

Germany–Ukraine intergovernmental consultations: security as the foundation of a strategic partnership

Lidia Gibadło , Kacper Sienicki

On 14 April in Berlin, Chancellor Friedrich Merz and President Volodymyr Zelensky took part in the first Germany–Ukraine intergovernmental consultations in over 20 years. The Ukrainian president was accompanied by six ministers responsible for defence, foreign affairs, social policy and development, energy, the economy, and the environment and agriculture. The previous meeting of this kind took place in 2004. The next round of consultations is scheduled to be held in Ukraine in one year's time.

The meeting led to the signing of a declaration on a strategic partnership between Germany and Ukraine, structured around three pillars: security, the economy, and humanitarian issues (see Appendix). In addition, nine interministerial agreements were concluded, setting out concrete measures in specific areas. Representatives of defence companies from both countries also signed six memoranda of cooperation. These agreements envisage the establishment of two joint ventures focused on interceptor drones, as well as the joint production of medium-range drones. They also include three projects related to the development of cruise and/or ballistic missiles. A strong emphasis was placed on cooperation in the analysis of battlefield data. The relevant agreement provides for the development of a joint system to analyse German weaponry used by Ukraine. It also provides for the transfer of data from Ukraine's DELTA combat coordination system and other digital platforms. This data is intended to support the development of artificial intelligence models and analytical tools.

During the consultations, Germany announced a €4 billion military support package for Kyiv. The bulk of this consists of several hundred PAC-2 missiles for Patriot air defence systems worth €3.2 billion. The package also includes 36 launchers for IRIS-T air defence systems worth €182 million, as well as €300 million earmarked for the development of long-range strike capabilities.

The establishment of the strategic partnership and the revival of the intergovernmental consultation mechanism underline the growing importance of cooperation with Ukraine in German foreign and security policy. The Merz government regards support for Kyiv as a key element in deterring Russia, thereby making security the central pillar of this relationship. Within this framework, Germany has placed particular emphasis on expanding defence industry cooperation.

Commentary

- **The reactivation of intergovernmental consultations with Ukraine confirms that one of the main objectives of Berlin's eastern policy is to develop cooperation with Kyiv.** The Merz government treats support for Ukraine as a means of countering Russia's imperial ambitions extending beyond Ukrainian territory. This engagement is also intended to enable Germany to play as significant a role as possible in the peace process and to rebuild its credibility as a partner for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Germany also seeks to secure the participation of its companies in Ukraine's reconstruction and to gain access to Ukrainian know-how, particularly in the field of drone production.
- **Berlin is steadily strengthening its position as a key security partner for Ukraine** through continued deliveries of arms and military equipment, alongside the development of mechanisms for political consultation and defence **industry** cooperation. Germany is maintaining its support model, which includes supplying domestically produced equipment, participating in NATO's PURL mechanism for weapons procured in the United States, providing components for defence production in Ukraine, and expanding cooperation on drone production within Germany. The decision not to supply Kyiv with Taurus cruise missiles is being offset by German investment in the development of Ukraine's long-range strike capabilities. Germany's position as the largest European donor of military assistance to Kyiv is underpinned by stable funding, supported by the May 2025 reform of the Basic Law, which exempts defence spending exceeding 1% of GDP, including military aid to Ukraine, from the scope of the debt brake.
- **The course of President Zelensky's visit indicates that, amid declining US engagement, Kyiv now regards Germany as its most important partner for military support in the war against Russia.** Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha highlighted Berlin's leadership in this area among Ukraine's allies, reflecting the scale of German assistance. According to the Kiel Institute for the World Economy, Germany ranks second only to the United States in total support provided to Ukraine since 2022, amounting to more than €25 billion. In 2025 alone, Berlin allocated around €9 billion in military assistance. This has included deliveries of air defence systems, ammunition, and drones, as well as funding for the production of long-range weapons in Ukraine. At the same time, the German government ceased publishing detailed information in 2025 on the types and value of weapons supplied to Ukraine.
- **The consultations in Berlin were part of President Zelensky's diplomatic tour of Europe, during which he also visited Norway, Italy, and the Netherlands.** The aim of these visits was to mobilise partners to sustain support for Ukraine's war effort, particularly with regard to air defence systems and associated missiles. Shortages in this area have become particularly acute due to the United States' involvement in the war with Iran, given its previous role as the primary supplier.
- **The agreements signed, and the prominence of defence cooperation during the Berlin meeting, highlight Kyiv's efforts to leverage capabilities developed during the war with Russia to advance its political objectives.** Ukraine presents the combat experience of its armed forces, along with its expertise in the use of unmanned systems, as a key argument for its inclusion in the European security architecture. Expanding defence

cooperation through joint ventures with Western partners is seen not only as a means of securing externally financed drone supplies, but also as an opportunity to integrate Ukraine's defence industry into the broader provision of security for European states. In this context, Berlin's engagement is intended to serve as a model for Ukraine's other partners.

- **From Ukraine's perspective, relations with Germany are central to the process of European integration**, which remains a key objective of Kyiv's foreign policy. Ukraine is therefore prioritising the development of bilateral ties with major European capitals, on the assumption that further progress towards EU accession will depend more on political decisions than on the pace of domestic reforms. Ukrainian policymakers expect the process to accelerate once the new government in Budapest lifts its blockade on opening further stages of accession negotiations. At the same time, they are aware that some countries opposed to EU enlargement may no longer be able to hide behind Hungary's position and could begin to openly obstruct or delay Ukraine's integration. In this context, Berlin's stance will be crucial in helping to overcome such resistance.

Appendix. Key provisions of the declaration on the strategic partnership between Germany and Ukraine

The fifteen-page document is divided into two parts, the second of which contains a detailed list of specific commitments and agreements. The first part sets out the rationale for elevating bilateral relations to the level of a strategic partnership, with Russia's ongoing full-scale invasion of Ukraine identified as the principal driver. The overarching objective is to secure a lasting peace in Ukraine, accompanied by "strong, credible, and legally binding security guarantees". Germany also reaffirmed its support for Ukraine's territorial integrity within internationally recognised borders, as well as for its freedom and sovereignty. The declaration identifies three principal areas of cooperation: security, the economy, and humanitarian issues.

Security-related arrangements form the core and most extensive element of both the consultations and the agreements concluded. The parties stated that, as of 2026, Germany has become Ukraine's most important bilateral partner. Berlin and Kyiv committed to regular strategic consultations on security and to the establishment of a high-level consultation mechanism. They also agreed to expand investment in the defence sector in a manner that reflects Germany's role as a key military and financial donor to Ukraine. Both sides pledged to deepen defence cooperation, particularly in air defence, drones, short-range missiles, and ammunition. Germany reaffirmed its support for Ukraine's EU integration, while emphasising that the pace of accession should depend on Kyiv's progress in reforms, and calling for the immediate opening of all negotiation clusters. Berlin also committed to supporting efforts within NATO to build consensus on Ukraine's future membership.

In the economic sphere, Germany committed to launching new development assistance funds for Ukraine, targeting areas such as economic and social reconstruction, housing, transport, district heating, decentralised energy, multi-level governance, and local government, in line with the principle of subsidiarity. The parties also agreed to establish a new working group on the economy and trade. Additional areas of cooperation include

cybersecurity, agriculture, hydrogen, biomethane, and critical raw materials. Both countries will also deepen cooperation in digitalisation, particularly in the provision of public administration services.

In the humanitarian dimension, Berlin and Kyiv pledged to expand cooperation in areas such as healthcare, housing, educational programmes, and the reintegration of veterans. They also committed to coordinating the return of Ukrainian citizens from Germany. The German side explicitly expressed its expectation that Kyiv would reduce the number of men of conscription age leaving the country, noting that between September and December of last year, more men than women arrived in Germany from Ukraine for the first time. A liaison office has been established in Berlin to facilitate voluntary returns. Support for cooperation between local authorities is intended to advance Ukraine's decentralisation process. The parties also announced plans to hold a Ukraine–Germany Bilateral Cultural Season in 2027–2028.

Key provisions of the intergovernmental consultations

Security:

- Agreements on the delivery of: PAC-2 GEM-T missiles for Patriot air defence systems; 36 launchers for IRIS-T SL air defence systems; long-range Anubis strike drones; and medium-range Seth-X drones.
- Conducting regular consultations on security policy, defence, and the defence industry between the foreign and defence ministries.
- Establishment of a German–Ukrainian Working Group on the Defence Industry.
- Establishment of a working group of the interior ministries of Ukraine and Germany to exchange experience in countering unmanned systems.
- Intensification of cooperation to support Ukraine's accession to the European Union, particularly in the area of reforms.
- Ensuring Germany's role, in close coordination with other European partners, in the peace process, with the aim of achieving a just and lasting peace and providing credible and legally binding security guarantees for Ukraine through the Coalition of the Willing and in cooperation with the United States.

Economy, innovation, and reconstruction:

- Establishment of a German–Ukrainian Working Group on the Economy and Trade between the ministries responsible for economic affairs.
- Provision by Germany of an additional €233 million for development cooperation with Ukraine.
- Opening of a branch office of Ukrainian Defence Industry (UDI) in Berlin.
- Expansion of cooperation in biomethane and hydrogen, for example through the activities of the hydrogen diplomacy office in Ukraine, including the organisation of the first hydrogen conference in Lviv (autumn 2026).

- Enhancement of cooperation in digitalisation, particularly in the areas of GovTech and digital ecosystems, aimed at implementing joint projects and programmes.

Humanitarian issues:

- Investment of over €110 million by 2029 in the reconstruction and reform of Ukraine's higher education and science system.
- Organisation of the Ukraine–Germany Cultural Season in 2027–2028.
- Launch of the Unity Hub in Berlin, aimed at improving the professional qualifications of Ukrainian citizens.
- Opening the Consulate General of Ukraine in Dresden.
- Establishment of a joint working group between the German Ministry of the Interior and Ukraine's Ministry of Social Policy to facilitate the return and integration of Ukrainians.