

## ESMT Berlin project breaks down walls of international market expansion

ESMT Berlin was founded by 25 leading global companies. Being a global leader today means not only having international operations, top products, great people, cutting-edge technologies, and corporate culture, but having a sustainable approach and developing projects which create a long-term social impact. Amid the biggest continental war in the last decades, the Russia-Ukraine war is expected to have a substantial impact on the [Ukrainian economy, decreasing it by 45%](#) in 2022, which emphasizes a strong need for business support in Ukraine.

The ESMT community has rallied to support Ukraine by searching for a sustainable initiative to support the Ukrainian economy and businesses. Together with the support of the ESMT community, Vitaliy Ishchuk, an ESMT student, Martha Ihlbrock, director of corporate communications at ESMT, and Grit Schreiber, head of operations at ESMT, developed the Ukraine Impact Project (UIP), an initiative aiming to support Ukrainian businesses with international expansion in wartime and afterward.

The project involves having pro bono consultants led by experienced mentors form project teams work in close collaboration with Ukrainian businesses to help them with international expansion. While consultants can benefit from gaining hands-on consulting experience, Ukrainian businesses receive a strong boost in their expansion activities. The pilot project took place from July 19 to August 30, 2022.

The key players of the pilot project were the mentors, as they were the on-the-court coaches, which was what made the project work. According to Max Müller, senior consultant, CVA, it is relevant today to conduct such a project where European professionals can give concrete help to businesses from Ukraine. Max's main tasks were to "structure the approaches of the teams and give feedback and high-level guidance." His key personal outcome of the project was "gaining new insights and ideas, as well as the potential recruitment of two prominent participants of the project."

Teams were created from volunteer master's and MBA students. ESMT unites people from all over the world and across businesses and this project did the same. Interacting with other consultants from different countries provided our students with the opportunity to experience diversity and exercise global thinking.

Gain an insight into the project from the perspective of our students as they share their experiences:

"The initiative was born from a provocation on how we could connect the knowledge and experiences of businesspeople from around the world with the challenges of some Ukrainian businesses, given the reality of war. The interaction with a local entrepreneur, aligned with the

mentorship of more experienced consultants, made the project even better. During the weeks of the project, I reflected on the need to adapt an already consolidated business model to a new logic, given an extreme change in the context where the company was dealing. Also, the sequence of crises, in the case of Ukraine's businesses, the pandemic, and war, taught me a lot about entrepreneurial resilience". – [Douglas Souza](#), CFO [Grupo Anga](#), Global MBA 2023 ESMT Berlin.

"The project is a great step that enables students who want to help struggling businesses by consulting and guiding them through a comprehensive plan and achievable results" – [Jad Soubra](#), Master in Management 2024 ESMT Berlin. He also emphasized that taking part in the project exposed him to new challenges and to new concepts that he may not have been previously introduced to.

"I have never learned so much in such a short time before... This project is a great learning opportunity for people who are passionate about helping businesses to expand internationally". – [Mansi Singh](#), former Deloitte consultant, Master in Management 2024 ESMT Berlin.

The project proved to be a success for the Ukrainian businesses that took part. [Advansys Group](#), an engineering and construction group of companies specializing in energy-efficient commercial real estate, decided to focus on its newly developed product - [Advansys SCADA](#). The project outcomes include a critical analysis of the product's competitiveness, a helicopter view of the critical process of finding new partners, and innovative ideas on the market entry with a list of potential partners.

Clarity Project, an open-source data startup, benefited from new business perspectives, a critical analysis of the value proposition for new markets, hands-on recommendations implemented during the project, as well as aligning their core team on international expansion. The time invested returned more than they expected.

ESMT has been established as an international platform for dialogue. This project is an example of how our mission is important: to develop entrepreneurial leaders who think globally, act responsibly, and respect individuals. This project will only be a sustainable success if we involve more businesses, educational establishments, and professionals from Germany, Europe, Ukraine, and the world. This is just a first step towards supporting people who need it. We need to grow to have an impact.

We would like to thank the project leads Vitaliy, Martha, and Grit for bringing this project to fruition. We would also like to express our gratitude to Corporate Value Associates, a founding partner of the initiative, for their professional support throughout the project development. If you are interested in learning more or would like to collaborate, please contact Vitaliy via email: [vitaliy.ishchuk@mim.esmt.org](mailto:vitaliy.ishchuk@mim.esmt.org).