NRW Business Forum Ukraine: business cooperation as key to the future and to reconstruction

At the NRW Business Forum Ukraine, which was hosted by the Chamber of Industry and Commerce (IHK) *Mittlerer Niederrhein* in Neuss on 27 January 2026, it became clear that business cooperation between German and Ukrainian enterprises is an important lever for resilience, reconstruction and sustainable growth on both sides.

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The event was aimed at German companies, in particular from North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), which are interested in working together with Ukrainian partners. Especially small and medium-sized enterprises from the region showed great interest in the event.

At the forum, the *Partnering in Business with Germany* programme presented its services to help German enterprises to do business with Ukrainian partners. Many participants used the opportunity to inform themselves about specific possibilities to enter the Ukrainian market and to establish initial contacts.

Clear signals from business and government

Jürgen Steinmetz, managing director of the *IHK Mittlerer Niederrhein*, underlined the significance of joint efforts. He put it in a nutshell by saying that big issues and great challenges require cooperation.

H.E. Oleksii Makeiev, Ambassador of Ukraine in Germany, pointed out that support alone is not sufficient. He said that business cooperation to the benefit of both sides is decisive. He underlined that Ukrainian enterprises are innovative and attractive partners for German firms. At the same time, he said, the business community is a key factor for the resilience, reconstruction and economic stability of Ukraine. He called upon German enterprises to become active in Ukraine now rather than to wait, as people in Ukraine noticed and appreciated those companies which are already contributing to Ukraine's economy. Business activities can begin at a low level, embedded in local ecosystems. and subsequently be scaled up.

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He also pointed out that many wide-spread assumptions about Ukraine were not true.

Guido Reinsch (left), responsible for Ukraine in the Partnering in Business with Germany programme, in discussion with company representatives ©GIZ/Tobias Knubben

Ms Mona Neubaur, Minister for Economic Affairs, Industry, Climate Action and Energy of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, underlined the great respect enjoyed by the Ukrainian people. She pointed out the clear win-win situation for Ukraine and North Rhine-Westphalia, making the point that investments in Ukraine are investments in a future member state of the European Union. She reaffirmed that North Rhine-Westphalia stands firmly by Ukraine's side, and that together both sides become stronger.

North Rhine-Westphalia is already the most important trading partner of Ukraine in Germany. Around 300 companies from North Rhine-Westphalia are currently active in Ukraine. There are promising prospects for cooperation in a broad range of sectors, including IT, renewable energy, energy efficiency in buildings, the construction industry, the healthcare sector, logistics and food production. Exactly at this interface, the *Partnering in Business with Germany* programme helps German and Ukrainian enterprises to initiate business in a structured way and to establish robust partnerships.

In 2026, four business delegations with a total of around 60 participants from mechanical engineering, the construction industry, the food sector and the healthcare sector are expected to visit Germany in the context of the programme. The NRW Business Forum Ukraine has again shown how important face-to-face encounters, reliable networks and specific business prospects are for successful and sustainable cooperation between Germany and Ukraine.

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Partnering in Business with Germany

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