

*Ernst REICHEL,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
of the Federal Republic of Germany to Ukraine*

DEEPENING OF PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN GERMANY AND UKRAINE

Germany was among the very first countries to recognize Ukraine's independence. Today, Germany is one of Ukraine's most important partners and friends.

Germany and Ukraine celebrated their 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations last year. Because of the transformation of the formerly established Consulate General into an Embassy, the former German Consul General, Graf von Bassewitz, on 7 February 1992 became the first residing Ambassador accredited to Kyiv. At our ceremonial reception the former Foreign Minister of the first and last democratically elected Government of the German Democratic Republic, Markus Meckel, recalled the different stages of the relationship between recently reunified Germany and recently independent Ukraine. With a series of events including radio shows; a poster campaign depicting 25 facts connecting Germany and Ukraine; an essay contest on "25 years together – further perspectives"; and a final joint concert of the rock bands "Trümmer" and "Vymir", we celebrated our relationship. By the way: These events came on top of the yearly "German Weeks" with their overall 75 cultural and social events in 14 cities all over Ukraine the German Embassy has been organizing since 2013.

After having celebrated 25 years of diplomatic relations in 2017, the year 2018, surprisingly, gives an occasion to remember 100 years of diplomatic relations! Indeed, 100 years ago, Germany played a central role in pushing out Bolshevik forces after the Ukrainian declaration of independence in early 1918 and was among the 26 states recognizing Ukrainian independence in February 1918. However, the German role in these difficult and chaotic times in support of an independent Ukrainian state is controversial, as shortly after coming to the rescue of Ukraine, Germany supported a coup against the Ukrainian Popular Republic by Hetman Skoropadsky. The latter promised to serve German interests by making additional food supplies available to a Germany at war. This complicated part of our common history certainly deserves further exploration and discussion.

After Ukrainian independence in 1991, step by step, a whole range of instruments aimed at strengthening our bilateral relations was established. The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit – today's GIZ – started operating in Ukraine in 1993, accompanying and supporting the country on its transformation path ever since. GIZ opened a representation in 2009 and is to



Спільний концерт німецького гурту «Trümmer» та українського гурту «5 Вутір» на завершення Тижнів Німеччини в Україні 2017. На сцені «Trümmer». © Євгенія Люлько / Посольство Німеччини в Києві

Joint concert of German music band Trümmer and Ukrainian music band 5 Vymir at the end of Germany Weeks in Ukraine 2017. Trümmer is on stage. © Ievhenia Liulko / The Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Ukraine

day running one of its biggest portfolios worldwide, with a staff of more than 350 in Kyiv and seven regional hubs. Moreover, KfW Development Bank supports economic and social progress with specific funding programmes.

After the Revolution of Dignity, German commitment in the field of technical and financial cooperation increased dramatically. Since 2014, EUR 377 million were committed under bilateral Development Cooperation (2014: EUR 81 million, 2015: EUR 172 million, 2016: EUR 82.5 million, 2017: EUR 41.45 million). Particular attention was given to the situation of refugees with a programme “Fighting the Causes of Flight – Reintegration of Refugees”. Germany also became the largest bilateral contributor in humanitarian aid for the Donbas spending a total of EUR 74.2 million (2014: EUR 7.88 million, 2015: EUR 18.0 million, 2016: EUR 25.3 million, 2017: EUR 23.02 million).

In its cooperation efforts, Germany focuses on three main areas: 1. sustainable economic development; 2. democracy, civil society, public administration and decentralization and 3. energy efficiency. Germany has also greatly expanded its support to Ukraine in dealing with the crisis in the east of the country. For example, the rehabilitation of the municipal infrastructure destroyed by the

conflict or particularly used by internally displaced people, is being supported with a total of EUR 55 million. Germany also provided winter-proof accommodation for currently about 2,300 people. Other projects serve to promote employment and create housing for internally displaced persons.

In the sphere of cultural and educational relations, the Goethe-Institut in Kyiv was opened in 1993. The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) has fostered the exchange of students, granted scholarships to Ukrainian students and developed an academic course for European and German studies in collaboration with Jena University. Currently more than 70 universities in Ukraine benefit from DAAD's funding when it comes to their bilateral cooperation projects with German partner universities.

The Internationale Stiftung für Rechtliche Zusammenarbeit (IRZ) already started operating in Ukraine during the last months of the Soviet Union. It supports the transformation of the post-Soviet judiciary into a system corresponding to Western legal standards by promoting contacts with German legal experts, bringing legal advice and expertise to Ukraine and organizing seminars.

In addition, a "German Advisory Group for Ukraine" has been offering extensive expertise and advice to Ukrainian state agencies on economic, social and political issues since 2005.

With a whole range of visiting and training programs for different target groups – including regional administration officers, managers of Ukrainian enterprises, lawyers and judges – we try to introduce German experiences and practices to Ukrainian decision-makers. The Embassy has initiated a cooperation with the Verkhovna Rada, allowing for an internship of German graduate students. After a successful start in 2017, the programme in 2018 is giving three young Germans the possibility to study Ukrainian political life for five months from the very heart of the political process. A similar programme for Ukrainian graduates is organized every year by the German Bundestag.

As a measure for the people of our two countries, the year 2017/2018 is dedicated to the German language in Ukraine and, at the same time, to the Ukrainian language in Germany. It's a truism that learning a foreign language today is becoming ever more important. In view of the new level of exchange between the European Union and Ukraine, this particularly applies also to German. We also hope that Ukrainian would get more of the attention it deserves in Germany.

Finally, Ukraine has been a partner for German business since its independence. The Delegation of German Commerce and Industry was established in 1993. In 2016, this institution was transformed into a fully-fledged German-Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce and Industry – marking the growing and sustainable interest of German business in the Ukrainian market. As of today, hundreds of German companies are active in Ukraine with representations and affiliates, many of them with investments. As an example, German car parts man-

ufacturers have created more than 30.000 jobs, mainly in Western Ukraine. Other production facilities have been built up by German companies in the chemical industry, the production of construction materials and in the agricultural sector.

In 2017, German-Ukrainian trade continued its recovery, thus compensating for losses in 2014 and 2015. Growing by more than 22% as compared to 2016, the trade volume in 2017 has reached more than 6.6 billion euros. Germany is a major destination for Ukrainian exports (number three among EU countries) and Ukraine's biggest source of imports in the EU. It is also among the most important foreign investors in Ukraine.

The truly distinguishing factor in the German-Ukrainian relationship is the intensity of the political dialogue and the outstanding political interest Germany takes in a stable, peaceful and democratic development of a sovereign Ukraine. Geography and history are certainly two defining elements in this respect. As a formerly divided country, Germany arguably has gained more than any other country from the end of the Cold War. It has a deep insight into the challenges of transformation processes while bringing along the experience and tradition of a state anchored in the Euro-Atlantic community of values since the Federal Republic's foundation. That is why reunified Germany committed very early to the support of the transformation processes in Central and Eastern Europe, including in Ukraine.

In this vein, Germany has dedicated particular interest to the aspirations for democracy, freedom and the rule of law in our Eastern neighbours, including the Orange revolution and the Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine. When a violent repression of the Maidan revolution was looming, the German, French and Polish Foreign Ministers together urgently flew to Kyiv brokering a deal to end the bloodshed. The agreement, in effect, led to the flight of President Yanukovich and his closest allies.

Since then, Germany has been a central supporter of reforms in Ukraine. An unparalleled number of high ranking visitors, including the Foreign Minister who visited Kyiv six times in 2014 alone, but also the Chancellor and the Federal President have been coming to Kyiv. Since the Maidan revolution, German cooperation funding has multiplied. Today, Germany is one of the biggest bilateral donors in addition to its large role in EU funding. Germany established an expert group at the level of State Secretary in various fields ranging from health care to agriculture allowing for high ranking direct talks on cooperation. In order to foster direct relations between people, Germany adopted its own Eastern Partnership programme in 2014, of which Ukraine has consistently been attributed the lion's share. In summer 2017, upon a request by Ukraine to the G7 countries, Germany appointed the former Prime Minister of Saxony, Georg Milbradt, as a special advisor on decentralisation, reform of civil service and good governance.

From 2014 onward Germany has steadfastly resisted all attacks on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. Germany has not recognized the



Німеччина профінансувала придбання восьми екскаваторів для комунального водопостачання в Маріуполі, Волновасі, Мар'їнці та Красногорівці. Для купівлі екскаваторів Дитячим фондом ООН (ЮНІСЕФ) Федеральний уряд Німеччини виділив 465 тис. євро. Постійний заступник Посла Німеччини у Києві Вольфганг Біндзайль разом із Головою Представництва ЮНІСЕФ в Україні Джованною Барберіс символічно передав ключі від екскаваторів заступнику директора КП «Вода Донбасу» Віктору Заводовському. © Посольство Німеччини

Germany financed the acquisition of eight water supply excavators for Mariupol, Volnovakha, Mariinka and Krasnohorivka. The Federal Government of Germany has allocated 465 thousand euros for the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) to purchase the excavators. Permanent Deputy Ambassador of Germany to Ukraine, Wolfgang Bindzail, together with Head of the UNICEF Representative Office in Ukraine, Giovanna Barberis symbolically handed the keys to the excavator to Viktor Zavadovskyi, Deputy Director of the ME "Water of Donbas". © The Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany

illegal annexation of Crimea and will not do so. It supports Ukraine's interests in bringing up the situation in Crimea, including the human rights situation, in the relevant international bodies.

Above all, Germany has engaged at an unprecedented scale to a peaceful solution of the conflict in Ukrainian Donbas. On 4 June 2014, during the 70th commemoration of the Allies' landing in Normandy, Germany, together with France, established the so-called "Normandy Format" that provides for a framework for dialogue between Russia and Ukraine with France and Germany as facilitators. This format has proven useful at countless occasions and significantly contained the ongoing bloodshed. It was particular instrumental during the Minsk negotiations in February 2015, allowing for an agreement that showed the way for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Certainly, the so-called "Minsk package of Measures" could not offer a perfect solution from a Ukrainian perspective, as it was the result of a negotiation process under difficult circumstances and had to be a compromise.

However, it provided for an end of the large scale fighting and a starting point for further negotiations.

By contributing to the establishment of the Trilateral Working Group (Ukraine, Russia, OSCE), meeting regularly in Minsk and discussing practical measures in the security, political, humanitarian and economic sphere, Germany supported another channel for minimizing the consequences and working towards a peaceful solution of the ongoing military conflict. In 2016, being fully aware of the challenges in face of the biggest crisis of confidence in the Euro-Atlantic area since the end of the Cold War, Germany took over the Chairmanship of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

After more than three years of negotiations, a lasting solution to the conflict in Ukrainian Donbas has not been reached yet. This is certainly not a satisfactory result. However, up to date, the Minsk process, seconded by the Normandy format meetings, remains the only mechanism that allows for a negotiation process, while the Minsk package of measures stays on the table as the only agreed document containing a perspective for the end of the conflict. Within these frameworks, the German Government has consistently and unequivocally supported Ukraine in its legitimate pursuit of a settlement restoring its territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Chancellor Merkel and the respective Federal Foreign Ministers have shown remarkable personal engagement and commitment in pursuing this course.