

## ‘Bridging Managers’ connecting Germany and Ukraine – a successful pilot project enters its second round

Eliminating obstacles – building bridges: this is a brief summary of Partnering in Business with Germany’s special initiative for Ukraine that enabled 37 refugee managers from Ukraine to do eight-week internships in German companies in Berlin and Düsseldorf in autumn 2023.



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Skilled and qualified decision-makers are indispensable for the reconstruction of Ukraine and for the process of bringing the country closer to the EU. This is where the special initiative for Ukraine taken by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action comes in, bringing together German companies and Ukrainian managers. Both sides gain new insights into each other’s business culture and business environment and hatch ideas for cooperation together.

A new edition of the successful pilot project is scheduled for 2024.

The key to the successful cooperation lay in matching companies and participants based on the respective industries and the skills and qualifications of the Ukrainian participants. The Ukrainian colleagues much appreciated the fact that their professional opinion was sought. It also brought them a step closer to continuing their normal careers.

### Information

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Yuliia Chernetzka and Georgiy Vaydanych did an internship with Boreal Light in Berlin and developed an idea for a mobile, hybrid water purification plant for drinking water. “Over those eleven weeks, we built very good contacts with German business organisations and can now draw on different networks, including the Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations, the Berlin Chamber of Industry and Commerce and Berlin Partner. We had the feeling that we are building bridges between German companies and the Ukrainian



Yuliia Chernetzka and Georgiy Vaydanych presenting their idea for a new project ©GIZ/Jens Jeske

business community”, says Georgiy Vaydanych, summarising his experience of the last few months.

Another project, which is about entering the Ukrainian castings market, is being planned by Maksym Grytsenko and his host company Südguss in Saxony. Castings are in great demand in a country whose railway system, water supply and energy system, including the gas and oil sectors, have been severely damaged.

For the German host companies, participating in the special initiative has been about more than just social responsibility: they have also identified ideas for future cooperation with Ukrainian companies. Sums up Silvio von Krüchten, CEO of i-ways: “We were able to cooperate with our two participants on an equal footing. It was obvious that both are experienced managers.” He saw offering the internship as an investment into the future that will allow him to position himself as a first mover on the Ukrainian market. Other German companies have also gained valuable new insights into the Ukrainian business environment. In several cases, the internships have resulted in new contacts with Ukrainian companies. The sector network for optical technologies and microsystems technology Optec Berlin-Brandenburg (OpTecBB), for instance, already was part of an international network, but the Ukrainian participant was able to add to that network in a meaningful way by supporting systematic contacts with the Ukrainian photonics cluster.

Even before the Russian attack on 24 February 2022, there was already close cooperation and partnership between the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action and Ukraine. In response to Russia’s brutal war of aggression, the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action intensified and adjusted its support. ‘Bridge builders’ are of major importance in the field of promoting foreign trade and investment, especially where complex business relations such as rebuilding entire neighbourhoods in war zones or the reconstruction of infrastructure are concerned. The special initiative for Ukraine, which is part of Germany’s activities to promote foreign trade and investment, and its ‘bridge builders’ help expand business relations between German companies and Ukraine in spite of the ongoing war.

The lessons learned during the pilot round in autumn



Closing event at the Düsseldorf Chamber of Industry and Commerce ©GIZ/Björn Hickmann

2023 will prove valuable for Partnering in Business with Germany's next "special initiative 2.0" for Ukraine: "The possibilities arising for German companies in a crisis region are not obvious and tend to unfold over a longer period of time", analyses Dr Linda von Delhaes-Guenther, CEO of AHP International, who took charge of a group of Ukrainian managers participating in the programme in Berlin. "We are therefore very grateful that we were able to find companies that were a perfect match for our participants, allowing both sides to benefit."

If you are interested in applying to join the programme as a participant or as a company, please watch this website. The application process for the new round will start soon.

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