



Ford LGBTIQ+ group celebrates 25 groundbreaking years



Eva Reifschneider (left) and Tobias Nowak (right), with GLOBE sponsor Peter Godsell

In 1996, Ford did something unheard of at any large-scale company in Germany: it established an in-house group for Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual Employees – GLOBE.

The initiative came from three employees who were inspired by the founding of Ford GLOBE in the US in 1994.

The first meeting, at a pub in Cologne, Germany, was an awkward one, with a handful of people unsure what to say to each other. It was all such new territory. They were nervous, but happy the meeting was taking place and that the group was established.

Today, Ford GLOBE has 854 members worldwide. The group has brought about significant changes regarding diversity and sexual orientation – including gaining equal rights within Ford of Europe in 2001. Ford GLOBE has also helped other companies set up in-house groups for their LGBTIQ+ employees.

“The 1980s and 1990s are not that long ago,” said Jochen Trempler, who started at Ford as a toolmaker in 1960, was a founding member of Ford GLOBE Germany and retired in 2003. “Homophobia was widespread. I’m sure I speak for other LGBTIQ+ colleagues of that era when I say I often felt safer and more included at work than in public life.”

Jochen was interviewed for a special virtual event on July 1 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Ford GLOBE in Germany. Interviewees from Ford GLOBE past and present will share their experiences of coming out at Ford and highlight the key challenges for the future, which include getting the next generation of employees involved and supporting colleagues in countries where there is a lesser acceptance of LGBTIQ+ equality.

“As a global company, Ford can help raise awareness that human rights are indivisible and apply everywhere at all times, including LGBTIQ+ people of course,” said Eva Reifschneider, GLOBE Germany, who joined Ford in 1998. “We as a minority need to fight for and defend our rights globally and be visible. Those who speak up can be heard and can help bring about positive change.”

The power of diversity

For more than a century, Ford has been a pioneer in providing equal opportunity to people regardless of race, gender, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity and background.

Ford GLOBE is one of several Employee Resource Groups that provide support for Ford’s employees, agency personnel and contractors, and it exemplifies Ford’s commitment to ensuring a welcoming and inclusive work environment.

The company is currently providing a training programme specific to sexual orientation and gender identity issues, and is also developing programmes and policies that will assist with the integration and smooth transition of transgender employees. Since 2016, Ford has offered training on unconscious bias to help employees understand when they might be forming stereotypes about certain people outside of their conscious awareness and showing bias as a result.

Ford’s commitment to creating the right culture is viewed as a strategic imperative to the company’s future success. To that end, every corporate officer at Ford has a diversity, equity and inclusion objective to actively cultivate a culture of belonging.

“Here at Ford, caring for each other includes ensuring that every Ford team member feels respected and appreciated,” said Peter Godsell, vice president, HR, Ford of Europe. “When we can bring our authentic selves to work, we do our best work.”

Key milestones for Ford GLOBE in Europe

- 1999 – Ford GLOBE members participate in the Cologne PRIDE Parade for the first time
- 2001 – Ford implements Domestic Partnership Benefits Scheme, providing same-sex couples with equal rights in all Ford policies
- 2010 – Ford of Germany sponsors the Gay Games in Cologne
- 2015 – All-new Ford Mustang wins [“Gay Car of the Year” Award](#) in Europe
- 2020 – Ford of Britain launch Transitioning at Work policy

2021 – In the UK, GLOBE is a founding member of a new cross-automotive sector LGBTIQ+ network

2021 – Ford GLOBE Germany celebrates 25th anniversary

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About Ford Motor Company

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Ford of Europe is responsible for producing, selling and servicing Ford brand vehicles in 50 individual markets and employs approximately 43,000 employees at its wholly owned facilities and consolidated joint ventures and approximately 55,000 people when unconsolidated businesses are included. In addition to Ford Motor Credit Company, Ford Europe operations include Ford Customer Service Division and 14 manufacturing facilities (10 wholly owned facilities and four unconsolidated joint venture facilities). The first Ford cars were shipped to Europe in 1903 – the same year Ford Motor Company was founded. European production started in 1911.

Ford in Belgium & Luxemburg

Ford Belgium distributes Ford vehicles and Ford original parts in Belgium & Luxemburg, since 1922. Ford Lommel Proving Ground is the lead test facility for validation of all Ford models in Europe, with approximately 390 employees.

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