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Together We Are Resilient: The European Union supports Ukraine's SMEs in times of war

On 29 February 2024, the EU Delegation to Ukraine organised a networking event called 'EU for Ukrainian SMEs: Together We Are Resilient!' The event closed the ['Together We Are Resilient. Together we are Europe'](#) communication campaign, which was running from October 2023 to the present day and informed Ukrainians about the support provided by the European Union to small and medium-sized enterprises during the war.

During the networking event, participants were presented with the results of the second foresight session '[Small and Medium-sized Businesses in the Process of European Integration: Scenarios and Strategies](#)'. More than 80 foresight participants representing business, government, EU-funded projects, international organisations and experts discussed the key factors driving SME development and defined and described scenarios and strategies for its further development in the context of European integration. The retention and development of mass entrepreneurship, i.e. small and medium-sized businesses was established as a key factor for positive scenarios.

*"Ukraine is fighting off a ruthless aggressor. At the same time, it is working on its recovery, demonstrating amazing resilience and vitality, implementing reforms and preparing for EU accession. This is the choice of the people of Ukraine. The European Union has supported and will continue to support Ukrainians on this path. In the middle of the full-scale war, we are working for our common future. We are at the beginning of a challenging path - negotiations on Ukraine's accession to the EU and reconstruction. To make this path easier, we have established a new instrument for reliable financial support – the Ukraine Facility worth EUR 50 billion - which enters into force from 1 March",- said **Stefan Schleuning**, Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to Ukraine.*

For many years, the EU has been cooperating with the Government of Ukraine and civil society to promote key reforms, improve legislation, create a business-friendly environment and promote investments, in particular through support to the [Better Regulation Delivery Office](#) (BRDO), the [Entrepreneurship and Export Promotion Office](#), government agencies, Diia.Business offices across the regions, as well as in cooperation with the [Union of Ukrainian Entrepreneurs](#), the [European Business Association](#) and other dedicated associations.

Since the onset of the full-scale Russian invasion in February 2022, EU support to Ukraine's economy has been focused on helping SMEs face fundamentally new challenges: from maintaining or repurposing production to relocating businesses, adaptation to operations in the context of limited technology, labour shortages, loss of markets and partnerships. Thanks to the support of the EU, 68% of Ukrainian SMEs continue operating during the war, adjusted to working in relocation and in the de-occupied territories, restored disrupted partnerships, and entered EU markets. Many small and medium-sized enterprises are run by women and young entrepreneurs, and the EU pays special attention to them, as well as to veteran-led businesses.

Under the [EU4Business](#): SME Recovery, Competitiveness and Internationalization programme, more than 1,100 grants totalling EUR 5.5 million were awarded from February 2022 to December 2023 to provide comprehensive support to small and medium-sized businesses, with a total of EUR 7 million in direct grant assistance.

As of today, there are 15 bilateral EU projects aimed at helping businesses in Ukraine with a total budget of over EUR 92 million.



In addition, Ukraine is involved in several pan-European programmes which also include business opportunities:

Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine

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The European Union is made up of 27 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of 50 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders.



- [Horizon Europe](#), which focuses on science, research and business innovation
- [Creative Europe](#) supporting culture and creative industries
- [Digital Europe](#) focusing on SME digitalisation tools
- Single Market Programme - fostering business competitiveness. As part of this programme, the Ukraine Ready4EU initiative was launched in 2023 with a total budget of EUR 7.5 million, including two [calls for proposals](#):
 - [Business Bridge](#) (EUR 4.5 million), which enables Ukrainian SMEs to receive vouchers for participation in international trade shows;
 - [Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs Ukraine](#) (EUR 3 million) for young business people who want to explore foreign business experience.

Despite the significant risks for financial institutions, Ukrainian SMEs, in particular those operating in the liberated territories and frontline communities, have been able to take out loans through the EIB and EBRD support mechanisms.

In recognition of the resilience and achievements of Ukrainian SMEs involved in the EU4Business programmes, **Iryna Hubarets**, Sector Manager – Competition and Economic Cooperation, Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine, presented **Business Recognition Awards 2023** in the following categories:

- «International market access» - **Organic Milk**
- «From export learning-to-doing» - **Rekava**
- «From competitors to partners clustering» - **Lviv cluster of medical business**
- «Business diversification into new area» - **Prime Snack**
- «Business boosting» - **Edelvika**
- «National finalists of 2023 European Enterprise Promotion Awards»: **LadyFest** та **UNIC** (Ukrainian Network of Integrity and Compliance)
- «Horizon Europe EIC Accelerator winner»: **Releaf Paper**
- «Driver of deregulation reform»: **BRDO**
- «Systemic development of entrepreneur support centers»: **Diia.Business Entrepreneur Support Center in Bucha**
- «Pioneer solution for easy and transparent distribution of EU4Business grants»: **Business Development Fund (BDF)**.

Background

For more information on EU support for SMEs: eu4ukraine.eu and eu4business.org.ua

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