

Fit for Partnership with Germany Journal

ISSUE 18
ENGLISH

MANAGER TRAINING PROGRAMME OF THE GERMAN FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS AND ENERGY

In Focus: Sustainable Business



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IN FOCUS IN THIS ISSUE:

Companies Contribute to Sustainable Development

Promoting sustainable development is the guiding principle of German government policy. The economy is an important driver and multiplier of sustainability.

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Dear Readers,

It has been known not only since the coronavirus pandemic: We all need to think and act in a more sustainable way in order to prevent future crises. The economy bears one part of the responsibility for this. This edition’s theme (starting on page 20) therefore illuminates how companies can contribute to sustainability from various perspectives.

It is with some pride that I can report that this year we were able to welcome executives from all 21 partner countries to the virtual Programme: a total of 51 groups with nearly 1,000 participants. You can read about what they experienced and learned in the “Germany” section. And it was even possible to hold some events in person, as a report on the meeting of Ukrainian partners in Kiev attests (page 16).

One highlight of recent months was the partner workshop with representatives from the MP’s partner countries. The valuable exchanges showed me once again that the MP is built on a solid foundation. That is also confirmed by feedback from our Egyptian partner: “The Programme is more than a business relationship, it’s a big international family.” Starting on page 5 you can read more about this two-day event.

I am especially pleased to present the first success stories from our partner countries Ethiopia and Chile. Despite the current crisis situation the two MP alumni succeeded in breaking through in the market – find out how on page 36.

I hope you enjoy reading our latest magazine. Feel free to send us your suggestions or questions about the articles to mp@giz.de.

Anne Jach-Kemps
Head of the Manager Training Programme



MP to Continue with Moldova



Dr Heinz Hetmeier (left) and Vadim Gumene at the signing in the Moldovan Ministry of Economy in Chisinau.

Germany and Moldova have extended their partnership as part of the Manager Training Programme (MP) to 2023. Dr Heinz Hetmeier, Deputy Director-General for European economic policy at the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi), and Vadim Gumene, State Sec-

retary at the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Moldova, signed a joint declaration to this effect in the Moldovan capital Chisinau on October 21, 2021.

“This is a good day for German-Moldovan economic relations,” Heinz Hetmeier

said afterwards. “Today, we and the new Moldovan government signed a joint declaration for the Manager Training Programme with Moldova. This ensures the Programme GIZ and Moldovan Chamber of Commerce and Industry have invested so much time and effort in will continue successfully for another three years,” Hetmeier noted. Vadim Gumene added: “We truly appreciate our German partners’ efforts on behalf of the Moldovan executives. Due to the “Fit for Partnership with Germany” Programme, our managers have gained the know-how needed to sustainably and successfully manage a business. This is especially important in the context of our country’s integration into the European and global economies.”

Moldova has been an MP partner since 2009. More than 350 Moldovan entrepreneurs have completed the Programme since it began.



MP Featured at the Caspian Europe Forum



The second Caspian Europe Forum took place on October 5 and 6. As a platform for promoting economic cooperation between Europe and the Caspian region, the hybrid event provided information on opportunities for cooperation in the

fields of energy, sustainability, logistics and infrastructure.

One forum entitled “Training made in Germany in the Caspian Region” invited German companies and organisations

from the education sector to present their products and services and discuss topics like digitisation, practical training, ways to increase employability, and the role of soft skills in international business relations. These included GIZ Project Manager Katrin Trushevskyy, who explained the many ways foreign and German companies benefit from the Manager Training Programme (MP). “The MP enables trusting, long-term partnerships,” Trushevskyy emphasised. Other speakers on the panel included Michael Dietrich from IeXsolar, Andreas Hurst from Festo Didactic, Prof Bertram Lohmüller from the Export-Akademie Baden-Württemberg, and Christian Schöldgen from LD Didactic.

Visitors learned more about the MP at a virtual booth and asked questions in the associated chat. All five countries that border the Caspian Sea – Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan – are MP partner countries.



International Partner Workshop for the 2022 Roll-Out

“The MP has a clear future”

Policy and implementing partners from the 21 Manager Training Programme countries met at two online workshops to discuss the innovations to the Programme planned for 2022 and to share their experiences carrying out the Programme during the pandemic. Around 150 participants, including representatives of German and foreign embassies, got together on screen on November 17 and 18. The German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) hosted the event.

“During the pandemic, the Manager Training Programme again proved to be an effective and internationally recognised instrument for promoting foreign trade. It adapted to the pandemic and the new needs of partners, and evolved accordingly,” State Secretary at the BMWi Claudia Dörr-Voß said as she welcomed the online guests. “The numbers show how well the Programme was received in its virtual format. In 2021, we worked with 51 groups and a total of about 1,000 participants,” Dörr-Voß said. On the second day of the workshop, Director-General for European Policy at the BMWi Dr Kirsten Scholl opened the meeting and talked about the current economic situation. “Cooperation between companies is the key to overcoming the ongoing

► crisis,” Scholl said, adding, “BMW i and GIZ have developed a new training concept for international managers. The MP has a clear future as a platform for German and foreign companies.”

Personal interactions essential

Head of the Programme Anne Jach-Kemps (GIZ) shared details on the new programme format and process on both days. “We want to use the experience from the pandemic and the associated boost in digitalisation to strengthen economic cooperation by consistently adapting modern teaching and learning techniques. We have incorporated feedback from our partners into improving the Programme.” Jach-Kemps added that the Programme would focus on bilateral meetings and sustainable alumni work in future. At the same time, she asserted, “personal exchange can never be replaced.” In 2022, the Programme will be launched in a social blended learning format, a combination of online and in-person modules. Here peer-to-peer exchange and advising among participants will be key training methods essential to successful learning and cooperation. A tutor-assisted implementation phase will help participants initiate changes in their companies and realise their cooperation plans with the German business community even more effectively. The Programme will conclude with a networking event with MP alumni and local German business institutions to meet the demand for long-term, sustainable, and stable networks. A new, unique learning platform (MP Campus) has been specifically tailored for the Programme and will support and enhance virtual training delivery while promoting communication among participants.

In virtual break-out rooms, conference participants met in smaller groups to discuss the concrete roll out of the adapted programme format, the role of partner organisations, and further programme development. They also talked about the variety of ways the MP has had an impact, the professional development of MP graduates, successful modernisation projects in participating SMEs in the partner countries, and the socio-economic effects. Some partners requested more attention be paid to companies from emerging sectors of the economy, and many said they would continue working to raise the



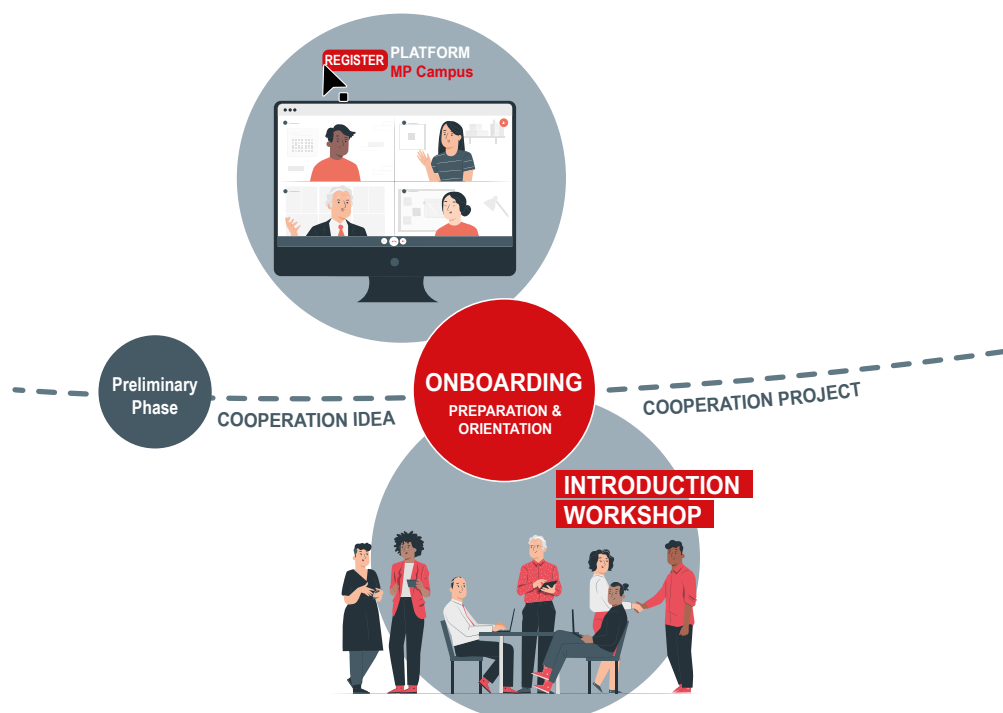
“Today we have not only strengthened our business ties; we have built on some personal ones too. We look forward to expanding all the online contacts with face-to-face visits soon.”

Yıldız Götze

Programme’s profile even higher in their home countries. A number of partner countries also expressed an interest in intensifying exchange amongst themselves.

The key to success: the partnership approach

In a panel discussion, representatives from the BMW i and partner countries talked about ways to strengthen partnerships and create new opportunities for cooperation, and how the MP can help SMEs cope with the economic challenges posed by the pandemic. Yıldız Götze, Head of Division at BMW i, thanked all the partners for their support. “The partnership approach with shared responsibility between Germany and the partner countries is what makes the Programme so successful,” she emphasised. Götze went on to praise the uniform, yet sufficiently flexible programme structure for all the countries involved, the



shared goals for the benefit of both sides, the sustainability created by continued co-operation, and international networking through the alumni associations as important factors in the Programme's continuing success and staying power. Finally, she also highlighted "the passion, because we all put our heart and soul into making the Programme more successful."

Representatives from partner organisations described their individual experiences with the online programme. "It has gained more and more acceptance among our entrepreneurs over time," Zaur Gardashov from the Azerbaijani partner organisation Small and Medium Business Development Agency (SMB) said. On the new programme format starting in 2022, he added, "This will allow us to take the MP to the next level. The combination of online and in-person elements will help our participants develop working relation-



Dr Kirsten Scholl



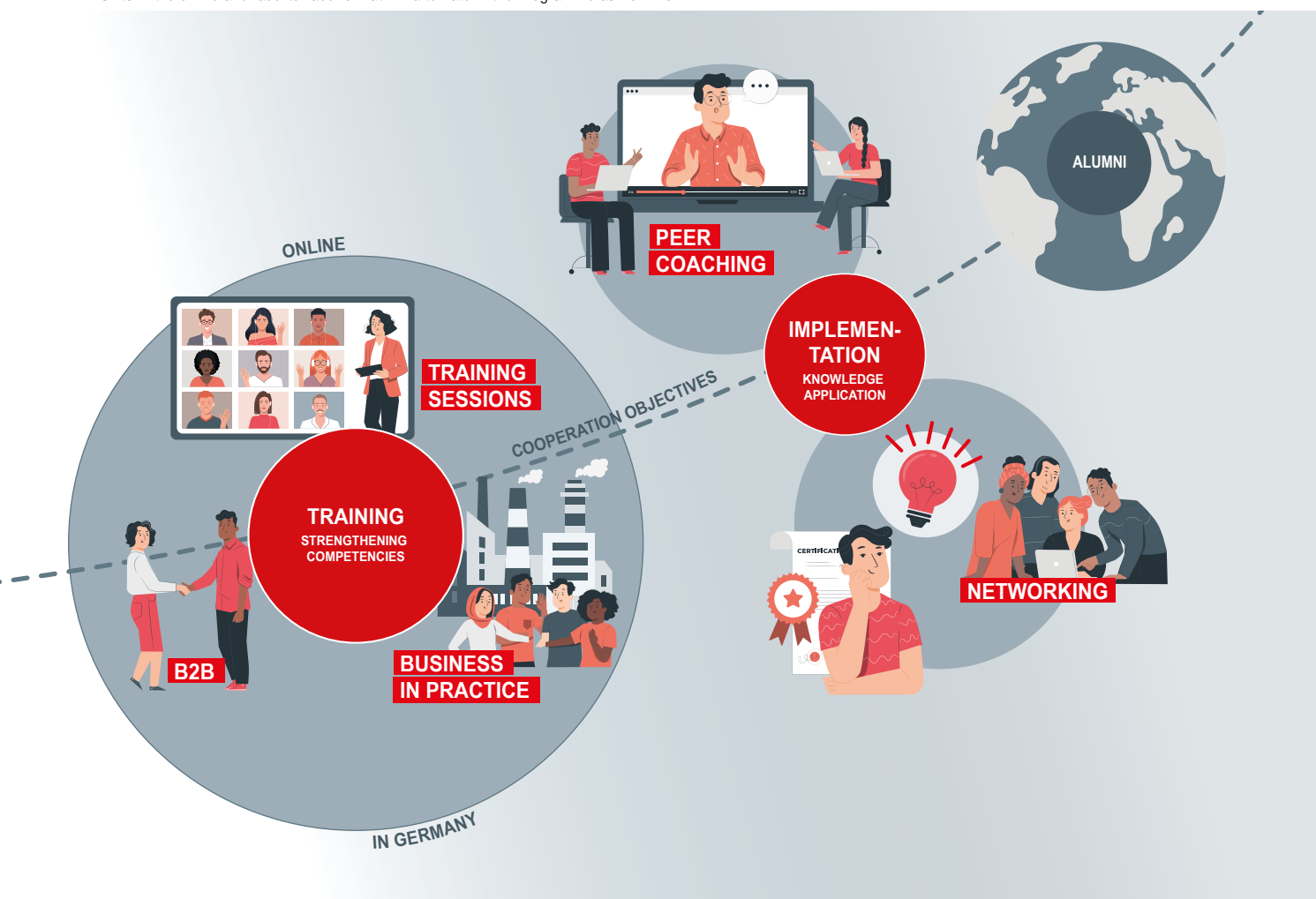
Claudia Dörr-Voß

ships with the German business community even more effectively." His colleague Mritunjay Kumar, who coordinates the MP in India for the partner organisation FICCI (Federation of Indian Industries), praised the future programme design: "It is a good mix of seminars, practical examples, and business in practice. Also, the virtual courses mean our participants, most key decision-makers, will be spending less time away from their desks in future, so

they can continue to take care of business during the Programme." Like Gardashov, he also pointed to how the MP has contributed to increasing the competitiveness of participating executives' companies.

Inesa Iordatii from the Vocational Training Centre of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Chisinau, reported from Moldova: "The online format was a real challenge for all of us, but our partners' great

Units in the online and face-to-face format will alternate in the Programme as from 2022.





Ivana Fernández Stohanzlova



Zaur Gardashov



Inesa Iordatii



Mritunjay Kumar

professionalism is a strength that benefits us all.” Moldovan companies are trying to reprofile themselves using online formats and digital platforms, Iordatii said. “This helps them find new business partners.” In the Eastern European country, companies have significantly benefitted from the Programme and discovered a lot of new ideas for their business strategies, she added. Ivana Fernández Stohanzlova, Director of Institutional Outreach at the Mexican Ministry of Economy, said the MP has generated a lot of close collaborations. The virtual format was also well received in Mexico, she added. “Another benefit on our end was that we had the opportunity to meet with executives from Chile in virtual groups as well, so it opened another networking avenue on a regional level.”

Together, the panellists looked to the future. “For the brightest possible future, we want to take advantage of online options while strengthening the parts programme that have proven so effective over time. There will be no going back to the old format, even after the pandemic, but we plan to combine the best of the online and the offline worlds,” Yıldız Götze explained.

In a wrap-up session, Anne Jach-Kemps applauded partner countries and stakeholders for being so well-prepared to keep the MP going in the new format. “We know the needs of our partners and continue to elicit their input so we can keep optimising the Programme,” she said. Yıldız Götze added, “I am pleased with all the feedback that has shown how successful we’ve been in generating interest in the new format. Active exchange with partners is what keeps the MP so dynamic.” Once again, she emphasised that challenges could only be mastered through joint effort. Yıldız Götze then ended on a positive note: “Today we have not only strengthened our business ties; we have built on some personal ones too. We look forward to expanding all the online contacts with face-to-face visits soon. Hopefully, we’ll be able to meet in person to celebrate the MP’s 25th anniversary in 2023.”



“We want to use the experience from the pandemic and the associated boost in digitalisation to strengthen economic cooperation by consistently adapting modern teaching and learning techniques. We have incorporated feedback from our partners into improving the Programme.”

Anne Jach-Kemps

How does Industry 4.0 work in practice? This question was answered by a visit to the automation company Festo that managers from Vietnam attended in October. In addition to practical information, they received examples of applications and insight into developing occupations in Germany.



Factors for Success in Industry 4.0

Automation, Productivity and Didactics

Eberhard Klotz, who is responsible for international customer queries about Industry 4.0 at Festo, offered the group from Vietnam insight into the realisation of projects with international customers. The MP participants learned that the company is one of the global market leaders in automation technology and in technological training and further education. Festo focuses on humans and machines working together to increase productivity and competitiveness, as well as plant and process automation. The company also advises the German Federal Government in the area of Industry 4.0, is active in the steering committee for the platform Industry 4.0, which includes players from companies, associations, trade unions, researchers and politicians from across Germany, and is a founding member of Labs Network Industry 4.0 (LNI 4.0), a network of German testing centres and companies.

In his presentation, Eberhard Klotz specified three factors for success in Industry

4.0 solutions: automation, productivity and didactics. The integration of employees through training, further education courses and learning systems is crucial according to this expert. For this reason, Festo's subsidiary Festo Didactic develops training and further education concepts for specialist and occupational training on behalf of the German government and other governments world-wide. New occupations are developed in the qualification measures – adopted to a new, controlled and automated working and vocational environment. The Vietnamese managers were shown during their virtual visit insights into integrated, interactive and intelligent systems such as “Smart Factory”, which stands for networked, responsive and learning production. The main issues for companies are currently how to make the incorporation and integration of employees succeed, and how the manufacturing and production processes can be developed and improved using data, explained Klotz. In view of the

current trends, he also mentioned mass production with increasing demand for Industry 4.0 solutions because the automation and digitisation are also progressing here as well. The need for Industry 4.0 technology will require a more flexible and self-learning production in the future, says Eberhard Klotz.

The Vietnamese group, which was made up of executives from various sectors, showed great interest in the presentation and the insights at Festo, since digitalisation and automation solutions are also gaining and increasing foothold in Vietnam in numerous manufacturing and production sites.



About the author

Franziska Wegerich has been employed as a specialist tutor for the MP at AHP International since 2015. As a senior manager she is also responsible for the organisation and realisation of projects in the BMWi market entry programme for SMEs and supports American and

international companies in establishing and developing business ties in Europe.



“With a culture of encouragement and support, however, every potential female executive can participate actively and make a valuable contribution to economic success.”

Marinda Seisenberger

Women Find their Own Path

MP participants from South Africa learned how to successfully lead as entrepreneurs in a further education module on female leadership. They acquired valuable new competencies as well as confidence for their future work.

“When women enter positions of leadership, they bring with them specifically female skills, different perspectives and structural and cultural differences that ultimately also contribute to effective solutions and the success in business”, explained the coach Marinda Seisenberger, who herself has a leadership position in human resources, concerning the background of her seminar. In one training and exchange session on female leadership and female executives, she examined current developments and research results and elicited an enthusiastic discussion using practical examples. “The development of female executives depends on ensuring that they receive the opportunity to lead. That is not always self-evident. With a culture of encouragement and support, however, every potential female executive can participate actively and make a valuable contribution to economic success”, declared Seisenberger.

The compatibility of work and family was also an important issue for the MP participants. The seminar also explained issues of terminology, such as the differences between “male leadership” and “female leadership”, about which a lively debate took place. In addition, selected aspects of female leadership between German and South African businesswomen were compared. At the conclusion of the seminar, the respective stereotypes were examined and the participants discussed ways of overcoming them in order to position themselves as female executives in a company.

The active involvement of the course participants and the intensive exchange of their own experiences and of best practices made it clear how much interest there was in the topic. At the same time, many of the entrepreneurs felt affirmed in their style of leadership. “I learned that you don’t

have to adopt a male style, but that you can find your own path”, explained one of the participants after the session. Another praised the coach: “I enjoyed this session with Marinda, she was on fire. The course was very interactive, and Marinda is very understanding and funny too with her examples in between.”

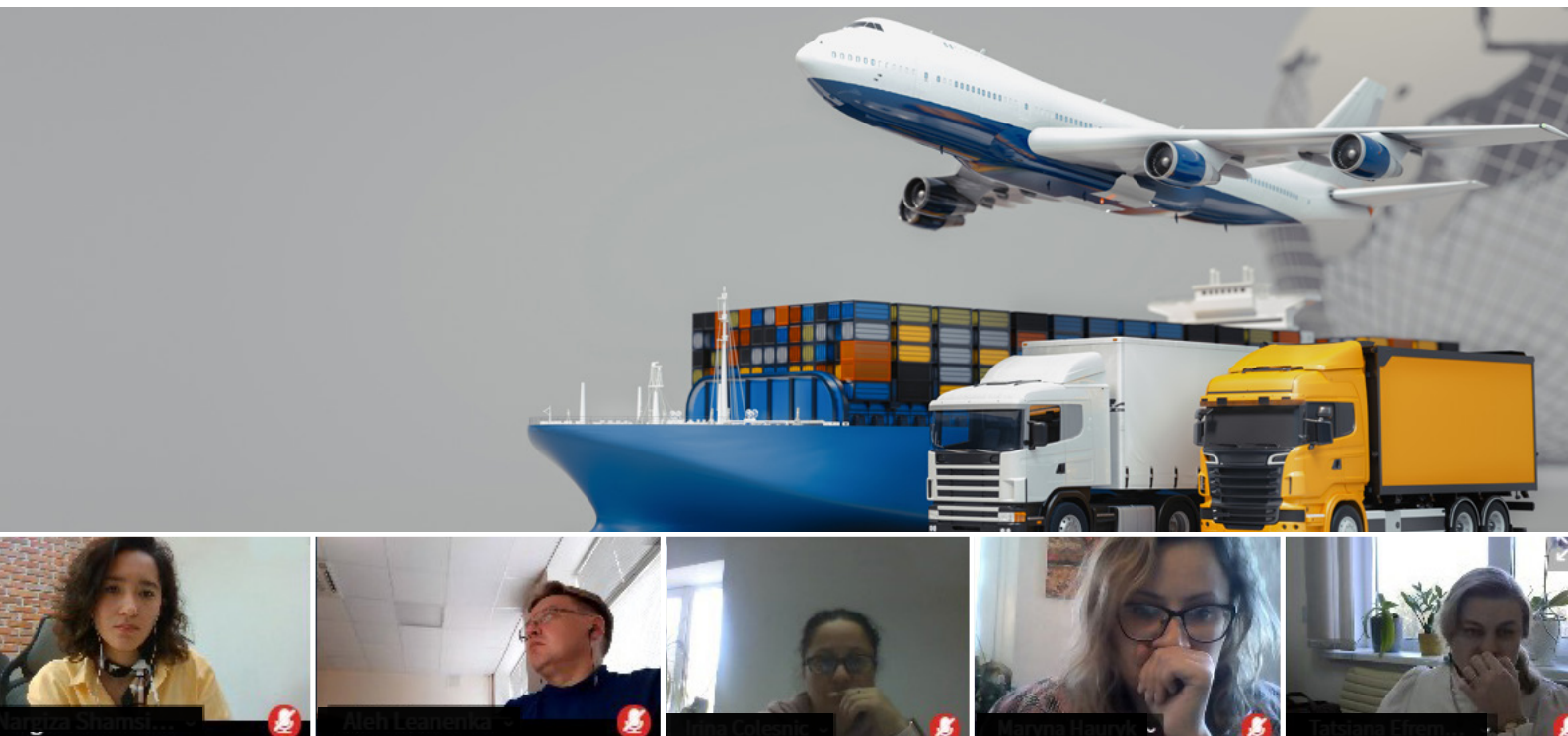


About the author

Lena Mählen works as a programme specialist at the ICUnet Group in Passau as a multi-talent for design and execution in the Manger Training Programme team. She also has a passion for learning new languages, creative writing and diversity.

Cooperation Works Best with Good Logistics

The eight-week programme entrepreneurs from Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine completed covered a lot of ground: Human resource, change and project management were all on the agenda along with leadership. A look behind the scenes at a freight forwarding company proved one of the highlights of their virtual training.



The 22 executives were particularly interested in seeing business in practice at German companies who already partner with East and Central Asian countries. These included Stravex, a Hamburg-based freight forwarder that has been providing transportation and warehousing logistics worldwide for almost 20 years. The firm also assists its customers with customs clearance and certification measures in Germany and in destination countries. In an online meeting with the MP group in October, Stravex Managing Director Valerian Braziler shared some insight about organising and executing shipments and the logistical methods the company implements according to customer need. He also went into detail about the required standards and certifications for exporting to Germany and Europe. MP participants took away a lot about possible options for realising their projects in Germany.

Braziler stressed the importance of having an effective marketing plan, which was, he said, essential for a successful logistics provider. He then told the entrepreneurs from the three countries that Stravex Forwarding would be happy to help them draft a marketing plan. An animated exchange followed the presentation. Belarusian participant Tatsiana Efremova, manager of FLLC ACE Logistics, and her compatriot Uladlen Chornanos, managing director of sport accessories manufacturer VimpeX Crown, were interested in the business potential and prospects in the field of logistics between Germany and Belarus. "It was a successful exchange. In future, I hope we will develop some joint projects with the company," Uladlen Chornanos said.

Overall, the executives received a number of new impulses for their own businesses and appreciated their Stravex counter-

part's openness and willingness to communicate. After the meeting, Volodymyr Lipinskiy, head of Research and Development at Ukrainian company Vikonda, said: "I came away with a lot of useful information today about logistics and customs in Germany. Valerian Braziler really got to the heart of things and explained in detail. I look forward to working with this company in future."



About the author

Oxana Gusárova has worked for the MP since 2011. As a project coordinator at Akademie International, her responsibilities include programme development and establishing cooperative relationships between foreign participants and the German private sector.



Business Contacts to German Companies Strengthened

Executives from China participated in a virtual training run by the German Management Academy of Lower Saxony (DMAN) from July to September. With the COVID-19 pandemic ongoing, the entrepreneurs seized the opportunity to establish and expand their business ties to German companies.



The 19 Chinese Manager represented various company sizes and industries, with the majority from equipment and systems engineering, and others from the fields of LED lamps, medial technology, refrigeration and food. Through the combination of virtual training sessions, company visits and individual business meetings they received a comprehensive overview of the elementary components needed to build and expand German-Chinese business relationships. Most of the group already managed to achieve their ambitious goals while still attending the Programme.

"I would like to get to know German corporate culture and hope to learn some tips on how I can build a company culture that optimises internal processes", is how Zhang Hui explained his motivation for participating in the MP. His company plans, builds and provides maintenance for clean rooms, intensive care units and operating rooms and was able to add three new company contacts in the German pharmaceutical and medical divisions. Lei Yun Ping's food company produces and trades frozen meats. As a member of their

board, he was able to use the Programme in two ways: "One of the great challenges for me and my company is setting up new purchasing channels, especially in terms of using big data for my business. Prospectively, I would like to use my participation to found a German affiliate." He met three potential German business partners during the MP. Plus, Fred Ludolph's OET GOLDEX finance GmbH promised their support in building a technology park in China. Min Wie's company manufactures equipment for the oil industry. "By sharing experiences with German companies in my sector, I would like to find solutions for my greatest challenge: the ever increasing individualisation of our products combined with the increasingly short delivery times that our customers expect." Min Wei found a new partner for this via the MP and he succeeded in revitalising and existing contact to the company ITAG Valves Engineering GmbH.

The German companies that they virtually visited showed great interest in exchange with the Chinese executives. Carsten Braun, Managing Director of ITAG Valves

Engineering GmbH, already managed to achieve specific successes. "As a partner of DMAN for many years, we appreciate the opportunities that result for our business from contact with foreign companies. As part of the Programme with China we were able to restart the contacts to the company Jiangsu Jinshi Machinery Group CO. Ltd we had established years ago with a direct virtual dialogue, and we already have concrete plans for the next steps of the negotiations." The managing director of DMAN, Thomas Rilke, also welcomed the virtual meetings with the entrepreneurs from China: "As an academy we benefit from the interest, questions and suggestions from the Chinese guests, because this helps us to get to know our target customer groups increasingly better. And it is also an excellent opportunity to explain our presence and our expansion strategies in China and to enter into a dialogue. And for their part, our participants learn about our somewhat unique business model and the communication opportunities for their companies that can be derived from it, so that both sides can benefit fully from this company visit."



About the author

Dr Ronald Pschierer is the programme director at DMAN (German Management Academy of Lower Saxony) and responsible for the conception and the execution of qualification programmes in the MP.



Michael Götz (middle) invited the guests of the virtual tour to see the brewery in Bayreuth.

Attaining International Success with Hops, Malt and Yeast

A beer that is delicious and tastes the same everywhere in the world? Mongolian Programme participants convinced themselves that it is possible while taking a peek behind the curtains at a traditional, family-run business. And while doing so they also learned plenty about quality management.

The 22 executives excitedly anticipated their visit to Maisel brewery, since beer specialties and the German identity are closely linked for them. The theme of this virtual meet-and-greet was “Quality Assurance”. The sales director for exports, Michael Götz, explained to the participants important facts about the manufacturing process and quality management, as well as the interesting melding of tradition and innovation, and regional and international. In addition, they learned more about the history of the family business and gained insights into the brewing laboratory on a virtual tour. The participants learned that the use of regional ingredients creates high-quality products. For instance, the wheat beer “Maisel’s Weisse” uses soft water from the nearby Fichtel Mountains, hops from Bavaria, high-quality brewing malts and the brewery’s own yeast.

An environmentally friendly brewing process also contributes to the unique taste of the beer specialties. Maisel considers itself to have a shared responsibility for the environment because the sustainable management of their resources is an im-

portant foundation for the survival of the business. Through a cooperation with the Institute for Energy Technology (IfE) of the East Bavarian University of Technology of Amberg-Weiden measures for the reduction of the consumption of energy and raw materials at the brewery are currently being developed. In addition, the company is a part of the initiative “Umweltpakt Bayern”, in which companies commit to sustainable activity, and of Klimaregion Bayreuth, a mutual platform for action to promote climate protection measures at the regional level.

The virtual visit made a lasting impression on the managers from Mongolia. “It was not until now that I was fully aware of the significance of small and medium-sized enterprises and family-run businesses in Germany”, explained Munkhbold Damdinbazar. Participant Bolormaa Byambasuren was also able to take along some ideas and suggestions for her business. The group joyfully received the invitation from Michael Götz to visit the Maisel brewery in Bayreuth in person and now hopes to meet face-to-face next year. The company visit provided lasting motivation

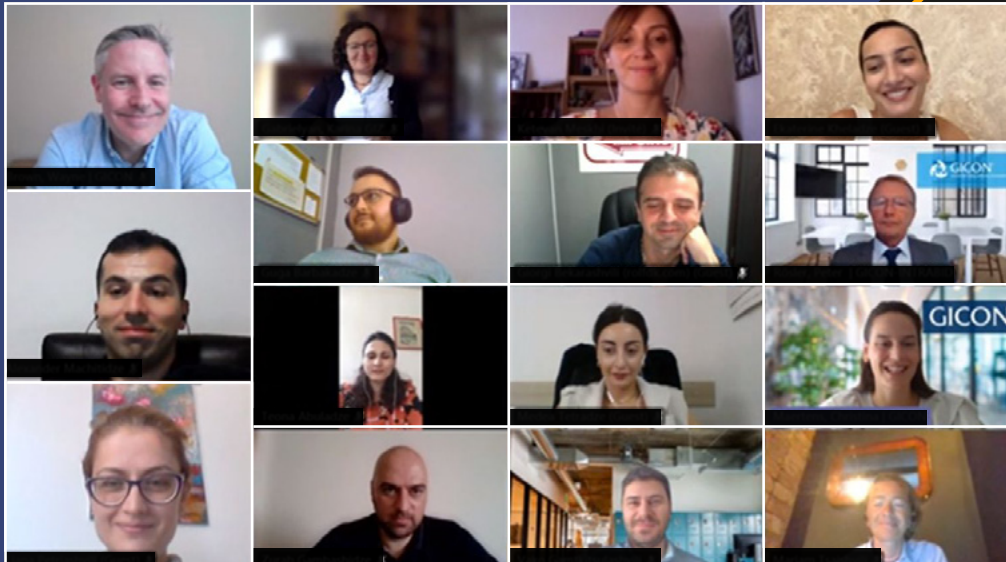
to the participants to intensively analyse the complex topic of quality assurance and to derive opportunities to promote innovation in their own businesses. The practical aspects from the company visit were expanded upon over the course of the training. One training course on change management examined the role of family businesses and the development of medium-sized enterprises, for example.



About the author
Lilia Gass is the seminar manager at the TÜV Rheinland Akademie GmbH in Cologne who coordinated the group from Mongolia in Germany.



“I am on the right path”



By participating in the MP, Georgian entrepreneurs looked for new paths to make their companies more international and to enter the German market. Their optimism continued unabated despite the sometimes difficult conditions.

The group hosted by the training centre GICON-InTraBiD wanted to find German business partners for trade with products such as wines, spirits, dried fruits, children's rucksacks and suspended metal ceilings via their participation in the Programme. Not all of the goals were met during their virtual participation in the Programme, but the participants from Georgia were able to achieve some initial successes.

His plans are realistic and “I am on the right path”, is how Valeriani Gamtkitsulashvili summarised his participation in the Manager Training Programme. The general manager of the vineyard Twins Wine House in the Georgian village of Napareuli intends to stick to his goal of selling his products in Germany after the

Programme despite the plenty of international competition. Even though this didn't work out while he was still participating in the Programme “naturally also due to the pandemic”, he still gained many new insights and experiences during the training. His next steps include acquiring more German importers for Georgian wines at the German trade fairs Anuga and ProWein and applying high international standards to the processes in his business.

Ekaterine Kheladze from the Georgian women entrepreneur organisation “Women for Tomorrow” (W4T) was able to point to a successful talk with the Association of German Women Entrepreneurs (VdU) following her participation in the Programme. The two organisations will be starting a close collaboration in the coming year, in which Georgian women entrepreneurs can observe how the offices and the state-level associations of the VdU work in an “offline” setting. VdU has also announced its support for the further development of W4T in word and deed. Despite the various obstacles, the Georgian executives were optimistic to have taken a major step in the direction of Germany and Europe by participating in the

Manager Training Programme. „For the moment I haven't obtained the results I expected, but I am optimistic to establish some initial business contacts starting in autumn“, explained Zurab Gambashidze, the head of sales for the wine and spirits manufacturer Kartveli in Martkopi. “In my experience you need a lot of patience in dealing with importers, distributors and trade chains. I am therefore moving ahead in the acquisition process with all of the knowledge I gained in the training and business-in-practice meetings during the MP”, said Gambashidze. His description also includes the virtual visit to the state winery Schloss Wackerbarth in Radebeul near Dresden. Schloss Wackerbarth produces both wine and sparkling wine and puts on numerous events.

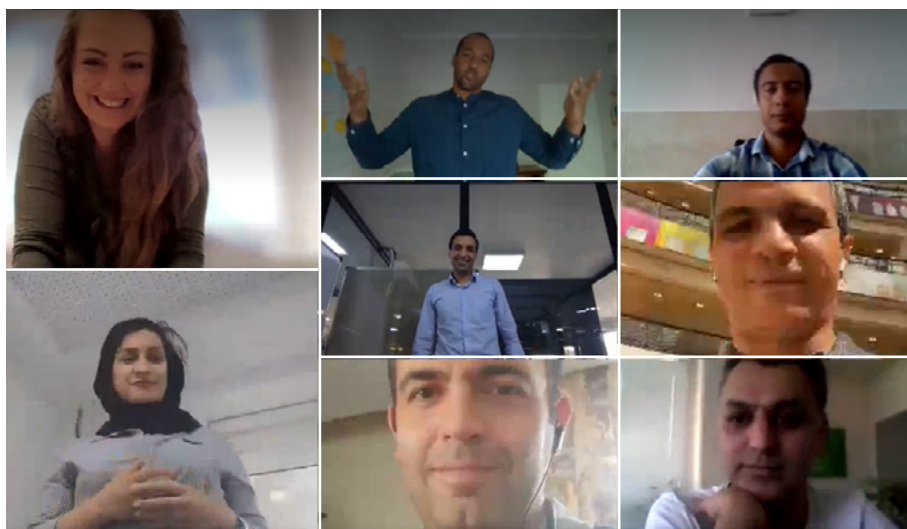


About the author

Peter Rösler has been working for the MP since 2002. As a project director he is responsible for developing the programme and establishing cooperation relationships between foreign participants and German companies at GICON-InTraBiD GmbH.

An Elevator Pitch Closer to the Goal

In July, Iranian alumni completed the “How to do business with Germany” virtual training course. The interactive seminar addressed what to consider when initiating contact with German companies, how to conquer new markets, and how to impress a German company with your business ideas and acumen.



Structure of an elevator pitch:

- >> Grab the audience's attention (using a rhetorical question or a metaphor, for example).
- >> Describe the target group's problem
- >> Present your approach to the problem and unique selling point (USP)
- >> Highlight benefits and added value for the target group
- >> Finish with a call to action

The Iranian participants represented companies of various sizes and from a range of industries, such as food processing, mining, raw materials extraction, the Internet of Things, medical technology, and plant and mechanical engineering. Organised by the trAIDe GmbH together with RWTH Aachen, the day-long seminar centred around the elevator pitch. Participants independently crafted a pitch based on an e-course developed by the trainer, then gave it live. The goal of an elevator pitch is to explain how a business idea

stands out and the benefits it offers the listener in the shortest possible time. Ideally, it grabs a potential business partner's interest and increases their willingness to engage in further, detailed discussion. The Iranian entrepreneurs presented their ideas for working with German companies in their pitches. Constructive feedback from the trainer and fellow course participants helped alumni understand how to make their pitches both exciting and persuasive.

The exuberant mood at the end and the positive feedback showed how much participants had taken away from the course. “I am confident that the ability to focus on benefits and communicate effectively will help participants perform well and enter into win-win partnerships with German business partners,” trainer Philip Okito said after the event.



Why is it called an elevator pitch?

The name “elevator pitch” is based on the idea that a person might run into an investor, potential major customer or another important person in an elevator and take advantage of the opportunity to pitch them an idea. The elevator pitch, also called an elevator speech or statement, describes an idea in a very short time, ideally between 30 and 120 seconds, or around the length of a ride in a lift.

Participants then had a chance to apply their new knowledge in additional pitches. The trainer and experienced tutors supervised small groups of alumni, working with each individual and highlighting elements of German business culture. Finally, one candidate from each group was chosen to compete in a final pitching contest. Naghmeh Ahmadi, Amir Shirvani and Amir Iranmaneshparizi put on a virtual pitch fireworks display, demonstrating the self-confidence the seminar had given them. Amir Shirvani took the day for presenting his joint venture idea best in the eyes of MP participants.



About the author

Eva Rath helps implement virtual MPs as a Junior Project Manager. She has provided support to project management with groups from South Africa, India, Vietnam, Iran, Chile and Mexico.

Ukrainian Partners Strengthen their Collaboration

The Ukrainian partners from the Manager Training Programme met from September 16 to 18 – face to face for the first time since the beginning of the pandemic. They reviewed the programme work over the crisis and agreed on measures to anchor the MP even stronger in Ukraine.

The three-day event in Kiev attracted 32 partners from nearly every region of Ukraine as well as MP alumni. Together they analysed the results of the Programme so far and the challenges they currently face in their work environment. Topics of discussions included future collaboration on the Ukrainian partner platforms and the role of the alumni, as well as how the Programme can become more popular with its target groups. Guido Reinsch, who directs the Eastern Europe programme for GIZ, presented the new Programme format for 2022 and after. There is also much discussion about how this Programme can be implemented in Ukraine.

The conference participants unanimously agreed that the Programme proved to be robust even during the coronavirus crisis, and that it was possible to attract many qualified executives to participate. In this year, 120 Ukrainian entrepreneurs successfully completed “Fit for Partner-

ship in Germany”. In addition, numerous online business workshops for Ukrainian businesses interested in cooperations with Germany in 2021 were organised, as well as B2B exchanges, expert talks and meetings for alumni to share experiences. The MP partners were also able to actively further their education, e.g. by conducting negotiations for establishing business.

The network of the Ukrainian partner platforms includes various business developers, regional chambers of industry and commerce and business departments of state governments, and training firms and consultancies. Alumni of the Manager Training Programme are also members. Over the course of the last year further organisations such as industry associations and NGOs have also joined. They all have realised the benefits of membership: In addition to the Programme’s high level of visibility in the regions, the fully developed network provides its members an intensive exchange for working with the

German economy, with both expert further education opportunities and online visits with German companies.

At the conference, partner platform representatives from all regions expressed the desire to continue the partnership with the Manager Training Programme. To attract more participants, the Programme is to be made more well known in the regions and potential participants are to be targeted more specifically. Everyone was satisfied with the decision to diversify the partner network by involving new members and thus strengthening its effectiveness in various business segments of SMEs. In addition, the conference participants agreed to involve graduates more in the work of the partner platforms.





“ We are grateful that the event was conducted in person, because even with the advantages of an online format, live communication and human hospitality cannot be replaced virtually. We are looking forward to the next meeting.

Khrystyna Savuliak, partner platform Lviv

“ The positive impressions from this meeting still have us in a good mood!

Dina Sidasch, partner platform Dnipro

“ The conference was useful, informative and practical.

Andrei Diogtev, alumnus

“ Everyone who wants to sell their products in Germany is welcome to join the Programme. As a graduate I could expand my knowledge at the conference and cast a glance at the future of my industry.

Gennadii Dubov, alumnus



An Ecosystem for Central Asia

Implementing partners and alumni from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are driving development of the MP in their countries by strengthening alumni relations and recruiting new Programme participants, who are boosting the national economy. A new tool is part of the process: a collaborative ecosystem.



Roadmap of the cooperation ecosystem in Central Asia 2021

The importance of ecosystems – networks of various players that cross-fertilize to generate added value for one other, is growing in business. In the future, these synergy effects will also be used for programme work in Central Asia. All the relevant stakeholders in the future economic ecosystem will be involved in fruitful cooperation: alumni, new and potential participants, local partners, companies and associations in the countries to act as

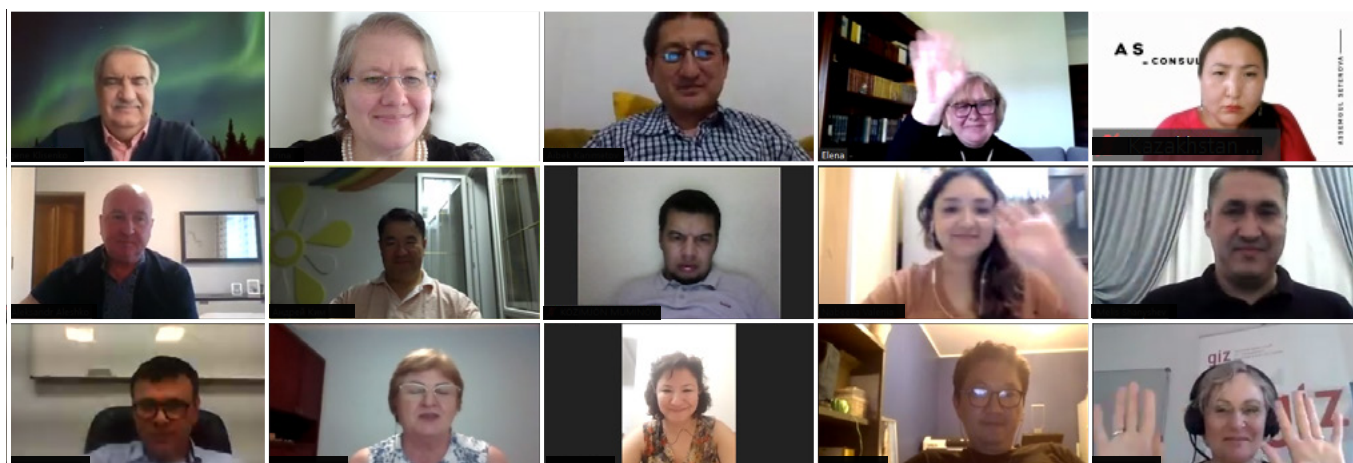
multipliers, as well as representatives of GIZ and the German training centres.

“The ecosystem gives alumni relations in Central Asia an effective, modern tool,” Eugene Klisenko says. He has been overseeing this strategic process and designed the roadmap. The first steps were taken in the summer and autumn of 2021. Programme partners and a particularly active core of alumni discussed the new approach

in depth at a series of virtual meetings and convened several brainstorming rounds and networking sessions to the same end. In June, strategic workshops helped create a preliminary map of the ecosystem. The map includes the names and locations of potential members of the future ecosystem. They are likely to profit from cooperation with the MP alumni network thanks to the existing intersections – such as industry associations, clusters, and economic development agencies.

Many impressive success stories from graduates of the Manager Training Programme will encourage these stakeholders to get involved. In November, a motivation session helped move the process in this direction. Alumni from the health sector as well as local companies from the industry met with German providers in the field of telemedicine to explore opportunities for Germany and Central Asia to work together in this field.

A flagship event, the “Alumni Business Show”, is planned for 2022. It will provide a platform for alumni to talk about their successes in initiating business with



“The ecosystem gives alumni relations in Central Asia an effective, modern tool.

Eugene Klisenko

German companies, but also openly discuss obstacles and challenges. “We want to give our graduates the opportunity to exchange ideas on topics that you won't find in any book,” GIZ project manager Irina Alexiadis says, explaining the approach. Additionally, the participants want to work out more effective ways of letting the public know about the options and advantages the MP offers. To this end, GIZ will invite companies from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to attend the event along with active alumni.

The Underlying Idea

Economist and GIZ expert Dr Eugene Klisenko from the National University of Kyiv mapped out the ecosystem approach for the Central Asian countries as a sustainable strategic project. He explains the idea behind it:



In the early 1990s, US strategic management expert James Moore was the first to draw parallels between biological ecosystems and economic communities and coin the term business ecosystem. He defined it as “an economic community supported by a foundation of interacting organisations and individuals that produces goods and services of value to customers, who are themselves members of the ecosystem.” The ecosystem concept caught on quickly outside of academic and expert circles too. The ecological metaphor proved so compelling and productive it provided the impetus for the development of fundamentally new ideas and concepts for strategic economic development and its practical implementation.

Today, realising cutting-edge development strategies and programmes, including the recent EU Economic Recovery Plan and the German 2030 Industrial Strategy, relies on the development of entrepreneurial, innovative and technological ecosystems. The situation is similar in Central Asia, where the national development strategies of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan either explicitly target creating economic ecosystems or consider them an effective tool for carrying out these strategies. In this context, the emerging Manager Training Programme economic ecosystem is designed as an instrument for internationalising national ecosystems and promoting their cooperation with German partners.

The advantages of a cooperative ecosystem take place at three, central levels:

- ▶ Professional networking among all participants is much more intensive and productive, and new forms of collaboration emerge.
- ▶ This, in turn, enables the fast, efficient and targeted exchange of knowledge and experience among participants in the ecosystem.
- ▶ Professional networking, mutual exchange and the development of new forms of cooperation among ecosystem members stimulates new, realistic cooperation ideas and projects.

“The emerging Manager Training Programme economic ecosystem is designed as an instrument for internationalising national ecosystems and promoting their cooperation with German partner.

Promoting sustainable development is the guiding principle of German government policy. For lasting sustainable development, economic performance, the protection of natural resources, and social responsibility have to go hand in hand. The economy is an important driver and multiplier of sustainability.

AGENDA 2030

Companies Contribute to Sustainable Development

Adopted by the United Nation member states in 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development addresses the private sector: “We call on all businesses to apply their creativity and innovation to solving sustainable development challenges”. The 2030 Agenda comprises 17 objectives known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that target ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable development. These include combating poverty and hunger, promoting health and education, protecting the climate, the oceans, and terrestrial ecosystems, improving the energy and water supplies along with mobility and infrastructure, as well as boosting resource efficiency, full employment, and sustainable economic growth. The private sector is essential to achieving these goals, “from microenterprises and cooperatives to multinational corporations”.

The German Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS), which aligns with the 2030 Agenda, also calls on the private

sector: “as producers and providers of goods and services, as drivers of research and development, as creators of demand for raw materials and semi-manufactures, as employers, as providers of in-house training, as promoters of equality and of a work-life balance and as bearers of great responsibility for the achievement of sustainable development goals in their own regions”. This gives companies a wide range of opportunities, but also comes with some major challenges:

Corporate sustainability trailblazers can improve their positions in goods markets and in future financial markets, as consumers and investors are increasingly looking for social compatibility and environmental friendliness in products and manufacturing processing when deciding what to buy and how to invest. There are likely to be advantages on the labour market too, as skilled workers often consider a company’s commitment to sustainability when looking for a job, making it particularly important in industries with

skilled labour shortages. From a production standpoint, sustainable business increases profits when efficiency measures lower production costs by reducing energy and raw material consumption.

Investment in a functional circular economy

Shifting production to a circular economy reduces dependence on primary raw materials. The circular economy encompasses all measures to decouple economic growth from resource consumption and harmful emissions. This makes it an important driver of technical innovations, and it is opening up new business areas, such as in the sharing economy or the product as a service. This initially involves considerable investments in technology and know-how though, placing a financial burden on companies. In implementation, the key is to ensure that material cycles are actually closed, meaning that the necessary trading partners are available and secondary raw materials



▶ markets are working and, for consumer goods, that the consumer side is also contributing.

Free trade and open markets enable participation in global value chains and create jobs, growth, and prosperity at home and abroad. Diversifying trade relationships helps make supply chains more resilient. But it can also make it harder to enforce human rights and environmental standards along the supply chains of globally active companies. By adopting the National Action Plan in 2016, the German government set clear guidelines and required all companies to introduce corporate due diligence regarding human rights appropriate to their size, industry and position in the supply and value chain. The June 2021 Supply Chain Due Diligence Act obligates companies based in Germany above a certain size to fulfil their human rights due diligence responsibilities along the supply chain, though the scope of this due diligence varies based on degree of influence.

While the law will not take effect until 2023 or 2024 – depending on company size – firms should already be making every effort to prepare to meet their legal obligations by then.

Need for transparent communication

Companies are also facing new sustainability reporting requirements. Sustainability reports complement financial reports, informing stakeholders about the impact of corporate activities on the environment and society and also about

the effect of external developments, such as climate change, on corporate activities. Investors, NGOs and consumers are increasingly demanding such non-financial information, which is clearly reflected in the expansion of reporting obligations, particularly at the EU and international levels. The EU Commission has drafted a directive intended to define reporting requirements and expand the number of companies subject to them. Here it is going to be important to do justice to the interests of stakeholders while also ensuring that reporting requirements for

Digital technologies offer great opportunities for many sustainable business areas.



companies – and especially for SMEs – are appropriate and manageable.

Digital technologies offer great opportunities for many sustainable business areas, such as sustainable production, value chain traceability, efficient resource use, intelligent network control, and decentralised energy supply solutions. Digital technologies and the analysis of large datasets are likely to bring about a real transformation. At the same time, it is important to keep an eye on the negative effects of digitisation, like increases in the consumption of energy and raw materials and its impact on the labour market and competition.

As important as corporate responsibility is, the Sustainable Development Goals can only be reached if the private sector, the scientific community, politics and society work together. The German government offers a wide range of advisory and promotional services to help companies increase sustainability in all areas, includ-

ing the fields of energy, innovation, digitisation, SMEs, the regional economy, due diligence in supply chains, and foreign trade. At the end of the day though, the key will be creating framework conditions for companies that ensure the protection of natural resources and social responsibility go hand in hand with economic performance.

The German Sustainable Development Strategy calls on the private sector.



More information:

www.deutsche-nachhaltigkeitsstrategie.de

About the author

Stefan Liebenberg is responsible for sustainable economy issues at the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi).



MP alumna **Cristina Garcia** is a business-management consultant at the Mexican coaching and consultancy agency Glauwissen. The participation in the Manager Training Programme inspired her to change the business model and social responsibility in her company, Garcia explains in an interview.

Journal: You are applying the concept of sustainable business approach in your company. How did you come to this?

Cristina Garcia: During a stay in Germany, I learned the importance of sustainability in the corporate culture and was convinced of it. Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. I witnessed that for German SMEs this is not just a definition; it is a basic characteristic of the way of developing business. For me, it was a new concept that I committed myself to, applying it to our company. In such a way that in 2020 we joined the Global Compact Initiative of the United Nations, which encourages firms worldwide to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies. And in 2021 we were awarded with the Distinction of Socially Responsible Company for SMEs, which is granted by the Mexican Centre for Philanthropy CEMEFI and held by companies that showed their social and environmental commitment to their stakeholders.

What influence does the reference to the SDGs have on your business?

Since 2020, we have been committed to integrating the ten principles of the UN Global Compact Initiative as a fundamental part of our business strategy, our daily operations and our corporate culture. As a training and consulting company, we work every day to convince through free talks to the entrepreneurial and business ecosystem of our town. When I returned from Germany, we started providing free talks to

**“We want to
actively promote
sustainability”**



The Programme fundamentally changed my idea about doing business. The preparation courses in Mexico City were an excellent start to share my experience with other Mexican entrepreneurs whom I would otherwise not have met.

entrepreneurial and Mexican SMEs from various sectors. Also, we made a collaboration with the municipal women's institute at Toluca and Metepec, teaching around 100 women about entrepreneurship, supporting the SGD 5. It is important to mention that all of them have been rescued from domestic violence.

The focus of our talks is on supporting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all as well as inclusive, equitable quality education and building resilient infrastructure, promoting sustainable industrialisation and fostering innovation. So, we are addressing four SDGs in total, numbers 4, 5, 8 and 9.

How did joining the Global Compact Initiative change your business?

Joining the Initiative has allowed us to participate in forums at a national and international level, where we, like the rest of the member companies, seek to support the fulfilment of the sustainable development objectives through different activities. It has also allowed us to support other SMEs to start aligning their business strategy with the SDGs, but above all to create awareness in our community about sustainability.

The automotive sector is one of Mexico's most significant industries. You are offering training courses on sustainability to companies from the automotive industry. What do they look like?

We are working on two major axes. One is the Sustainability Reports based on the Global Reporting Initiative standards. We hereby help the companies to align their

strategy to the SDGs. That means that we offer introductory training on the Sustainable Development Goals and teach companies how to integrate the SDG into their current business. Together we develop a SDGs Strategy Journey Map. The other axis is a general view, each topic has its own details and themes to develop.

In 2019, you participated in the Manager Training Programme. Which experience did you gain with German businesses?

It was impressive for me to realise how entrepreneurs, regardless of the country of origin, have similar goals and concerns. Something that caught my attention was the philosophy of teamwork, not only within the organisation, but also outside it, with suppliers, clients, and the community. Another point was automation: Many processes have been well planned and those that can be done more efficiently have therefore been identified. That led me to implement process mapping in our organisation. Dual education was another topic that I learned and that we implemented in our company when we returned. We had to stop it due the pandemic, but we are currently taking it up again. In my town there are many young people looking for development opportunities.

How did "Fit for Partnership with Germany" help you to improve your business?

The Programme fundamentally changed my idea about doing business. The preparation courses in Mexico City were an excellent start to share my experience

with other Mexican entrepreneurs whom I would otherwise not have met. This was of great advantage. GIZ and the German training centre gave me the methodology to structure business meetings so that the meetings scheduled with SMEs in Germany were successful. The next thing was to improve our business model through the concepts and examples that I learned in the Programme module on innovation. So, I changed my business model to a digital e-learning platform. All this happened in autumn 2019 when we did not know yet that we would experience a pandemic in 2020 and 2021. Without any doubt, the Programme prepared me for the times to come.



More information:
www.glaufwissen.com.mx

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a large, vibrant green heart-shaped leaf against their chest. The person is wearing a light grey t-shirt. The leaf is held in a way that its heart shape is clearly visible, with the person's fingers gently gripping the edges. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

**“We have an
ecological conviction”**



Executives from Ethiopia learned about sustainability and effective human resources management during a company visit. They saw how ecological and social commitment are compatible with economic activities based on the example of international trade company Cerona.

As a leading company for the Remarketing of IT and medical technology in Europe and a specialist for the renovation and resale of used IT and medical technology equipment, Cerona has specialised in the marketing and utilisation of medical devices and IT technology. The company follows a strictly sustainable approach: Used equipment that the company receives from manufacturers like Canon, Konica Minolta or Siemens, are extensively tested and then partially renovated. At a virtual visit in September executives from Ethiopia were able to see this for themselves.

The managing director Daniel Morgenstern explained the product cycle: After the complete functionality of the equipment is established, they are delivered to a local partner who distributes the machines to the retail customers in the target country. MP participant Haile Mariam asked about the restoration and maintenance process here. “Only the most necessary machine parts are replaced. The more new parts you use, the higher the price gets”, was the managing director’s answer. You often need to respond to what the local market is willing to pay. The machines that cannot be repaired or repurposed are dismantled and used to repair other used machines or taken solely for their spare parts. By doing so, the

company ensures the long life cycles of the equipment and systems and contributes to sustainability.

Currently operating globally, in Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Africa, the company, explains Morgenstern, is just taking its first steps in the Ethiopian market and is looking for business partners in this East African country. Because MP participant Abdi Ermolo is already selling devices in the medical sector in Ethiopia and is interested in German medical devices, a cooperation with Cerona GmbH might work.

“We are increasing flexibility in our employees’ working day”

In the second part of his presentation, Daniel Morgenstern looked at the company’s human resources management involving his 30 employees. He described the process of human resources recruiting, starting with the recognition of a specific human resources need, to the job description and the publication of the job profile on the respective platforms, and finally the interviewing and hiring process, using the example of an opening in sales. The company also trains up to three interns each year. The advantages of the dual-track training system were also explained to the participants.

In addition to the in-house and external training courses for new colleagues, Cerona GmbH regularly hosts coaching talks which both sides prepare for. Here it’s important to always have an open ear for problems and issues, to arrange annual feedback discussions and goals, and to evaluate the trainings. This serves to custom-tailor their offers for new employees. “I am also convinced that as a company we can provide very meaningful employment. We are right in the middle of climate change and we want to make a contribution to

turning this development around. We are working with regenerative power, and offer electrical charging stations for our employees’ vehicles, for instance. All our activities attest to our ecological conviction. We do have regional roots, but we are active internationally”, explained Morgenstern.

Solomon Wolde, himself the CEO of a trade company in Ethiopia, asked for tips for dealing with pressure at work and reducing stress. “As managing director, I try to make the working day more flexible for my employees”, responded Morgenstern. “We want to create opportunities here: There are employees who want to work with more flexible working hours or from different locations, e.g. from home. We take that into account. I can personally say that it helps me a lot to prioritise the tasks. You can’t always finish everything you set out to do. Leaving out the less important tasks and concentrating on the essential reduces the pressure. What helps me personally is meditation – but everyone needs to find their own path to cope with the side effects of increasingly fast-paced working life. That is the key”, proposed Morgenstern at the conclusion of his talk.



About the author

Michael Früh works for the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Stuttgart Region as an expert tutor for the Manager Training Programme. In the MP he is responsible for the conception and execution of the qualification programmes and partly in charge of the matchmaking between German companies and the participants.

Recognising Trends and Getting your Company Fit

How can small and medium-sized enterprises benefit from digital media? How can they optimise marketing? And how can they find and retain qualified personnel? Turkmen alumni discovered the answers to these and other questions in a series of seminars organised for them by the Manager Training Programme.



The rapid technological developments shaping our everyday lives and the business world also come with new challenges for SMEs. Digital marketing tools like search engines, company websites and social media are growing in importance for successfully communicating with target groups, and qualified employees are an essential element of entrepreneurial success. This also applies to joint ventures with German companies. Against this backdrop, Turkmen Programme alumni learned about current trends in human resources and marketing in three online seminars in August, where they also expanded their management and IT skills.

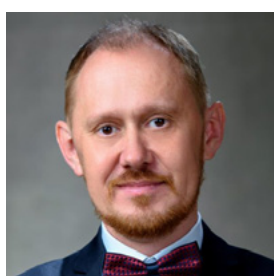
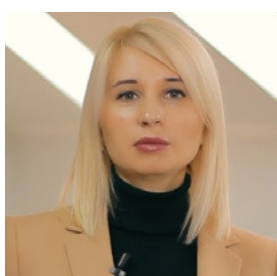
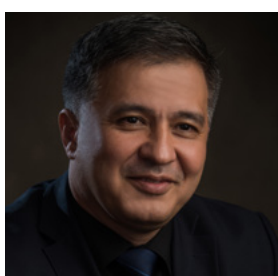
Arslan Djourayev, an HR specialist from Turkmenistan, spoke about human resource management. He addressed recruitment, designing work processes, performance evaluations and employee motivation, and discussed various leadership and work-

ing styles, as well as how to deal with stress and conflicts. "I work in human resources myself, so I have really enjoyed this interesting seminar. I learned a lot and would like to continue to improve my knowledge and skills on an international level," one alumna said at the end of the course.

Alumni learned all about marketing in a seminar with trainer Daniil Maykovskiy. He explained how to develop marketing strategies and introduced current market research methods as well as market research and analysis tools. Finally, Turkmen alumni put their newly acquired knowledge to use by working on a case study. Irina Kuropas offered a two-day digital marketing seminar. The Ukrainian expert talked about digital marketing trends and tools. She provided tips on creating a company website which, participants learned, is more than a digital version of a paper business card these days. Along with search engine opti-

misation, Kuropas also addressed brand building on social media, life hacks, messenger services and creating chat bots. "If you want to do business on an international playing field, you have to invest time and money in a digital marketing strategy," she advised.

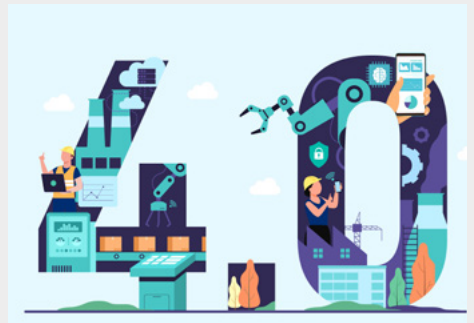
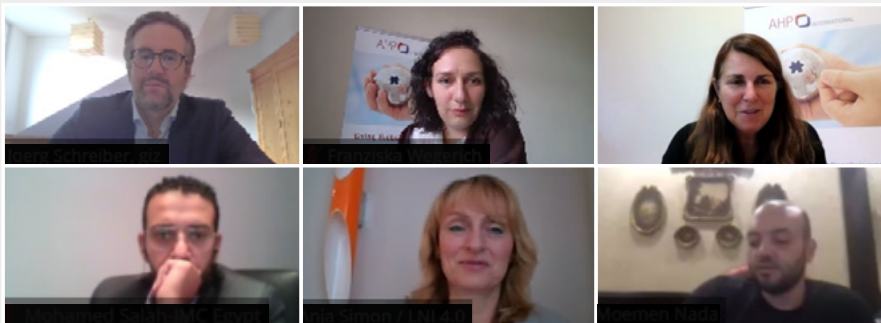
The Turkmen executives look forward to integrating all they learned in the courses into their work. "The seminars were really useful for our business. I'll pass on what I learned and also recommend these courses to my partners and colleagues," one participant said afterwards. A team member added, "Knowing the trends and keeping up with the times is important to me, so I'll keep attending these seminars in future." The interactive format was very positively received. "I'm grateful that we SMEs have so much active support and that the seminar content was presented in easily digestible information bites. The coaches were really good," one participant added. "These are very interesting topics and really relevant to our time. Thank you so much for the detailed presentation," Shagul Nepesova, representative of the partner organisation in Turkmenistan, said in conclusion. In addition to professional exchange with all the experts involved, the alumni took the seminars as an opportunity to network with each other and explore possible synergies for future cooperation.



The seminars were held by Arslan Djourayev (left), Irina Kuropas (centre) and Daniil Maykovskiy (right).

Using Networking and Expertise for a Strong Start to Industry 4.0

A virtual follow-up event for Egyptian alumni was focused on networking and partnerships. The managers, who had participated in the MP in Germany in 2017 and 2018, also gained exciting insights into current trends in Industry 4.0 at the meeting, as well as information about opportunities for further training.



At the online event in October the graduates shared their knowledge and best-practice approaches for initiating and developing business relationships with German companies. All of them agreed that building a successful business relationship with German SMEs is based on slow, steady and organic growth that can be reliably continued. “As hard as it is to start a cooperation with Germans, as easy it is to maintain it”, is how one alumnus summed up his experiences. Some graduates benefited from the contacts to German firms that they had established during their stay in Germany during the COVID-19 pandemic as well and were able to increase their export rates. At the follow-up three alumni presented their cooperations and business activities with German and international partners. These presentations demonstrated the positive effect of the MP on their own companies and their personal skills. The concepts and the insights gained during their participation in the MP into German business culture were consistently mentioned as the criteria to success.

The follow-up was supplemented by two expert talks held by several representatives from Siemens. Anja Simon, Chief Technical Officer (CTO) LNI 4.0 at Siemens AG in Munich, offered insights into automation solutions. She presented



LNI 4.0 is a network of more than 45 renowned test centres (labs) and about 300 companies throughout all of Germany, who have tested Industry 4.0 innovations in their practical application in more than 120 use cases and five large testbeds on various topics. The founding members of LNI 4.0 e.V. are: Deutsche Telekom, Festo, SAP, SIEMENS and the associations Bitkom, VDMA and ZVEI.

Labs Network Industrie 4.0 e.V. (LNI 4.0), a platform that works with industry’s global players on concepts, test demonstrations and testing institutions to integrate acquired knowledge and data into the “digitalised environment of the industry of the future”. In neutral testing environments data can thus be collected on various scenarios and topic areas, e.g. for digital solutions in production such as measurements, sensors, robots or cobots, which can boost efficiency.

Hebatallah Abd El Haleem and Sherif El Naggar from Siemens LLC in Egypt presented the activities of Siemens in the country and elaborated on the offers for further training for alumni: With “SITRAIN – Digital Industry Academy”, Siemens offers

a training module for workers from industrial companies and medium-sized enterprises. The cooperation partners of this training include the Egyptian National Academy for Science & Skills (NASS) and the Egyptian German Technical (EGT) Academy, which train specialists on new digitalisation solutions in various areas. In close contact and with visits to the companies for consultation, together new concepts for further training can be realised that are individually tailored to the needs of the respective company.

In summary, the Egyptian executives rated the Alumni network and the exchange amongst themselves as especially essential for their work. The close contact to other MP graduates that has now lasted years was described by one graduate at the follow-up as “a network rich in experience, advice and support” – which has helped and is helping many of the Egyptian alumni through the ongoing coronavirus crisis.



Further information:

www.lni40.de

www.sitrain.com

“We want to generate links”

Chilean MP alumni have joined forces in the newly founded network ASOGICH.
The Journal spoke with chairperson **María Inés Díaz** about the objectives and plans.



Journal: As a graduate of the MP, you founded the first alumni network for MP participants in Chile. How did this come about and what characterises ASOGICH today?

María Inés Díaz: The idea of founding the alumni association resulted from the intention to formalise collaborative projects that arose within some of the Chilean companies participating in the Manager Training Programme in 2020. Having a formal network allows us to generate links between the enterprises of the alumni in a more fluid and orderly way and to support us in the generation of new alliances within the network as well as with alumni networks in other countries. We are convinced of the benefits of international trade for societal development; for example, it allowed us to initiate joint activities with the Mexican Alumni network, with whom we already have strong ties. Some of the companies participating in the Programme are already starting an immersion and soft-landing programme in the Mexican market thanks to alliances that were formed through the collaboration between the alumni networks of both countries.

We are currently still in the process of formalising our association's legal status to be able to access government benefits. At the same time, we are planning the steps to be taken for the year 2022 as well as the association's roadmap for the coming years. Business networks have an impressive strength. Only by unifying many voices can we make ourselves heard, exert influence and bring about change. Thus, we are working on strengthening our community model and our relationship with the environment, human resources, and marketing.

What are currently the greatest challenges for Chilean alumni regarding the cooperation with German companies?

At the moment, Chilean companies, including those belonging to ASOGICH, as well as many companies in Europe are beginning to recover after the hardest stage of confinement due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As companies are resuming their activities, they face a different scenario, in which digitalisation and sustainability appear as the main challenges and lines of action. This, is added to the fact that we are immersed in a globalised economy with trade conditions that increasingly exert



We offer monthly networking meetings and a professional exchange with entrepreneurs from our country as well as experts from Germany.

pressure on companies for competitiveness. In this scenario, collaboration between companies is essential and part of the collaboration focus that some companies in the ASOGICH network have generated with German companies. In this sense, collaboration has already taken place in the fields of mining, health, and artificial intelligence.

As an association, we believe that the greatest challenge lies in strengthening the collaboration ties that have already been established between Chilean and German companies. It is also important for some companies in the network to resume collaboration activities with German companies that were interrupted by the pandemic. Finally, another significant challenge is to initiate new collaborations in fields such as Industry 4.0 and renewable energies, areas in which Germany has advanced a long way and from which our companies can learn a lot.

Another important area of German-Chilean cooperation in which the alumni network would like to play a leading role is the promotion of a dual vocational training system inspired by the German experience.

How do you specifically support the alumni?

These days, the alumni network of Chile, ASOGICH, is focused on disseminating information on support programmes that the Chilean government offers for SMEs. We have also advised companies that want to apply for government benefit programmes and collaborative projects that have arisen within the network.

On the other hand, we are also organising an activity for our members for the first half of 2022, aimed at empowerment and leadership of companies in our network in two specific topics of great interest in our environment: Industry 4.0 and renewable energies, particularly green hydrogen – an event for which we hope for the support of other alumni networks as well as the Manager Training Programme “Fit for Partnership with Germany”.

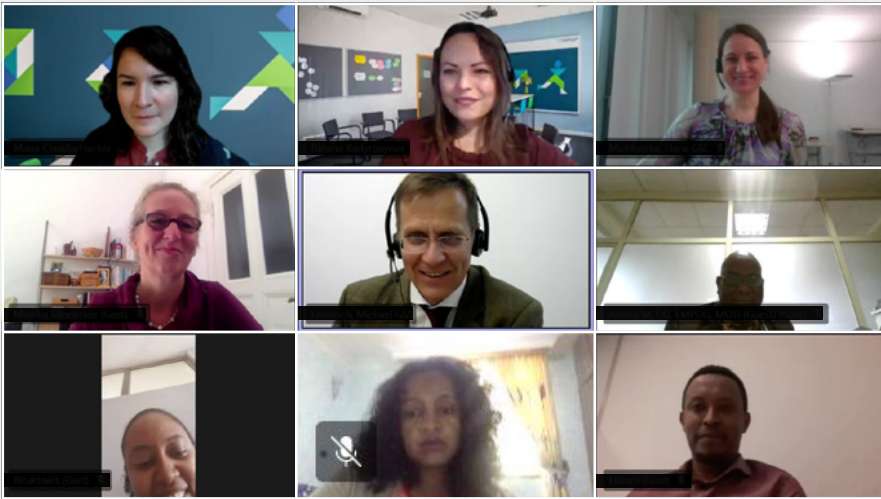
What can I look forward to if I decide to become a member of your association?

We offer monthly networking meetings and a professional exchange with entrepreneurs from our country as well as experts from Germany. We are, for example, in close contact with the Chilean business development initiative CORFO, with whom we started the preparation of an application for government funds to hold an event of high quality on Industry 4.0 and renewable energy topics. This will allow us to exchange experiences between German and Chilean professionals.



How to become a member of ASOGICH

Fill in the contact form available on www.asogich.org or send an e-mail to one of the following addresses: contacto@asogich.org, mariaines@asogich.org or paulo@asogich.org. After confirming that you have participated in the MP, you are registered as a member. ASOGICH is also on LinkedIn.



“The programme was a game changer”

Alumni from Ethiopia met for a virtual follow-up event in July, one and a half years after completing training in Germany. The group talked about financial performance and another key topic everyone was very invested in: resilience

The 21 entrepreneurs enjoyed the reunion at the digital meeting organised by the IMAP training centre. The pandemic had put them all through some challenging months, but everyone agreed participating in the MP had really helped them make it through. At the follow-up, alumni – all members of the 2019 Ethiopian pilot group – enthusiastically ex-

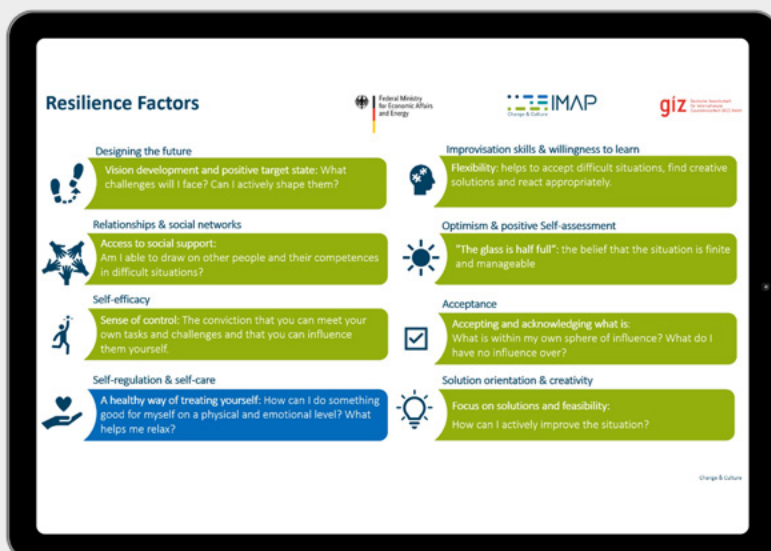
changed their experiences from the past year, shared results, and discussed current difficulties and opportunities.

The agenda also included an advanced training module on resilience and coping with the changes brought about by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In this session, alumni expanded on their

knowledge of change management from the Manager Training Programme and learned more about their own resilience and how to strengthen it. Participants also discussed factors that influence resilience, like acceptance, a positive attitude in crisis situations, and a social network.

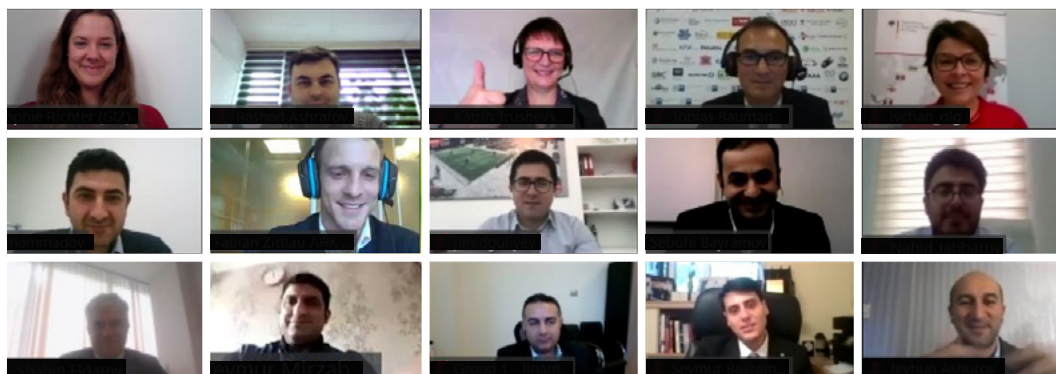
At the follow-up, alumni noted three core skills they relied on for crisis management during the pandemic: expertise in marketing, negotiation and change management. These topics were covered during training in Germany and alumni were subsequently able to leverage their know-how successfully. “I remember it was a real game changer,” one Ethiopian entrepreneur said, looking back on taking part in the Programme.

Monika Stienecker from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy and representatives of the MP's local partner, the Ethiopian Ministry of Trade and Industry, also joined the virtual event: Assefa Mulugeta Kondal, Director General Export Promotion Directorate General, and his deputy Haimanot Tibebu Kassaye. Monika Stienecker emphasised the importance of sustainable economic development and affirmed that although cooperation with Ethiopia in the Manager Training Programme was currently in the pilot phase, results had proven very promising so far. Ethiopian partners confirmed their dedication to bilateral cooperation and assured participants that the Ethiopian government was very interested in working closely with the Ethiopian private sector. Assefa Mulugeta Kondal praised the MP as an excellent opportunity for exporting Ethiopia's predominantly agricultural products. He noted that the German market was particularly challenging because it places such high demands on quality, which made this unique form of support from Germany very welcome. At the same time, the Programme gave German companies access to a growth market, Kondal added: “Our relationship is a win-win situation”.



Alumni are Using Digitalisation for Networking

Azerbaijan Alumni of the Manager Training Programme want to more intensively network nationally and internationally and expand their contacts to the German economy. A virtual alumni hub has been designed to make it easier.



“We have been imagining a network in this form for the graduates in Azerbaijan for some time now. We would like to use it to sustainably build up and reanimate national and international structures for economic cooperation”, is how Rashad Mammadov justified this plan. He is an entrepreneur and the coordinator of the alumni association Azerbaijan-German Alumni (AGA) Club, and is a graduate of the MP himself. “We have realised that a closed and highly visible structure supports our entrepreneurs in times of crisis. It enables them to go new ways efficiently and independent of their location. We would like to make the network even more active through the digital format. The virtual alumni hub is to serve this purpose”, explains Mammadov.

The coronavirus pandemic and the resulting increased acceptance of the digital formats for cooperation ultimately became the catalyst for this idea. A team of ten people is now working on setting up the virtual alumni hub. It is on their homepage that the club will be presenting its services, and inviting members to both its own and external events like trainings, trade fairs and member gatherings and to organise and realise its own events. The AGA Club is primarily concerned with building bridges to Germany. This connection to Germany is also apparent



We would like to make the network even more active through the digital format.

Rashad Mammadov

in the new club logo, a bunch of grapes: Each grape in the colours of the German and the Azerbaijani flag stands for one alumnus and symbolises the German-Azerbaijani collaboration and their mutual success.

Rashad Mammadov has specific ideas for future work with alumni: “There will be a good mix of online and offline events. We also want to keep our alumni active, of course.” In-person meetings are still important and ought to give MP graduates the opportunity to network and motivate

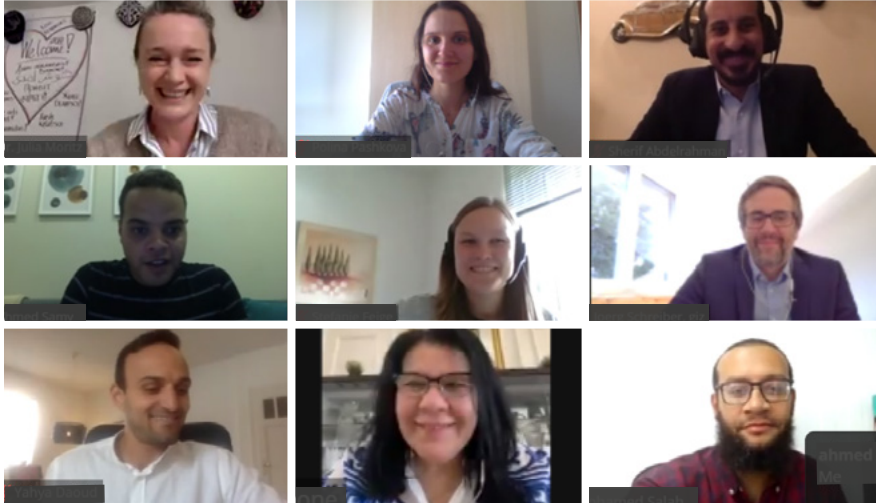
each other. Members are to be individually guided and be in a position to present themselves in a more appealing way to German and international companies. The AGA Club should also make it possible for alumni to present their companies, participate in further education, find new ideas and business partners and to realise projects together.

Since the Manager Training Programme started in Azerbaijan in 2009, the active alumni – specialists from various sectors in middle and upper management – have been meeting regularly for roundtables, discussions and trainings. Following the 10-year anniversary of the Programme in 2019 a group ultimately formed with the goal of developing measures for the Azerbaijani MP graduates and revitalising the network. Of the current 490 alumni, many are already involved in the AGA Club network. “We hope for many more”, says Rashad Mammadov. The club also hopes to reach them through the virtual alumni hub and plans to establish itself as a professional contact for German businesses with the network.

Contact:

rashad-mammadov@hotmail.com

A New Perspective through Peer Coaching



In the Manager Training Programme the participants encounter many different types of people: trainers, German entrepreneurs, potential partners. But they also get to know the other executives with whom they are completing the Programme very intensively, their peers. Egyptian and Tunisian alumni learned about how to benefit from these contacts in a seminar on peer coaching.

As a special form of exchange between colleagues in which a group of like-minded individuals work together to solve a concrete problem, peer coaching is about moderating with an open-ended solution and grasping complicated relationships more quickly. In a virtual seminar held in September, the graduates came to terms with this method and were able to apply it immediately. The mix of sectors that the alumni represented – from the food industry to pharmaceuticals and commerce, and the construction and energy sectors – was only to their advantage, explained the trainer Dr Julia Moritz: “The more diverse the group is, the better. In an interdisciplinary group, anyone can ask questions about a problem and get new perspectives from his peers.” In every peer coaching session there was a case owner, a group of experts and one or more moderators who ensure that the rules are followed and who oversee the process.



Be fair, but also be objective.

MP participant

An MP alumna presented the first case in the workshop. She reported that her company had recently merged, resulting in a new corporate structure. Her department was also about to go through some changes. While many of the employees had integrated into the new structure quite well, there were still some who refused to accept the change. This presented the alumna with difficult human resources decisions: “How do I include employ-

ees in the change? Now I either have to transfer some of them to another department or let them go. I have a dilemma on my hands because I don't have a practical solution for these employees“, explained the manager. In the next step the stand-in experts had the opportunity to ask questions in order to better understand the described problem. Only afterwards did they propose solutions. As in brainstorming, three rules applied here: All ideas are welcome, quantity takes priority over quality, and you can pick up on suggestions from others and develop them further. The case owner has a listener-only function here.

Many ideas were collected and discussed over the course of the workshop. One course participant concluded the discussion with the advice: “Be fair, but also be objective.” The alumna offered her gratitude for the good ideas in a feedback round: “I now see many things more clearly and will make a well-considered decision at the right time in future”. Other course participants were also impressed by the method. Another case owner summed it up as follows: “I will directly implement some of the ideas. The various professional backgrounds of the participants helped us to stay focused on the issue and provided valuable suggestions. It depends only on how deep you dig, for there is always a solution.” The method of peer coaching offers both solutions and sensitivity to a particular problem. “The core idea is to get a fresh perspective through peer coaching. I think that's very useful”, said another alumnus.

Looking for Innovative Solutions

A conference for Russian alumni of German programmes under the “Shaping a sustainable future – new responsibilities for science, research and business” motto took place in Yekaterinburg from October 24 to 26. Manager Training Programme alumni attended the event initiated by the German-Russian Forum and organised by the German Embassy in Russia.

Event partner Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) invited 20 Manager Training Programme alumni to attend the conference held at Ural Federal University. In cooperation with the German-Russian Chamber of Commerce (AHK), GIZ organised two workshops on the effects and challenges of the 4th industrial revolution for Russian-German cooperation. These addressed questions such as how Industry 4.0 could help Russian SMEs increase their competitiveness and export potential and conquer the digital market niche.

Ernst Stöckl-Pukall, Director of the Digitisation and Industry 4.0 Unit at the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi), highlighted how Industry 4.0 is integrating companies into larger ecosystems, bringing



Industry 4.0 is integrating companies into larger ecosystems, bringing them together to form flexible networks.

Ernst Stöckl-Pukall

them together to form flexible networks. The German government's 2030 Vision for Industrie 4.0 is about shaping these ecosystems globally. Stöckl-Pukall introduced the GAIA-X cloud platform, a lighthouse project focused on building data infrastructure.

Alumni discussed German-Russian cooperation projects and their experience with areas of Industry 4.0 with representatives from two German companies, Bosch Rexroth and Almatech. Dmitry Kononenko, Project Manager for Digitisation of the Economy at the AHK, talked about the German-Russian Initiative for the Digitisation of the Economy (GRID) and invited workshop participants to some events hosted by the German-Russian Chamber of Commerce.

MP alumni discussed their experience with Industry 4.0 technologies and visions for future digital collaboration with other workshop participants. Maxim Savinkov, founder and head of CSort, shared his visionary view of the digital future of entrepreneurship. He also talked about the tools already in use in his company, such as predictive analytics, big data and virtual reality. Inna Bondareva from Targetta, which opened an office in Munster in spring 2020, also addressed the use of virtual reality technologies in healthcare, including in the export of digital services. The CEO of the Russian Cheryomushki KBK plant, Sergey Shedrin, described his experience introducing robotics into production processes.

Together, workshop participants discussed prospects and opportunities for German-Russian cooperation in the digital field. Some solid ideas emerged, including creating a pilot 4.0 competence centre for SMEs on the Ural Federal University campus modelled on the German Mittelstand 4.0 competence centres, and continued training in the field of Industry 4.0 as part of the Manager Training Programme. The two GIZ and AHK workshops were very well received in Ekaterinburg.





New Paths

Manjusha Mohan represents change at G'sons Apparels, where she has promoted the development of women and revolutionised the way her company handles waste. She is also driving the firm's internationalisation.

”

I try to avoid plastic whenever possible.

Manjusha Mohan

When Mohan started working for Indian textile company G'sons at the age of 32, she knew next to nothing about fabrics. “I could barely see the differences in fabric quality and material. It was a steep learning curve,” she recalls with a twinkle in her eye. The computer scientist worked for her father's company for eight years, most recently as executive director. She participated in the Manager Training Programme in this role in 2019.

New mindset

Mohan was impressed by the quality of dialogue in Germany on diversity. “When I started at the company, it was the tradi-

tional male domain. Our seamstresses were at the bottom of the hierarchy and were supervised by male colleagues. Management, my father with his three brothers, was above that,” she recalls. “New male colleagues were always recruited from outside. So, I asked: Hey, why aren't we using our own people?” Mohan began promoting female employees and preparing them to move up the ladder. This was how she slowly broke down the traditional hierarchy. It has proven to be a very wise move, as the women who, with her help, have risen up through the ranks are successful and committed to the company.

Mohan leads a very environmentally conscious life. “I try to avoid plastic whenever possible.” The issue of sustainability is only just starting to take hold in this populous, emerging nation. So Mohan was especially pleased to see just how important a sustainable lifestyle was in Germany. Many



The company headquarters of the textile business G'sons is located in the South Indian city of Kannur.

German companies have already included fostering sustainable business practices in their corporate strategies. “We always used to burn our waste,” Mohan recalls. This was something she was determined to change. Along the way, she discovered that not everyone was enthusiastic about the idea. People would often remind her, “that’s the way we’ve always done it.” And not just staff either. She prevailed though and has found ways to either reuse or sell the valuable textile waste and production by-products. As plush filling for cuddly toys, for example. She won over even the most obstinate doubters once the income began coming in.

Business success overshadowed by the coronavirus

During the Manager Training Programme, Mohan successfully established a new business contact in Germany. She

was making and delivering t-shirts with a company logo for cruise line. Then the coronavirus pandemic hit. Due to the cruise industry’s precarious position, the business partner struggled to weather the crisis and the business relationship ended. Still, Mohan says, working with that first client in Germany and Europe was a valuable experience. She hopes G’sons will be able to maintain the thread she spun to Germany once the situation gets back to normal. Either way, training definitely helped her improve her international business skills, she says.

Rosy outlook for business

The coronavirus crisis has hit the textile industry hard. “People are not spending money on clothes,” Mohan says. The severe lockdown in India meant G’sons had to close down for months. Management was unable to cover payroll, and

employees had to be paid the emergency wages imposed by the government. In 2020, the company lost about 50 percent of its revenue, which meant dipping into its reserves. The situation is slowly easing now though. In 2021, Mohan expects a 75 percent return to pre-crisis sales. Nevertheless, she has decided to move to Dubai and take a new job there for personal reasons. Now the computer scientist is working in “her” industry again. She still feels loyal to her company in India though, and is now responsible for business development in the Middle East for G’sons. It is going well. She is leveraging the skills she learned in Germany to enter new markets and has already landed two projects. A container with work clothes will soon be on its way to the Persian Gulf.



“Buna enteta” – Let’s Have a Coffee!

Sara Yirga now successfully sells her coffee abroad as well together with her husband and business partner Dagmawi Iyasu.

Coffee is Ethiopia’s national beverage. **Sara Yirga** also loves the brew made from roasted beans. Her company produces fair trade coffee and supports smallholder farmers. Since completing the Manager Training Programme, she has also been exporting her special beans abroad. The passionate entrepreneur is also involved in advanced training for coffee experts.

At YA Coffee’s coffee roastery in Ethiopia’s capital Addis Ababa, an expert roaster pours beans into the hopper of a roasting drum. She presses the start button, and the drum begins to rotate loudly. In just a few minutes, an unexpected aroma

starts to build. It smells like popcorn. And sounds like it, too. Coffee beans and popcorn kernels go through a similar roasting process. Processing coffee beans, however, is very complex and a truly skilled craft. Gradually, the wonderful aroma of freshly

roasted coffee beans unfolds in the air. Sara Yirga, head of YA Coffee, uses a small shovel in the drum to check the results. “The beans look great, very nice colour,” she says, smiling with satisfaction.

Setting a course

It has been a long road to get here. It began in 2012, when Sara and her husband Dagmawi were sitting in a café, as they did every morning, enjoying a cup of coffee before work. That was the day they set the course for their future. “We wanted a change. And to do something



roasting in this country for quite a while,” she says. She has invested a lot of time and effort into creating an environment for in-country roasting. Over the years, Yirga has built up a network of producers and completed a number of training courses to expand her expertise. Seven years and many setbacks later, she successfully sold her first roasted coffee abroad. The Manager Training Programme helped her get there.

Value creation on site

Yirga is contributing to the development of the African country with her work. Roasted beans fetch double the price on the world market and create local jobs. The entrepreneur has created eight jobs and filled six of them with women. A few years ago, she founded the “Ethiopian Women in Coffee” association, still a passion project today. She completed the Manager Training Programme in 2019. Yirga has recently begun exporting her coffee to Germany through an online retailer and is adding other countries too. She says the time she spent in Germany, the largest exporter of roasted coffee in Europe, boosted her international business development. “I learned how the international coffee business works.” Her product is fair trade, certified organic and suitable for niche markets, so it can be sold in speciality and gourmet stores. That is something she learned in Germany.

Corporate philosophy

Around five million smallholder farmers in Ethiopia make their living growing coffee beans. Helping them out with better production and cultivation techniques is

close to Yirga's heart. YA Coffee's corporate philosophy focuses on sustainability. Yirga allows small businesses to use her company's roasting facility. YA Coffee also offers online training, including through GIZ's “The Coffee Innovation Fund” programme. Through the fund, GIZ supports coffee projects in East Africa in the field of innovation and sustainable development.

Outlook

Yirga expects a turnaround in 2022. She has set her sights high and is actively developing YA Coffee into a global brand. She also plans to set up training, research and education centres for smallholder farmers and wants to promote coffee tourism in Ethiopia.

Right now though, she is busy making her favourite drink, an espresso. She prefers to drink it in her own café, “Cherish Addis”, which she opened in June 2021. It is the mother of three's youngest “baby”, and she enjoys slipping into the role of barista here in the afternoons. She brings the same passion as she does to all her other roles: entrepreneur, coffee roaster, trainer, mother and supporter of women's equality. Sara Yirga lives a very full and busy life.

that had meaning,” Yirga recalls, looking back on this pivotal moment. “We knew next to nothing about coffee. Except that we love it,” the energetic businesswoman says with a laugh.

A rocky path

Yirga has had to overcome a lot of hurdles. One was sourcing the export-quality, green coffee beans she needed for her business. While large quantities of beans are exported, most are sent out raw. Then there was the fact that “the authorities here did not provide for professional



Cherish Addis is the name of YA Coffee's cafe in Addis Abeba.



Sara Yirga at her roasting drum.

Eight years ago, **Juan Reyes** founded his own software start-up together with four friends from university. “A company has to be as diverse as a zoo,” he says. Reyes completed the Manager Training Programme a year ago. It has become his springboard into international business.

Virtual Reality Made in Chile Conquers the European Market



When Juan Reyes walked into his new office for the first time, he was overcome by a strange sense of déjà vu. It was like he'd been there before. He walked down the hall and entered the showroom. Then, he climbed a small staircase to the spacious work area with a view over the rooftops of Vina del Mar. Everything was so familiar. The 36-year-old had walked through these rooms many times before – virtually in a simulation created by Yoy.

Reyes is the founder of the Yoy software start-up. The computer scientist feels completely home in virtual reality (VR), but this simulation surprised even him. “We used our own VR when designing our office. It looks exactly the same!” The office is a milestone in Yoy's history. “A long-awaited dream,” Reyes says, his voice full of emotion. Until this point, all company employees had been working from home. The office was meant as an opportunity for what is the norm for many firms: all working together in one place. But then the coronavirus came along and threw a wrench into the works. The new office within walking distance of the boulevard that runs along the Pacific Ocean and a stone's throw from Rio Marga Marga, stayed empty. Little by little, it is now finally filling with life.

Germany as springboard

“If we can make it there, we'll make it anywhere!” Reyes has adapted these lines from the famous song to describe why he participated in the Manager Training Programme (MP). And he made it in Germany. He is currently programming a business management game for an educational institution in Berlin. The institution's managing director was a trainer at one of the seminars Reyes attended as part of the MP. Together, they have developed a digital game tailored to meet managers' needs. The game allows executives to simulate business situations and solve them together online. Players do not need VR goggles, just an access code. Reyes wants to continue to expand internationally, and the Manager Training Programme has been useful here too. Through a contact, he was able to successfully develop a fire extinguisher simulator for Mercedes-Benz in Spain. It is used for fire safety drills in Vitoria in northern Spain. The plant there is the world's second largest production facility for Mercedes vans. Reyes has es-



We used our own VR when designing our office. It looks exactly the same!

Juan Reyes

established a subsidiary in Spain as part of the project. This first foreign office is another milestone for Yoy.

The company is developing rapidly and has hired ten new employees. With his work, Reyes is helping to ensure that fewer talented people leave the country for work elsewhere. His one wish is that he could hire even more people with different professional profiles, including more women. “A company needs to be as diverse as a zoo,” he says. He anticipates record sales for 2021 and would like to celebrate with his now 30 employees. In the new office, assuming the coronavirus situation allows it.

Digital learning is in

“Digital learning is in demand, and Corona-19 has only driven it up,” Reyes says. He has tailored his strategy accordingly, focusing less on VR and more on web-based training for industry. The advantages for companies are obvious: it saves on costs and goes beyond spatial limitations. And as Reyes emphasises: “Our safety and machine training units can prevent accidents and save lives.”

Digital cosmopolitan

Reyes is a cosmopolitan and thirsty for knowledge: “In another era, I would live in a library learning about science, technology, history and philosophy. I would spend a lifetime on each of these things.” The father of two writes for a digital newspaper, has a podcast, and his first book, a

handbook for start-up founders, is coming out soon. “So others don't make the same mistakes we did,” he says with a laugh. With 21,000 followers, he would number among the top 10 German CEOs in the LinkedIn rankings. In biology, a cosmopolitan species is a creature that inhabits most parts of the globe. Yoy has an excellent chance of growing into digital cosmopolitan. And who knows whose footsteps the company may follow in one day.

Juan Reyes' team also develops fire extinguisher simulators.



Entrepreneur from Tashkent Shows Flexibility and Farsightedness

Umida Tadjieva is a businesswoman through and through. After completing her degree as a paediatrician she attained a Master's degree in health management and in 2014 founded a company that now makes it possible for patients in Uzbekistan to have access to high-quality medical treatment in Germany. The company is also active on the international health market and trains staff from medical and other fields. Yet, as an entrepreneur she doesn't only export patients and staff, she also ensures that medical expertise flows back into Uzbekistan. The Manager Training Programme helped support her in doing this.



Umida Tadjieva (2nd from left) regularly attends the Tashkent health care trade fair TIHE, here in 2018 with a German delegation and representatives of the health care economy in Uzbekistan.

Umida Tadjieva founded Medica GmbH in August 2014, and has continuously developed the company since then. Seven years later the company employs a dozen experts, who are dedicated to the goal of making it possible for Uzbek citizens to get medical treatment that is unavailable in their country. As a native of Tashkent, she also helps to generate possibilities in her own country: Consulting Uzbek health institutions and providing qualified training abroad for Uzbek doctors have become further core activities.

Germany is often used as a standard in Uzbekistan. "We have been cooperating with German companies from the start", explains

Tadjieva. "I know the German healthcare system well. I know how the German hospitals that we send our patients, doctors and medical students to operate. In Tashkent we regularly present German hospitals and clinics at the international healthcare exhibition TIHE." The company also organises trips for Uzbek entrepreneurs from the healthcare sector to the international medicine trade fair MEDICA in Düsseldorf.

I have to go there!

Once the entrepreneur starts talking about the Manager Training Programme (MP), her eyes light up: "In the spring of 2017 the Uzbek Chamber of Industry and Com-

merce published a competition for participation in the MP. When I read that I knew: I have to go there! The programme was an opportunity for me. And a fantastic chance to share knowledge with internationally renowned experts in the fields of public health and health management." At the RWTH Aachen training site Tadjieva met MP participants in the economy and health sectors from Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Kirgizstan, Mongolia, India and Mexico. "We learned a lot", remembers Tadjieva: "How to manage a company in accordance with European norms, or transact or lower expenses intelligently. We networked with German partners and with colleagues from our region of the world."

A company in demand internationally

The manager returned to Tashkent with a number of concrete ideas and new expertise, rebranded her company and changed the employment procedures for new staff. In the summer of 2019 Medica won a bid for a matchmaking together with a German business partner, which was part of an export support programme headed by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy and the Federal Office of Economics and Export Control. Yet before the project could be realised, the plans were shut down by the COVID-19 pandemic. "We were to have completed the project in September 2020 with in-person negotiations, and tours of Uzbek hospitals, medical production site, etc.", so Tadjieva. In-



stead, 80 bilateral talks with twelve German and over 60 Uzbek firms were held online. “They included both companies with more than 20 years of experience and who are among the biggest importers of medical products and technology, large hospitals and also young businesses who reacted with great flexibility to a changing health care market, especially during the pandemic”, remembers Tadjieva. “The meetings were

both productive and fruitful. I hope that the companies will further expand their relationships with the German partners.”

COVID-19 also demands more flexibility from the company

Because the company relied on international flights, the coronavirus pandemic affected Medica as well. “Like the rest of the country, we were not prepared when the pandemic suddenly brought everything to a halt in early March 2020.” But Tadjieva knew what needed to be done: “Even during the complete lockdown we flew out emergency cases and patients with complex courses of disease for treatment. At the same time, we re-focused on the acute lack of doctors in Uzbekistan and acted as doctors from April to mid-October 2020. In addition, we contributed to various bids for the delivery of medical equipment. We closed the company office, but we maintained the cooperation with international



I know the German health-care system well. I know how the German hospitals that we send our patients, doctors and medical students to operate.

Umida Tadjieva

doctors and experts for collaboration, especially as concerned the pandemic.”

Umida Tadjieva has now completely resumed normal business operations and looks back at the previous seven years with pride: A small company with five employees has now become Medica GmbH – with a strong team of twelve and five times the revenues. “We are continuing to develop and enter new markets, in our country as well. We are also about to realise two large projects. The company website is currently being revamped.” Then it is also to be in German in addition to Uzbek, Russian and English: „Most of our strategic partners are in Germany”, explains Tadjieva. Resting on her laurels is not an option for this Uzbek businesswoman: “I am constantly optimising something in the company. That’s what the market demands as well. Our great hope is medical consumer goods.” Then Medica would have a new pillar of medical products, with medical services being the other.



Umida Tadjieva founded Medica GmbH in the summer of 2014. Her company now has 12 employees.



B2B meetings are an integral part of the Manager Training Programme. These went online when the Programme changed to a virtual format. Tutor **Mareike Dröge** talks about how to score points with German entrepreneurs and get closer to your business goals.

“Getting a foot in the door with German companies”

Journal: What has changed about B2Bs since the MP went online?

Mareike Dröge: We now have to invest even more in preparation. This is true for both sides, for Programme participants and German companies alike. The companies generally have fairly clear ideas and schedule the first meeting for no more than one hour. We advise both sides to prepare a short presentation and send it in advance, so they know who they are talking to during the video call and know as much as possible about the other's business as well.

What is the best way to prepare for a B2B with a German entrepreneur?

It is always important to know who is sitting across from you, things like the person's name and their role in the company. So for larger groups, it's helpful to make nametags ahead of time and have them clearly visible during the meeting. It's impossible to remember every name from the introduction round. It's also good to focus on just one or two products. An hour is just too short for more than that. It is better to talk about one topic in detail. You can always schedule another meeting to address anything else.

I also suggest that participants look at the website of the German company they are interacting with, and make sure they have a website they can refer the company to. It's also smart to meet online with the training centre organising the B2B 30 to 15 minutes before the scheduled time to check that the technology is up and running.

What advantages do you think the virtual format offers?

One big difference, and also a great advantage over face-to-face meetings, is the fact that other key people can jump in on the online conversation, like technical experts or specialists from a company's logistics or marketing departments. This is particularly helpful for more technical products. It's possible to hold a good conversation with up to five people and you make progress faster than if you talk to just one contact at a given company. But, as I said, systematic and thorough preparation is essential. We are happy to offer our support as a training centre.



Participants can fully benefit from the online talks and still meet all their family or business obligations at home.

Mareike Dröge

Another plus is that a virtual B2B can include companies outside Germany. Just like a virtual company visit, which can take place at a subsidiary in the participants' home country, for example, B2Bs can also be arranged with local branches. A company's individual sites often have different areas of expertise and experts is it useful to get directly involved. This is a real advantage for native-language programmes in Russian and Chinese, since it usually eliminates the need for interpretation.

In addition, participants can fully benefit from the online talks – and all other modules of the virtual Programme format – and still meet all their family or business obligations at home.

How are participants experiencing these meetings, what has the feedback been like so far?

Overall, our participants have been very satisfied. This has become the new normal in a sense. Executives around the world have gotten used to holding business talks online. And they have been a very successful part of our Programme. I remember one participant who tried and failed to initiate contact with a German company several times at trade fairs in Germany. He was finally able to meet with them via a B2B meeting we set up. These virtual meetings can help you get a foot in the door. And sometimes business opportunities emerge spontaneously during a meeting. We had one participant who came in wanting to sell saffron and ultimately agreed with his German counterpart to sell hazelnuts instead. And participants frequently follow up with personal contact. I was recently part of a B2B with Chinese MP participants. During the conversation, the German entrepreneur invited them to visit the company's subsidiary in China. Whatever the goal or outcome, it takes more effort and time to create a common level of understanding among participants for a virtual B2B. But if you prepare well, you will succeed.

How does a virtual B2B typically work?

The tutors in our training centres assist participants and moderate the conversations. After a round of introductions, the German company usually talks about what they do and shows photos or videos. Often these films are so good it's like you're actually there. Unlike in a face-to-face meeting, the impact of facial expressions and gestures is limited online. Charm and charisma, which often play a role in successful business interactions, don't have the same effect either. As part of the Manager Training Programme, we offer presentation training sessions where participants can practice exactly how to put their best foot forward and effectively interact with their German counterparts. This includes things like the right way to sit in front of the screen. ►



The direct line

The Manager Training Programme supports its participants in initiating and intensifying contacts with German companies. B2B talks with prospective business partners serve to sound out interest in cooperation and offer a variety of opportunities for networking and exchanging ideas with representatives from German companies. In virtual one-on-one meetings, Programme participants talk about their companies and products based on their company's profile and market research and negotiate possible future joint ventures. On average, each MP participant takes part in three business-to-business (B2B) meetings.



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► ***How successful do first meetings like this tend to be?***

The B2B meetings are usually the first steps, just like in the face-to-face format. They are introductory meetings in which prices, delivery quantities, or logistical issues like warehouses and supply chains can also be discussed.

So what should I pay attention to, and where should I worry about putting my foot in my mouth?

That's very country specific; there are a lot of intercultural elements that play a role here. Sometimes participants come to the meeting with very different expectations and goals. I suggest that if you want to sell something, you should introduce the product in the form the German company needs, the right size, for example, or desired quantity. One difference I've noticed compared to

face-to-face meetings is that many German companies ask a lot of questions in advance; they want to know more precisely than before whether their counterpart is a prospective business partner before committing to a B2B. Showing a film about your products goes down well. It's also important to make sure the interpreters have time to prepare. The more information I can provide in advance, the better. Overall though, good preparation is the absolute key.

About the interviewee



Mareike Dröge is a project manager, trainer and coach at Carl Duisberg Centres in Cologne and is responsible for preparing and implementing the MP. With a degree in English and economics, she has over 25 years of experience in dealing and negotiating with entrepreneurs from around 50 different countries.

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