus on gender, generations, and geography. Launched in 2018, the WIR mentorship program has been serving as a platform for building a strong and sustainable network, fostering collaboration, and addressing challenges faced by women leaders in today's dynamic business environment. Rooted in the belief that mentorship is a reciprocal exchange, WIR encourages participants—regardless of their background or professional standing—to share insights and learn from each other.



Spotlight Interview: WIR Leadership Forum 2025 Keynote Speaker

Interviewee



Carrie Chuang
Regional Director
The Executive Centre

1. Could you briefly introduce yourself and The Executive Centre?

I'm Carrie Chuang, currently serving as the Regional Director for Taiwan & Korea at The Executive Centre (TEC). My career has been shaped by a deep curiosity for how people learn, grow, and connect—starting from education and publishing, and now driving business strategy and leadership across borders at TEC. TEC is a premium flexible workspace provider with over 200 centres across 36 cities in Asia-Pacific region, serving top-tier professionals with bespoke office solutions.

At TEC, I lead our efforts in scaling business impact, fostering people development, and—just as importantly—building environments that empower human connection and collaboration through meaningful partnerships in both established and emerging business landscapes.

2. What does “strategic networking” mean to you, and how does it differ from traditional approaches?

To me, strategic networking is not just about collecting contacts—it's about designing trust. It begins with clarity: what do you stand for, and how can your presence bring relevance to others' goals? Unlike traditional networking



which often centers around visibility and access, strategic networking is long-term, value-based, and rooted in mutual insight. It requires listening with intention, following up with precision, and offering something meaningful before you ask for anything in return.

3. How have flexible workspaces transformed the way professionals connect, especially in dynamic markets like Korea and Taiwan?

Flexible workspaces today are no longer just physical offices—they've evolved into strategic ecosystems for connection. In markets like Korea and Taiwan, where speed, trust, and proximity to decision-makers matter, spaces like The Executive Centre offer more than convenience: we offer a community that is both intentionally curated and operationally empowered.

Through TEC Community, we don't just facilitate casual interactions—we systematically and strategically connect people around shared goals, complementary strengths, or cross-industry insights. It's about designing environments where business relationships grow organically but with purpose—resulting in collaborations that are not only serendipitous, but also scalable.

4. What's one key piece of advice you would offer to women professionals aiming to build influential networks and navigate evolving business ecosystems?

Build networks not just around who you want to meet, but how you want to be remembered. In a world overloaded with noise, it is clarity and consistency that make you stand out. Strategic relationships are built on generosity, not transactions—show up for others with relevance, and often before they even expect it.

One thing I've learned: people may forget titles, but they rarely forget how you made them feel—especially if you made them feel seen, heard, or supported even without an agenda. That's where true influence begins.

And at the end of the day, what sustains me isn't just strategy—it's belief.

I believe in showing up with intention, in the quiet power of consistency, and in leading with curiosity that is both outward and inward. These values aren't always loud, but they are deeply felt—and that, I've come to realize, is often why help, trust, and opportunity find their way back to me, even in the most unexpected moments.



Voices from the KGCCI German Office

As a hub for German businesses entering the Korean market, the KGCCI German Office is more than just a workspace—it is a launchpad for success, collaboration, and growth. In this special feature, we spotlight one of our tenants to uncover their journey in Korea, their insights into the market, and the unique advantages of being part of the KGCCI community. Discover how the KGCCI German Office supports companies in bridging the gap between Germany and Korea, fostering innovation and opportunities along the way.

Interviewee



Jason Jang
Country Manager
Gretsch-Unitas Korea



Interview

1. Please introduce your company.

Gretsch-Unitas Group is one of the leading suppliers of window and door technology, automatic entrance systems and building management systems. It manufactures and distributes architectural hardware, locks, and locking and access control systems for the G-U, BKS and Ferco.

With its comprehensive spectrum of compatible products, GU Group offers hardware solutions for burglar-inhibiting windows and doors, barrier-free construction, doors in escape and rescue routes and individual facade solutions for projects, always embodying “Securing technology for you”.

2. What motivated you to choose the KGCCI German Office as your business location?

The KGCCI German office is well-equipped with essential infrastructure for companies entering the Korean market. Expanding into a new market can feel like venturing into uncharted territory, with initial uncertainty often being the biggest challenge. KGCCI is ready to serve you as a reliable partner in navigating these challenges.



3. What are the biggest opportunities and challenges in the Korean market?

Due to the government’s mandate for zero-energy buildings, we are seeing a growing demand in the market for high-quality hardware solutions. With over 30,000 products developed over the past 115 years, we are ready to meet the technical and performance requirements of such projects.

However, we understand that product excellence alone is not enough—timely delivery is equally essential. That’s why we are actively exploring efficient and reliable ways to ensure consistent product supply to the Korean market, exactly when our customers need it.

4. What are your company’s goals or plans in Korea and beyond?

Wherever our customers are, that’s where we are too: everywhere in the world in more than 35 countries on all five continents. This presence creates proximity and makes us your capable partner, one that speaks your language and provides support and assistance throughout the entire project.

5. What advice would you give to other German companies considering entering the Korean market?

I believe that “Dynamic Korea” is one of the most well-expressed slogans to represent the spirit of Korea. The energy, agility, and momentum captured in this phrase are also reflected in the way we conduct business in Korea.

For instance, if a client requests feedback by tomorrow, we aim to provide it today— I’m confident that this proactive approach leads to greater business opportunities.





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