

Chairman's report for MV 2020

Dear Members,

Allow me to follow the tradition of the past few years and address you in English.

First of all a word of remembrance:

Prince Philip RIP

Very sadly, we have lost a key member of the British Royal Family. Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, who married Princess Elizabeth in 1947, and had been Consort of the British Monarch since 1952, died on 21.04.21 aged 99. Prince Philip had a distinguished military career, was an early environmental activist and launched inter alia the Duke of Edinburgh Awards, which inspired many youngsters in Britain and beyond. Always colourful, occasionally controversial, he was a pillar of strength and stability, always standing right behind the Queen. His loss no doubt leaves a terrible void for Her Majesty. Our thoughts are with them both.

Now to my report:

Covid-19

Brexit has usually been our key topic since 2016, but Covid-19 clearly upstaged Brexit in 2020.

First, on a personal note: I reported last October that, so far, my family and I had come through the pandemic with some frustrations and inconvenience, but without any significant harm. This has remained the case. My wife is now fully vaccinated, I have received one BioNTech jab and our daughter is coping fine in Japan. I recently even managed a trip to our second home in Lower Austria, although that involved multiple PCR tests and two lots of 5 days' quarantine in Austria and Germany. Now a regular Zoom participant and moderator, I actually produced a Zoom webinar last month together with my Japanese corporate finance partners. I continue to hike and cycle as much as possible. My wife and I have also taken to having a nice meal delivered on Friday evenings; so far German (Gänsebraten!), Italian, Indian, Japanese, French and Vietnamese. To be recommended!

I sincerely hope that you, dear Members, as well as your families and your loved ones, have also come through the past months happy and healthy and more or less unscathed!

What about Covid-19 now and looking forward? After a bad autumn and winter, with a surge in infections, and various logistical problems relating to the vaccination roll-out, the situation in early May seems to be improving. Lockdown relaxation is on the agenda throughout Europe and a Green Pass is likely to facilitate cross-border travel in time for the summer holidays. Fingers crossed that this trend continues and survives possible relapses via holiday returnees (as happened in 2020), potential further Corona variants and reinfection from later stage hotspots in India, Africa and Latin America!

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As for the Deutsch-Britische Gesellschaft Rhein-Main e.V. last year, the pandemic primarily affected our events calendar. We managed only one of many scheduled physical events: a fascinating lecture in February by Prof. Rüdiger Görner on "Über das Europäische in der Romantik". Later we switched to online events, starting with "German-British relations after Corona" in early June, continuing with regular inspiring talks and ending in December with a wonderful reading by our Members Dr. Jo and Alison Rippier. Overall, the DBG R-M has thus far emerged intact, arguably even strengthened: membership has grown somewhat, our financial situation remains solid and we have launched a full schedule of exciting events in 2021. We hope to be in a position to revert partly to physical events at some stage in the second half of this year.

Two words of thanks

In all of this your Managing Director, Michael Gehrig, has played a vital role. Not only has he identified and attracted most of our speakers, but he has also organised our Zoom set-up and proved a very skilled and effective Zoom moderator. Thank you, Michael!

A word of thanks also to Renate von Metzler, our former Deputy Chair, who recently celebrated her 80th birthday. Renate resigned from the Board in 2019 but has remained a strong supporter of the DBG, especially Rhein-Main, as well as a good link to the Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt. Renate continues to provide thoughtful and generous help, especially in support of our efforts to win new young Members.

Brexit

With a substantial majority in Parliament, Boris Johnson pursued a hard line on Brexit throughout 2020. The EU, in the eyes of many Britons, remained stiff and inflexible. This led to a stalemate in negotiations on a possible Free Trade Agreement ("FTA") until December. The key issues were:

- The "level playing field", including workers' rights, environmental regulations and state aid;
- Fisheries, an issue of minor economic but major emotional importance for both sides;
- Governance, including the overall structure of any deal, and the tricky issue of possible ongoing European Court of Justice powers in the UK after 31.12.20; and
- Last but not least, the even trickier issue as to how the UK proposed to avoid closing the land border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, which was further massively complicated by the UK's Internal Market Bill regarding the status of Northern Ireland post-Brexit.

Quite late on Christmas Eve Boris Johnson made a theatrical announcement that a FTA had been signed, to complement the existing Withdrawal Agreement. He offered the 1,246 page agreement as "nice Christmas reading for all of you"(!).

Before the end of the Transition Period on 31.12.20 we had a foretaste of how bad post-Brexit chaos might be. This was when a surge in Corona infections in southern England (the dreaded "British variant") caused the EU to close its borders with the UK in mid-December, leading to huge lorry tailbacks, especially on the UK side. Fortunately, in the event, extreme chaos was averted by the eventual signing of the FTA and the fact that cross-border traders had stockpiled substantially ahead of year-end.

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That said, British exports to the EU since the start of the year (esp. dairy products, seafood and whisky) have been very weak despite the FTA. Customs documentation, product certificates and additional VAT have put a brake on business. British SMEs have been particularly hard hit. EU exports to Britain have held up better, partly because the UK will not introduce its own trade restrictions until July. Overall UK-EU trade volumes sank substantially in January, recovering somewhat in February/March.

Financial Services were intentionally omitted from the FTA. This sector was due to be settled by 31.03.21, in a separate agreement prospectively involving "equivalence" of financial sector regulation on both sides of the Channel. However, related talks appear to have stalled....

Although the London City remains a huge and strong financial centre, some business has already been lost to the EU. Amsterdam has won market share in international equities trading; both Frankfurt and Paris have improved their position in derivatives trading; Frankfurt has also attracted banking assets and jobs from London and is now, for the first time ever, one of the Global Top 10 Financial Centres. London is reacting in several ways, including aggressive build-out of its already substantial start-up business.

Brexit has also negatively impacted many other areas including Education, Culture, Tourism and Sport. Britain's exit from the Erasmus Programme is massively complicating school and university exchange activities. New visa arrangements for longer UK-EU stays are restricting cross-Channel travel by orchestras, bands, theatre groups and sports teams. Lapsed recognition of various professional qualifications is also proving problematic for e.g. British architects.

Despite all these problems Britain is riding quite high at the moment. After a horrific year in 2020 Britain seems to have done a better job than the EU on Covid-19 vaccination, and is now relaxing restrictions faster than the EU. Britain led the Security Council this February. A G7 foreign ministers meeting is currently taking place in London, chaired by Britain. The G7 leaders summit in Cornwall next month will also be chaired by Britain. As will COP 26, the big global climate conference, in Glasgow in November.

This is music to the ears of the Brexiteers and others who like the concept of "Global Britain". Britain has indeed been making progress in its trade talks with ex-Commonwealth countries and e.g. Japan. However, such (distant) deals seem likely to replace only a fraction of the trade which Britain stands to lose with its nearest and biggest partner, the EU, as a result of Brexit. Whereas relations with most of the new partners are cordial, the dialogue between Britain and the EU remains frosty. Besides the ongoing huge problem area of Northern Ireland, we now also have British gunboat diplomacy and French industrial sanction threats around fishing rights post-Brexit in Channel Island waters!

Leading economists are forecasting quite a buoyant recovery in the UK, as against a slow, weak recovery in the EU. And Boris Johnson is in any case fortunate that it is practically impossible to disentangle the respective negative economic impacts of Brexit and Covid-19.

Looking forward, however, the Tory "sleaze and cronyism" chapter is not yet closed (i.e. questionable financing for the refurbishment of Boris Johnson's flat, ex-PM Cameron's involvement in the embarrassing Greensill bankruptcy etc.) In addition, the jury is out in terms of the local elections in England and Wales this week, which may or may not see the Tories consolidate their position beyond the Red Wall in northern England (where Labour suffered such painful losses in the 2019 general election). And SNP leader Nicola

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Sturgeon will probably be returned to power in the Scottish parliament, albeit with a slimmer majority than that forecast a few weeks ago. So further conflict around possible Scottish independence (or, at least, greater regional power and funding) is more or less guaranteed for the coming months.

Things can change very quickly in politics. Life could again become much trickier for Boris Johnson before too long.

DBG R-M Brexit Action

Your Board (especially your Chairman) was again active on Brexit, although less so than in previous years, as Covid-19 severely impacted event schedules at all organisations and societies. Here is a list of our activities in 2020:

- -30.01.20: interview on Radio FFH
- -31.01.20: I was invited to a meeting in Wiesbaden at which Lucia Puttrich, Hessen's Minister of European and Federal Affairs, thanked various parties (Frankfurter Wirtschaftsförderung, FrankfurtRheinMainGmbH, Hessen Trade & Invest and DBG R-M!) for their contributions towards positioning Hessen for Brexit
- -31.01.20: interview on NTV
- -02.02.20: "Cafe Europa" (a "Pulse of Europe" series) in Darmstadt with Yasmine Schritt, Head of the Brexit Team at the Hessische Staatskanzlei, and others on "Brexit nach dem Brexit"
- -02.02.20: I attended a "Very British" concert of music (including Elgar's "Land of Hope and Glory") in Ingelheim
- -07.02.20: Michael Gehrig, Hendrik Schmidt and I attended a British Chamber of Commerce Germany, Rhein-Main ("BCCG") event where Lord Kinnoul, Chair of the EU Committee at the House of Lords and Jens Zimmermann discussed Brexit latest developments and prospects
- -07.02.20: I joined a BCCG dinner with Lord Kinnoul

Several other physical events around Brexit scheduled for the second quarter of 2020, including a further panel discussion in cooperation with the Evangelische Akademie Frankfurt, were cancelled.

We attended numerous webinars and online discussion panels on Brexit in the following months.

DBG R-M events in 2020

- 20.02.20: Prof. Rüdiger Görner: "Über das Europäische in der Romantik", a physical talk in cooperation with the Goethe-Museum (Freies Deutsches Hochstift) Frankfurt
- 23.04.20: Prof. John Barton: "History of the Bible"; he had to cancel his trip but sent us some text instead
- 28.05.20: Prof. Vernon Bogdanor: "Never Closer Union?"; he also sent us some text
- 03.06.20: Robbie Bulloch, British Embassy, Berlin, and Jens Zimmermann, in our first Zoom event, on the subject of "German-British relations after Corona"
- 24.09.20: John Kampfner: online introduction of his new book "Why the Germans Do it Better"
- 22.10.20: Prof. Roberta Guerrina on "Gender ideologies from Brexit to Covid-19"
- 05.11.20: David McAllister, MEP, on the "Current state of EU-UK negotiations"

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- 26.11.20: Prof. Mary Evans on "Age and Memory"
- 17.12.20: Alison and Jo Rippier with a literature reading/performance.

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In addition, DBG Berlin invited DBG R-M Members to attend the following online events:

- 29.06.20: Dr. Mary Murphy and Lisa C. Whitten on "The Future of the Island of Ireland"
- 16.07.20: Opening session of the 60th Young Königswinter Conference
- 26.08.20: Prof. Andreas Busch: "A-Levels Fiasko in GB"

Other event highlights:

- 08.02.20: Hendrik Schmidt and I attended a very enjoyable Burns Supper organised by BCCG
- 21.02.20: my wife and I attended a performance of "The Effect" at the English Theatre, with other guests of the British Honorary Consul including the British Ambassador and his wife
- 26.02.20: I joined a mutual update over dinner of the Frankfurter Wirtschaftsbotschafter
- 03.09.20: Michael Gehrig and I attended a farewell dinner at Villa Bonn arranged by the British Honorary Consul for the outgoing British Ambassador Berlin and his wife.

DBG R-M events so far and further scheduled in 2021

- 21.01.21: "Short History of English Literature" book presentation by Prof. Christoph Heyl
- 25.02.21: "Never Closer Union" by Prof. Vernon Bogdanor (arranged by Nichola Hayton)
- 24.03.21: "German composers in English-speaking lands" by Paul Griffiths (arranged and chaired by Dr. Jünemann)
- 22.04.21: "Cognitive Framing" by Prof. Viktor Mayer-Schönberger
- 20.05.21: "Shakespeare's tragedies and why they might be the greatest literature ever penned" by Paul Stebbings (arranged by Nichola Hayton)
- 24.06.21: Brief online event to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the DBG Rhein-Main e.V. and its forerunner, Die Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft Landesgruppe Rhein-Main, (details to follow). Thereafter: a reading by Prof. Rüdiger Görner from his new novel to be published in mid-June
- 16.09.21: "Hitler's Escape from the Bunker: Conspiracy Theories and Political Fantasies?" by Sir Richard Evans (arranged by Nichola Hayton)
- 14.10.21: Institute for Government details and info on new book will follow, by Hannah White
- 18.11.21: "Religion in crisis?" by Prof. John Barton
- 16.12.21: "Casanova" a reading by Dr. Jo Rippier and Mike Marklove
 OR "Sinking giggling into the sea? The history of the music hall and British comedy" by Dr. Michael
 Raab (if an onsite meeting is possible then)

Cooperation on events between DBG R-M, DBG Berlin and other DBG "chapters" is working very well.

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Königswinter Conferences

- In July 2020 the Young Conference was held online
- The main Conference took place in hybrid form on 24-25.09.20
- The 2020 Economic and Defence Conferences unfortunately had to be cancelled
- In 2021 both the main Conference and the Young Conference will be held in June, format and locations subject to Covid-19 developments in the meantime. Plans for the Economic or Defence Conferences have not yet been published.

The Königswinter conferences were launched initially in the 1950s and are undoubtedly one of the key achievements of the Deutsch-Britische Gesellschaft. We can all be proud of this. I am confident that Königswinter and the DBG can and should play an increasingly important role in German-UK relations post-Brexit.

DBG-Netzwerktreffen

The Netzwerktreffen of the regional groups or "chapters" of the DBG took place online on 10.10.20. It was useful to meet and compare notes with colleagues from inter alia Berlin, Bonn, Düsseldorf, Göttingen, Heidelberg and München. We agreed to intensify cooperation by means of better communication and resource-sharing. From now on we will meet online on a quarterly basis. At the first online meeting in 2021 we discussed the DBG's possibly expanded mission and role after the end of the Brexit Transition Period, and how best to work with Social Media going forward.

Cooperation with other organisations and societies

To help gain new Members, find and share good speakers, organise joint events and generally "spread the word" about the Deutsch-Britische Gesellschaft, we have maintained our cooperation with:

- Young Königswinter Alumni
- BCCG
- Oxbridge Stammtisch
- FrankRheinMain Circle
- We also continue to support the International Stammtisch. Michael Gehrig recently introduced an online II event with Bruder Paulus of the Kapuzinerkloster, in cooperation with the Frankfurt School of Finance and Management
- British German Association, London: DBG Berlin has arranged with Chairman Peter Barnes a series
 of joint online events, to which DBG R-M will be invited
- Frankfurter Wirtschaftsbotschafter: Covid-19 has limited the activities of this group, in which I am the member for the UK. There will be future opportunities for cooperation between FW, with its entrepreneurial individuals from e.g. India, Japan, Russia, Turkey, the USA etc, and the DBG.

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Membership

We have recently won a second Institutional Member alongside Mazars. This new Member, AK Yarm/Kulturkreis Schwalbach GmbH, is cultural rather than corporate or profit-based. We thank our long-term Member Dr. Jünemann for the introduction.

Institutional Membership (corporate/profit-based) costs EUR 1,000 p.a., enables 10 named individuals from the institution concerned to attend all DBG R-M events, and offers the opportunity to work on joint events with the DBG and our network. We are proposing different arrangements for cultural institutions, which will be put to the vote later today. We continue to look for additional institutional candidates in both categories and would appreciate any suggestions you may have.

Individual members now total 203[MG1], membership having remained quite stable overall in 2020 and MG2] grown by 11 so far in 2021. In addition, we maintain a Members & Friends List of 591 people MG3; we need to convert more Friends to Members, as well as to identify and interest new candidates. Your help here, too, would be highly appreciated. As I never tire of repeating, current and new Members are our life blood!

Board of Directors

When Katharina Ruppel of our Geschäftsstelle Mazars moved to a different company in late 2019, her board position at DBG R-M was taken over by Tobias Mackenrodt, Rechtsanwalt, Steuerberater and Partner at Mazars. As Katharina's term still had over a year to run, there was no formal requirement at the 2019 MV to elect Tobias to the DBG R-M board. Now Tobias stands for re-election (or, to be rather pedantic, formal election) by the MV.

All other Board Members are also standing for a further two-year term.

70th Anniversary of DBG R-M

The DBG R-M was founded as the Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft, Landesgruppe Rhein-Main, in 1951. Accordingly, we will celebrate the DBG R-M's 70th Anniversary later in the year. We plan to do so in two steps: first a short online event with some prominent external speakers on 24.06.21; and second, assuming Covid-19 has been brought under control by then, a physical meeting with wine and finger food in the late summer or early autumn. Many of you will recall our party in summer 2019 for the 70th birthday of the DBG overall; fingers crossed for some more fun like that later this year!

06.05.21 Nick Jefcoat Chairman

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