

Business cooperation: The Special Initiative for Ukraine enters its second round

At the end of January, around 40 Ukrainian refugee managers and 33 German companies started a unique new edition of the Special Initiative for Ukraine of *Partnering in Business with Germany* in Berlin and Düsseldorf. The aim is to establish and strengthen business relations between Germany and Ukraine.



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Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) form the backbone of both the German and Ukrainian economies. The German Federal Government is keen to ensure that German companies maintain and, where possible, expand their business relations with Ukraine, despite the ongoing war. As part of the initiative, the Ukrainian managers will spend eight weeks working within German companies. During this period, they will gain valuable insights into German business culture and collaborate with their host companies to develop business partnerships – a genuine win-win situation. Anife Muzafarova, one of the participating entrepreneurs, explained her motivation for joining the initiative: “My goal is to grow professionally so that I can deliver even greater benefits to the company, our customers, and the countries of Germany and Ukraine.”

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Robert Butschen from the Düsseldorf Chamber of Industry and Commerce provides insights into trade relations between Ukraine and North Rhine-Westphalia

The differences in corporate management practices between Ukraine and Germany are significant. Ukrainian participants therefore act as bridging managers. “German companies often encounter cultural hurdles. The special initiative of the *Partnering in Business with Germany* programme provides a fantastic opportunity to invite these bridging managers into companies to help overcome cultural differences and foster promising business connections,” explained Robert Butschen from the Düsseldorf Chamber of Industry and Commerce (IHK Düsseldorf).

at the launch event in Düsseldorf. ©GIZ/Andreas Dobsloff

The 2023 pilot phase of the special initiative already yielded several cooperation projects with German host companies. These projects allowed participants to gain new insights into the Ukrainian business environment and establish new business contacts. A key factor behind this success was the careful matching of Ukrainian participants with German host companies based on industry alignment, professional skills, and qualifications.

The overarching objective of the programme is to strengthen Ukraine's economy, bring the country closer to the EU single market, and promote sustainable cooperation between German and Ukrainian businesses. The Special Initiative for Ukraine thus serves not only as a platform for professional exchange but also as a foundation for a shared, prosperous future.

Further information on the Special Initiative for Ukraine: [Special Initiative to strengthen Ukraine's economy – Partnering in business](#)

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