South Africa: the gateway to the African continent

As the geopolitical landscape shifts, the importance of diversifying markets is growing – for both South Africa and Germany alike. Against this backdrop, the second meeting of the German-South African Steering Committee took place in Berlin on 11 June 2025, with a clear focus on deepening bilateral economic ties.

20.06.2025

Representatives came together to reflect on the achievements of *Partnering in Business with Germany*, including the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWE), the South African Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (dtic), the Federal Foreign Office, the South African Embassy, the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK), the German-African Business Association, and two dynamic entrepreneurs from a South African delegation. Deputy Director-General at the dtic, Willem Van der Spuy, highlighted the value of the programme: "*Partnering in Business with Germany* has been a success story for us. It is not only about exporting to Germany, but also about building relationship with German companies and value chain cooperation." The programme provides a strong platform for collaboration in key sectors such as digitalisation, healthcare, renewable energy, food processing and mechanical engineering. In addition, the alumni network of former participants helps to strengthen bilateral links.

Information

Countries

South Africa

Kategorie

Programme news

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Head of Sub-Saharan Africa and Development Cooperation at the DIHK, Heiko Schwiderowski, emphasised: "In times of global challenge, German companies must diversify their markets. *Partnering in Business with Germany* plays a crucial role in this, connecting South African companies with potential German business partners."

South Africa remains a strategically important partner for Germany thanks to its geopolitical position,

economic potential and access to broader African markets. It is an important trading partner for Germany in sub-Saharan Africa and also serves as a hub facilitating access to other African markets. More than 600 German companies operate in South Africa, employing nearly 100,000 people directly and creating a similar number of indirect jobs. For South Africa, Germany is the second most important bilateral trading partner.

Looking to the future, the *Partnering in Business with Germany* programme will place a stronger focus on engaging South African small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that are eager to grow internationally and form business partnerships with German companies. The aim is to promote trade and investment, boost joint value creation, and contribute to sustainable, long-term economic cooperation between the two countries. Head of the Directorate for MENA, North Africa, trade fairs and development policy at the BMWE, Dr Dorothea Schütz, put it succinctly: “For many German companies, success in South Africa is often the key to success across the African continent.”

Find out more about the *Partnering in Business with Germany* programme with South Africa: : [Südafrika – Partnering in Business with Germany]

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Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy

Partnering in Business with Germany

'Partnering in Business with Germany' is implemented on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy by

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