FCSI Germany/Austria celebrates its 20-year anniversary. Four key people: from when the organisation began to the present day and beyond, talk about the impact of the unit and where it is heading.

**GERHARD FRANZEN FCSI**

Founding president

FCSI Germany was founded on 20 November 1999. A group of a dozen consultants, already organised in a group called BIG, were interested in a broader view of the market and an international exchange with similarly oriented partners on different levels.

We looked around the globe and we got in touch with FCSI Switzerland, initially intending to create a unit in the German speaking area. After a few meetings we became aware of our different interests – Switzerland was designer focused while Germany was more consultant oriented. A decision was made to found our own unit. I was the first president and today I am still proud of the decision of this group to join FCSI. In Germany there was a need to fulfil some tricky steps. This done, step by step we approached FCSI Europe, FCSI Worldwide and the other units already in existence. We became involved in the different groups and we successfully shared our ideas and experiences and learnt from each other. We became FCSI Germany/Austria in September 2004 when a few Austrian consultants joined us. The first milestone was to implement the code of ethics in our German bylaws. Another was the second board election. This showed us that we were on the right track. The next milestone was to fix the exam to become a professional member in our bylaws. This is the biggest and most important tool to demonstrate our competence against all other consultants in Germany. The unit organised the Europe conference at Berlin and the EAME conference at Marrakesh.

We live in a changing world and structures change faster than you can breathe. Clients’ demands grow every day. It is almost impossible to be up to date without the mutual help, assistance and exchange of experience with specialised partners.

**FRANK WAGNER FCSI**

Current president

One of the most important milestones for me is agreeing to have no equipment exhibitions in our annual meetings. We increased the time for networking by increasing the time for breaks and shared experiences. This helped us to understand the FCSI motto: we share, we support, we inspire. But the most important milestone is that we all agreed on a vision for our unit. I benefit a lot from the support we get from each other as members. It helps me to see trends or threats, and makes me more professional. Helping colleagues is helping our industry and my company to stay competitive.

The foodservice industry is small compared to all the other big industries in Germany and Austria. We need to stay united if we want to have a public presence. Everybody uses restaurants, cafes, canteens, market halls or hotels. Our influence on political or technological changes is strong when we stick together. It helps the industry stay competitive in a global market.

The biggest changes in the industry in Germany since our launch are the changes in food safety laws, which affect how we design kitchens and operate restaurants. The kitchens have become smaller and smaller, technology and food safety have become much more important in design, equipment and operation. We have worked hard this year to build a new plan for the future of our unit. We have asked both corporate and professional members what they expect from us and FCSI. Our ambitious vision is that there will be an FCSI member involved in every hospitality project in Germany and in Austria.

**GERHARD KRAMER**

Project director, Rational, representative for Allied members

The main benefit for me being a part of FCSI Germany/Austria is the great professional network. Of course, it is the network between the industry and the consultants and planners but it is very much also the personal network among the industry members. Since the FCSI is really like a family, we all learn from each other and we help each other.

It is so important to have this close professional and personal relationship because it enables us all to learn from each other. Young people who enter this industry learn much faster as a result of the network. The biggest change for the future is that far fewer young people start their professional life in this industry. It will be increasingly important that well-educated consultants, planners and industry members are taking care of the young, talented people.

**CATHARINA SALZMANN**

Student

Personally, FCSI gives me an opportunity to get to contact with great companies that I might be interested in working for in future. Through FSCI I have the chance to expand my network of industry experts from all over the world and also to learn from their vision. The exchange of knowledge makes a great contribution to the foodservice sector worldwide.

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**Top: Germany/Austria unit AGM in 2016**

**Above: Some of the members pose for a photograph on the initiative for Allied members in Nabilla in 2018**

**Right: Frank Wagner (speaker) and Gerhard Kramer in a meeting at the HOFEX in 2017**

**Below right: The founding board pictured in 1999**