

Business Scouts for Development

Networking. Investing. Developing.

Private sector creates prospects

The private sector is an important partner for development cooperation and efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Alongside official development cooperation, German and other European businesses can provide additional, necessary funding by investing in partner countries. Competitive economies in partner countries create jobs, giving people an income. Through innovative solutions and expertise, private companies can help partner countries to tackle societal challenges, including climate change mitigation, food and nutrition security, social standards and digitalisation.

Cooperation benefits the private sector, too. Many partner countries offer significant potential as future sales markets, attractive production locations and reliable partners in global supply chains. Sustainable commitment pays off here in the long term, underpinning stability and thus helping to ensure sound conditions for investment. Partnerships with local companies are particularly important. These companies are familiar with local requirements and can open doors to new markets, for example in the fields of health, climate, energy, water and environmental technology. At the same time, private businesses at local level benefit from the expertise of German and European businesses. They forge new business relations and gain access to new markets. Cooperation therefore creates a win-win situation for all involved.

However, the resources, networks and expertise needed to leverage this potential are often unavailable. The German Government therefore aims to use complementary approaches rooted in foreign trade promotion and development cooperation to develop support and funding options that make sustainable economic commitment in partner countries easier.

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Information about the programme



Title	Business Scouts for Development
Commissioned by	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Country	In around 40 countries worldwide
Overall term	January 2021 to December 2023

A strong network

To make the services more accessible, create a global network and establish an international contact structure for matters relating to development cooperation with the private sector, the successful work of five programmes (“ExperTS”, “EZ-Scouts”, “Global Business Network”, “Skilled Crafts and Trade Network 4 Africa” and “Creating Perspectives”) will be merged in 2021 on behalf of BMZ. This pooling of approaches and resources is the basis for the future direction of the new Business Scouts for Development Programme.

The Business Scouts will work in partner institutions in the private sector and in development cooperation structures in around 40 countries across the globe. By networking local and German/European companies and launching and supporting specific cooperation projects, they will improve companies’ access to new markets and drive forward sustainable development in partner countries.

Cooperation partners on an equal footing

To cooperate successfully with private-sector actors, development cooperation must be able to respond appropriately to the sector’s specific needs. The involvement of central associations and industry associations (including the Association of German

Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHK), the Federation of German Industries (BDI), the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZDH) and the Federation of German Wholesale and Foreign Trade (BGA)) as partners in development cooperation ensures that there is close dialogue with the formal private sector and that its needs are taken into account. The programme benefits particularly from relations that have already been developed over many years and the trust nurtured by the predecessor programmes with partner institutions and private-sector actors, which will now be continued and strengthened strategically.



The Business Scouts work in Germany and abroad. Within Germany, they advise companies via the central associations of German business, chambers of commerce and industry, chambers of crafts and trades, industry associations, state-level associations and foundations. In partner countries they work with German chambers of commerce abroad, delegations of German industry and commerce, and German development cooperation offices. Cooperation with European private-sector actors is being strategically developed.

Business Scouts therefore play a unique, pivotal role. They are familiar with the local conditions and regulatory structures and the requirements of the private sector, while also being directly networked with German development cooperation on the ground. This can help to generate and harness new synergies.

Flexible and digital implementation

The merging of the five programmes combines all their

support services and increases efficiency in service delivery. The newly merged programme aims to achieve a high level of flexibility so that new priority areas can be addressed in line with demand and requirements.

The current priority areas are:

- Climate, energy, environment, water
- Health
- TVET and skilled crafts
- The agri-food sector
- Sustainable economic development
- Digitalisation
- Cooperation with foundation organizations
- Trade fair promotion

The programme has an adaptable structure and can identify innovative approaches and new topics with the private sector, and then integrate and implement them swiftly. Implementing cooperation projects on the ground is therefore a central element of the merged programme, to specifically support improvements in living conditions in partner countries.

In view of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the programme is digitising its information, advisory and training services, and using digital platforms more and more. The online services of Business Scouts for Development are provided primarily through the matchmaking platform www.leverist.de.

An alliance for sustainable development

The programme is a tool for professional alliance management – a uniform contact structure makes two-way communication between the private sector and development cooperation easier and specifically fosters sustainable business commitment on development issues in developing countries and emerging economies. A complementary approach can therefore be taken with regard to relationships with key business actors and the interface with foreign trade promotion.

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