SME Growth Engine:

How Ukrainian SMEs Can Plug into EU Value Chains with the Help of Reliable Financial Partners

Special edition for the Ukraine Recovery Conference (URC 2026), Gdańsk, Poland

Prepered by KredoBank PKO Bank Polski Group | CASE Ukraine

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Case-Studies Report 2026: SME Growth Engine: How Ukrainian SMEs Can Plug into EU Value Chains with the Help of Reliable Financial Partners

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Executive Summary

The European Union has become Ukraine's central external market and the most important arena for the long-term transformation of Ukrainian exports. In 2025, the EU-27 accounted for more than half of Ukraine's goods exports, while Poland stood out as the largest single EU destination for Ukrainian goods. This makes Poland the most practical gateway for Ukrainian SMEs that want to test, enter, and scale within the EU. For many Ukrainian companies, Poland combines market size, geographic proximity, logistics access, cultural familiarity, and institutional links with the wider European market.

At the same time, Ukraine's current export relationship with the EU remains only partially aligned with the logic of deeper value-chain integration. The EU has absorbed large volumes of Ukrainian agricultural products, metals, minerals, and other basic inputs, especially after Russia's full-scale invasion and the redirection of trade flows through European logistics corridors. These exports are economically important, but they remain volatile and do not fully capture the strategic opportunity. The next stage of integration will depend more on expanding the number of Ukrainian firms capable of supplying higher value-added goods into European production and distribution networks.

This is where Ukrainian SMEs can bring real added value to the EU. The cases reviewed in this report show that Ukraine has a layer of entrepreneurial manufacturers able to design, adapt, and produce specialised industrial solutions. Their strengths include engineering flexibility, competitive price-quality positioning, niche specialisation, wartime resilience, proximity to the EU, and the ability to respond to practical production problems. Ukrainian SMEs can help European buyers diversify supplier bases, reduce overdependence on distant supply chains, and access cost-competitive industrial products.

However, unlocking the export potential of Ukrainian SMEs requires more than access to the EU market. Ukraine's SME base is narrower than the EU's, and the pipeline from micro-businesses to scalable small and medium-sized firms remains weak. The most promising candidates for EU value chains are often established medium-sized firms and selected advanced SMEs that already have production capacity, management capability, and some experience with certification, export logistics, or foreign buyers. Therefore, EU market access should be seen not only as a trade-promotion agenda but also as an enterprise-development agenda. Ukraine needs more firms capable of moving from isolated export attempts to repeatable supply relationships.

This report is based on an exploratory screening of 41 Ukrainian company case-studies. The sample does not represent all Ukrainian exporters. It focuses on visible company-level stories of Ukrainian firms that have entered, are prepared to enter, or already operate in EU markets. The selection deliberately prioritised firms that either are SMEs or developed from an SME-type entrepreneurial base. It also emphasises higher value-added goods rather than traditional bulk exports. The strongest concentration in the sample is machinery, equipment, vehicles, and instruments.

The case-studies show that there is no single winning route into the EU market. Ukrainian SMEs use several entry paths depending on product type, maturity, regulatory requirements, and available resources. The main models identified in the report include certification-led distribution, direct project-based B2B sales, local EU representation, EU production or deep localisation, private-label or component-supplier roles, first entry through support programmes, and regulated renewable-energy market entry.

One of the strongest cross-cutting lessons is that certification is necessary but not sufficient. Certification may open the door legally and technically but commercial access depends on trust. European buyers often prefer known brands, local suppliers, familiar distributors, and companies with a visible service record. Ukrainian SMEs reduce buyer risk through local partners, some form of local presence, or any other way that allows them to enter under a 'wrapper' already trusted by the buyer.

Poland plays a special role in this process. In macro terms, it is Ukraine's largest EU export destination. In micro terms, it often appears as the first operational bridge into the EU. For Ukrainian SMEs, Poland can function as a soft-landing market as a place to open a legal entity, set up warehousing, communicate in a more familiar business environment, and then expand further into Central and Western Europe. In this sense, Poland might be seen as a platform from which Ukrainian SMEs can become more legible, reliable, and accessible to European buyers.

Reliable financial partners are central to this transition. EU market entry is capital-intensive even before the first large contract arrives. Firms need financing for certification, participation in trade fairs, logistics, representative offices, etc. As companies move from pilot orders to regular supply, the financing need becomes larger.

This is why financial partners should be treated as part of the EU-entry model itself. Ukrainian SMEs need banks that understand both the Ukrainian business environment and the practical requirements of operating across the EU. In this context, KredoBank and PKO Bank Polski Group are naturally positioned to support Ukrainian SMEs with EU ambitions. KredoBank provides the Ukrainian-side banking relationship, SME finance and access to development-backed programmes, while PKO Bank Polski brings the scale, institutional presence and cross-border capabilities of one of Central and Eastern Europe's largest banking groups. Together, they can help Ukrainian SMEs bridge the financial, institutional and operational gap between domestic production and European market integration.

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Introduction

The European Union is already Ukraine's most important external market and one of the most promising sources of long-term demand for Ukrainian enterprises. For Ukrainian SMEs, the EU market can become a driver of sustainable growth, technological upgrading and business transformation as soon as Ukrainian firms are able to find their niche, enter the market, prove their reliability, and remain there as regular suppliers.

This report was prepared in the logic of a practical question: how can Ukrainian SMEs plug into EU value chains? The starting idea was to look at concrete company-level stories. By examining successful or partially successful cases of Ukrainian firms entering the EU market, the report seeks to understand what actually worked, which models were used, and what combination of steps may help other Ukrainian entrepreneurs seek their own opportunities in Europe.

The report first builds a macro-level picture. It shows that the EU has become the dominant destination for Ukrainian goods exports, especially after 2014 and even more since Russia's full-scale invasion. However, Ukraine's export basket remains heavily concentrated in commodities and basic industrial inputs such as agricultural products, metals, minerals, and other low-processed materials categories. Higher value-added manufactured exports to the EU are growing more slowly and remain relatively small. This means that Ukraine's deeper integration into EU value chains is still at an early stage.

The same applies to the domestic enterprise base. Ukraine has a visible layer of capable medium-sized firms and selected advanced SMEs, but the broader SME structure is weaker than in the EU. The pipeline from self-employment to micro- and mid-size firms remains too narrow. This is why EU market access is not only about the impediments to enter the market but also dependent on Ukraine's internal capacity to produce the right goods, meet quality standards, finance growth, build managerial capability, and scale production.

The report also reviews how other analytical materials assess the export potential and constraints of Ukrainian SMEs. These studies point to recurring problems, which include certification costs, weak access to partners and buyers, limited finance, insufficient export readiness, a lack of systematic supplier-development support, and the need for stronger integration into international value chains.

Against this background, the report then moves to the micro level. It analyses 41 case-studies of Ukrainian companies that have entered, are prepared to enter, or already operate in EU markets. The sample focuses mostly on SMEs or companies that developed from an SME-type base, producing higher value-added goods and industrial solutions. The cases are described through a common analytical framework and used to identify typical entry models.

The main finding is that there is no single winning route. Ukrainian SMEs enter the EU through several entry models, which include certification-led distribution, direct B2B projects, local EU representation, production localisation, private-label or component-supplier roles, support programmes, and regulated energy-market channels. Across these models, success usually depends on a full entry stack, which includes product quality, compliance, trusted partners, a local presence, and other important elements. The purpose of this report is to turn these individual stories into a clearer understanding of how Ukraine can move from isolated SME export successes towards a broader SME growth engine connected to EU value chains.

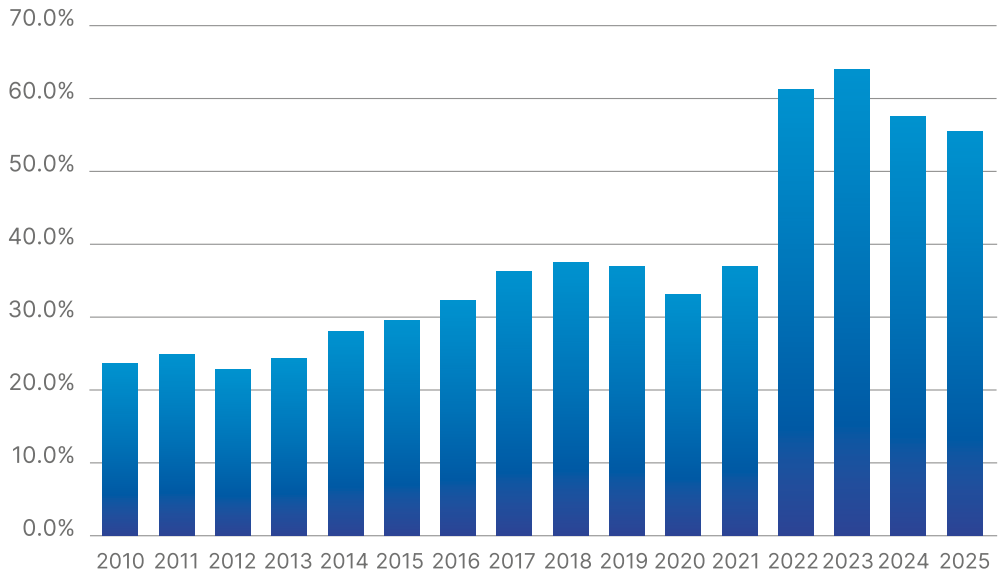
A feature common to all cases examined in this research is that, at every stage of their EU market entry, these companies faced a need for reliable financing and a dependable financial partner to back their expansion. For this role, Ukrainian SMEs can draw on only a limited pool of banks with a cross-border presence—institutions operating on both sides of the Ukraine–EU border. Against this backdrop, KredoBank and PKO Bank Polski Group stand out as natural allies for Ukrainian SMEs with EU market ambitions, uniquely positioned to provide the financial support and institutional continuity that such expansion requires

Exports to EU by Country and Sector

The EU has long been one of Ukraine's core export markets, but its role has changed fundamentally over the past decade. Before 2014, the EU accounted for roughly 20-24% of Ukraine's goods exports, while Russia absorbed around one quarter. After the Revolution of Dignity, Russia's occupation of Crimea and parts of Donbas, and the subsequent collapse of trade with Russia, Ukraine's export geography shifted sharply westward. By 2018, the EU-27 share had reached about 37%. A further institutional push came from the EU-Ukraine Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFT), provisionally applied since 1 January 2016, which created a more predictable framework for Ukrainian companies entering the EU market.

Russia's full-scale invasion accelerated this shift. In 2022-2023, the EU temporarily accounted for more than 60% of Ukraine's goods exports, reflecting both the loss or disruption of other routes and markets and the growing importance of EU logistics corridors. As Ukrainian exports gradually recovered some positions outside the EU, the EU share started to decline, but it remained structurally much higher than before the war. In 2025, exports to the EU-27 stood at USD 18.7 billion, or 54.9% of Ukraine's total goods exports. This means the EU has become the central external market for Ukrainian goods. EU-27 exports rose from USD 16.5 billion in 2019 to USD 24.8 billion in 2022, before easing to USD 22.0-22.2 billion in 2023-2024 and falling to USD 18.7 billion in 2025.

Figure 1.
Share of Ukraine's commodity exports* to the EU-27 in the period 2010-2025, %



** - food products, minerals, chemical products, wood products, manufacturing products, metals, and machinery*

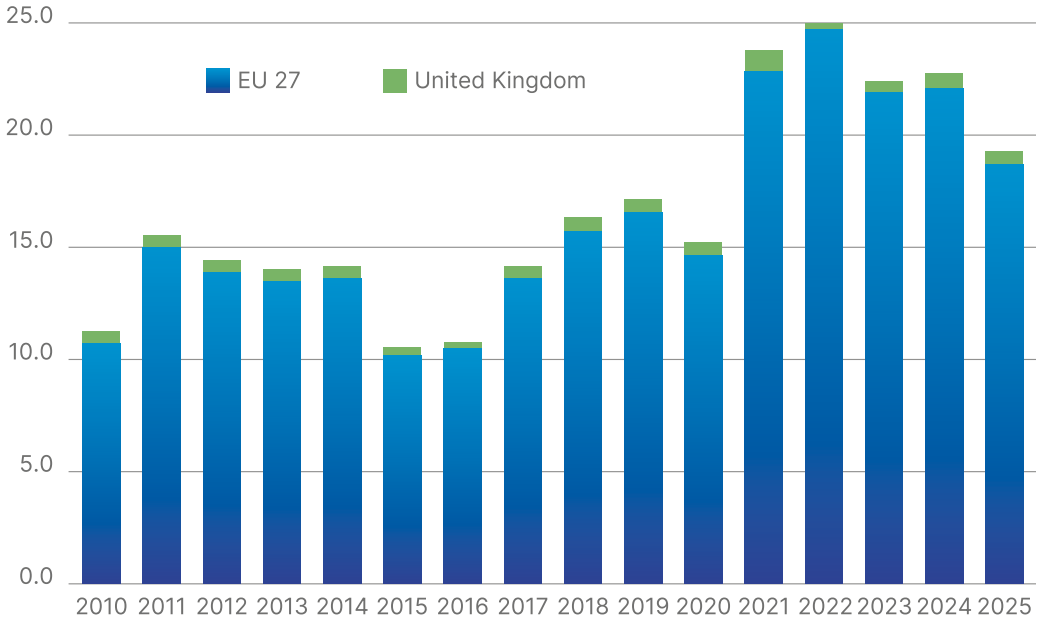
Source: National Bank of Ukraine

The country structure of Ukraine's exports also points to a more concentrated European footprint. Poland is now by far the largest EU destination for Ukrainian goods, with exports of around USD 4.0 billion in 2025. It is followed by Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, and Spain, each absorbing between USD 1.6 billion and USD 2.0 billion. Together, these five markets accounted for close to 60% of Ukraine's goods exports to the EU in 2025. Border and logistically important countries Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Hungary became especially important after 2022, not only as end markets but also as transit and redistribution points to wider EU value chains. The 2022-2023 surge in exports to Romania, for example, reflects the wartime reconfiguration of logistics as much as a structural increase in Romanian final demand.

In absolute terms, however, the expansion of exports to the EU has not yet translated into a broad-based transformation of Ukraine's export model. Between 2010 and 2020, exports of goods to the EU mostly fluctuated

within a USD 10-16 billion corridor. The structure was dominated by a narrow set of commodity groups: agricultural products, metals and mineral products (including iron ore), and machinery. In 2024, these four groups still accounted for around 84% of Ukraine's goods exports to the EU. Agriculture alone reached USD 12.8 billion in 2024, or almost 58% of the total. Metals and mineral products and machinery added another USD 5.9 billion. The EU market has therefore become larger and more important for Ukraine, but the export basket remains heavily tilted toward commodities and basic industrial inputs.

Figure 2.
Exports of goods to the EU-27 and the UK in the period 2010-2025, $ billions

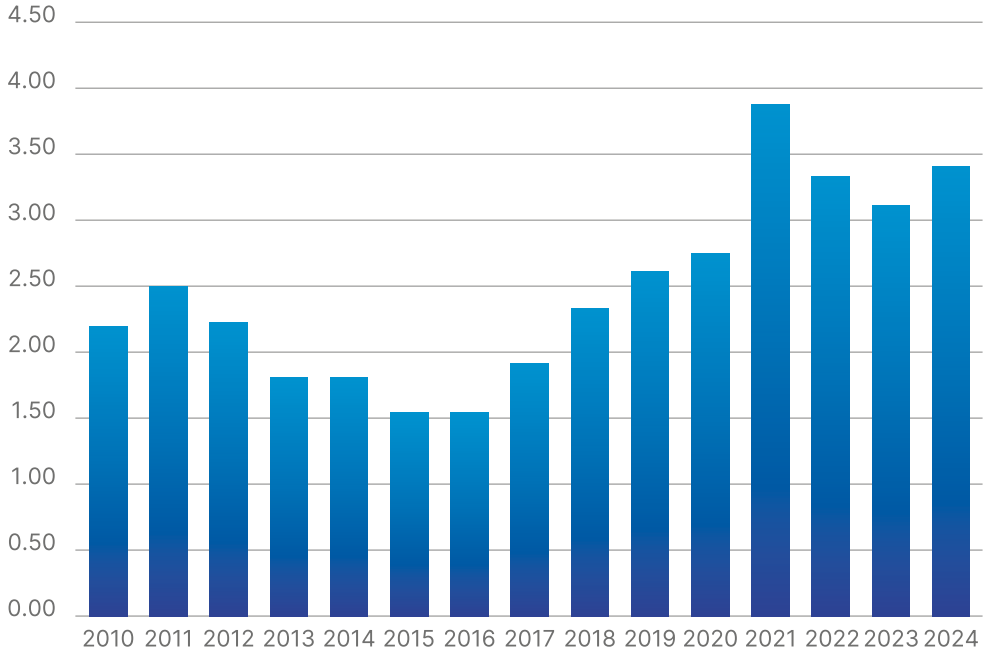


Source: National Bank of Ukraine

The sharp increase of Ukrainian exports to the EU in 2021 should be read with caution. Exports to the EU jumped from USD 14.6 billion in 2020 to USD 22.9 billion in 2021, but this was driven largely by the price cycle in global commodity markets rather than by a decisive shift toward higher value-added exports. The same pattern continued after the full-scale invasion. Exports to the EU rose to USD 24.8 billion in 2022, helped by agricultural shipments and the redirection of trade flows through the EU, but this did not represent a stable new growth trajectory. By 2025, exports to the EU had fallen to USD 18.7 billion—the lowest level in five years—with the decline in agricultural exports being the main drag. This pertained not only to the EU market, as Ukraine's total goods exports also declined in 2025, both in value and in physical volumes, with food and agricultural products seeing the sharpest contraction.

If food products, metals, wood products, and minerals are excluded, Ukraine's manufactured and non-resource exports to the EU show a slower but more stable upward trend. This group includes machinery, chemicals and industrial manufactured goods. It grew from roughly USD 1.5 billion in 2016 to about USD 3.4 billion in 2024. The trend is not spectacular, and it includes temporary spikes in 2021-2022, but it is more resilient than the headline export figures. Unlike commodity exports, which move sharply with prices, harvests, port access and geopolitical shocks, these categories are more closely linked to supplier relationships, certification, production capabilities, and integration into European business networks.

Figure 3.
Manufactured* exports to the EU-27 in the period 2010-2024, $ billions



** - excludes food products, metals, wood products, and minerals*

Source: National Bank of Ukraine

Table 1.
Ukrainian exports of goods to the EU by commodity structure in the period 2010-2024, $ billions

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
EU-27	**16.5**	**14.6**	**22.9**	**24.8**	**22.0**	**22.2**
Food products:	7.01	6.12	7.65	12.90	12.50	12.83
Maize	2.28	1.48	1.77	3.49	2.93	2.50
Rapeseed	1.21	0.84	1.15	1.37	1.08	1.66
Sunflower oil	1.30	1.54	1.91	2.66	2.55	2.88
Minerals:	2.4	1.9	3.6	3.3	1.9	1.8
Iron ore	1.7	1.4	2.9	2.3	1.6	1.6
Chemical products	0.8	0.8	1.3	1.0	0.7	0.9
Wood products	1.1	1.1	1.6	1.7	1.4	1.3
Manufacturing products	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4
Metal production:	3.4	2.8	6.2	3.6	3.0	2.8
Semi-finished carbon steel products	1.2	1.0	1.8	0.7	0.5	0.5
Machinery	1.0	1.1	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3

Source: National Bank of Ukraine

The weakness is scale. In 2024, machinery, chemicals, industrial manufactured goods, and other exports together accounted for only around 15% of Ukraine's goods exports to the EU. Machinery exports were relatively stable at about USD 1.3 billion in 2021-2024, even under wartime conditions. Chemicals partially recovered in 2024 after a weak 2023. Industrial manufactured goods remained small but continued to edge upward. This suggests that Ukraine does have a base of companies capable of selling into EU industrial markets, but that base is still too narrow to change the macro picture.

In the context of Ukraine's integration into EU value chains, the numbers presented above draw a clear picture. The EU is already Ukraine's dominant export market, but the current export relationship is still built mainly on commodities: grain, oilseeds, sunflower oil, iron ore, steel, and other basic inputs. These exports are economically important and will remain part of Ukraine's trade profile, yet they are volatile and do not fully capture the opportunity of deeper value-chain integration. The next stage of export growth will depend less on redirecting more raw materials to the EU and more on expanding the number of Ukrainian firms that can supply machinery, components, processed inputs, and other higher value-added products into European production systems.

Table 2.
Major European destinations for Ukrainian exports of goods in the period 2019-2025, $ billions

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
EU-27	**16.5**	**14.6**	**22.9**	**24.8**	**22.0**	**22.2**	**18.7**
including:							
Poland	2.5	2.5	4.4	6.0	4.5	4.1	4.0
Italy	2.3	1.9	3.3	1.6	1.5	1.9	2.0
The Netherlands	1.7	1.6	2.1	1.5	1.5	2.0	1.7
Germany	1.8	1.5	2.3	1.8	1.9	2.3	1.7
Spain	1.5	1.2	1.7	1.6	2.0	2.9	1.6
Romania	0.7	0.8	1.2	3.6	3.6	1.5	1.1
Bulgaria	0.5	0.5	0.8	1.4	0.9	1.1	1.0
Slovakia	0.6	0.4	0.9	1.4	1.1	0.9	0.9
Czechia	0.7	0.6	1.1	1.0	0.8	0.7	0.7
France	0.5	0.5	0.8	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.7
Lithuania	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6
Belgium	0.7	0.5	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.8	0.5
Hungary	0.8	0.5	0.6	1.4	0.7	0.5	0.5
Austria	0.5	0.5	0.9	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.5
Others	1.5	1.1	1.6	1.2	1.5	1.6	1.3
United Kingdom	0.6	0.6	1.0	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.6

Source: National Bank of Ukraine

Size and Role of SMEs in Ukraine and the EU

Before assessing how Ukrainian firms can enter the EU market and plug into European value chains, it is important to clarify what kind of enterprise base Ukraine actually has. The issue is not only market access, certification, logistics, or entry models. It is also whether Ukraine has a sufficiently broad layer of firms that can produce, supply, adapt, and scale in response to demand from the EU.

The data show that Ukraine's enterprise structure differs sharply from the EU pattern. To make the comparison meaningful, the number of enterprises was normalised by population and expressed as enterprises per 100,000 inhabitants. On this basis, the EU-27 had, in 2024, around 3,946 self-employed micro-entrepreneurs, 3,064 micro-enterprises with 2-9 employees, 348 small enterprises, 56 medium-sized enterprises and 12 large enterprises per 100,000 inhabitants. Ukraine, using 2022 enterprise data and depending on whether the population base is taken at 41 million or 37 million, had around 2,935-3,226 self-employed micro-entrepreneurs, 1,142-1,255 micro-enterprises with employees, 111-122 small enterprises, 37-40 medium-sized enterprises, and only about one large enterprise per 100,000 inhabitants.

This comparison points to a structural imbalance rather than a simple shortage of companies. Ukraine has a sizeable number of self-employed persons and a relatively visible layer of medium-sized firms. However, it has a much thinner layer of employer micro-enterprises and small enterprises than the EU average. These are precisely the groups that normally form the pipeline through which entrepreneurial activity turns into scalable business. In Ukraine, this transition appears weak. The economy contains many very small, often survival-driven, self-employment units, but far fewer firms that have already crossed the threshold into organised employer businesses.

The gap is especially visible in small enterprises. Ukraine has only around one-third of the EU-27 level of small firms per capita. The gap in large enterprises is even more severe: the EU-27 average is about 12 large firms per 100,000 inhabitants, while Ukraine has roughly one. This suggests two problems at the same time. First, micro-businesses do not scale easily into small and medium-sized companies. Second, the economy does not generate enough large firms, which usually require access to capital, predictable rules, long-term investment horizons, and strong domestic demand.

The medium-sized segment is the exception. Ukraine's number of medium-sized enterprises per capita is lower than the EU average, but the gap is much smaller than in the small and large segments. This confirms the specific structure of the Ukrainian economy with medium-sized firms playing a disproportionately large role. In many sectors, these firms are likely to be the most relevant candidates for EU value chains because they already have some production base and managerial capacity. At the same time, this also means that Ukraine's export potential may depend too heavily on a relatively narrow group of established firms, including enterprises that inherited part of their production base from the Soviet industrial period rather than emerged through a broad post-independence SME growth process.

The country-by-country comparison within the EU confirms that the Ukrainian pattern is not merely a statistical phenomenon. Some EU countries, for example Poland, Romania and Greece, have fewer micro-enterprises with employees per 100,000 inhabitants than Ukraine or a similar number. However, they perform much better in the small and large enterprise segments. Poland has around 255 small firms and 10 large firms per 100,000 inhabitants; Romania has around 238 small firms and nine large firms; Greece has around 468 small firms and seven large firms. Ukraine, by contrast, has only around 111–123 small firms and roughly one large firm per 100,000 inhabitants. Therefore, even where Ukraine does not look weak in one part of the micro-business segment, the broader enterprise ladder remains underdeveloped.

The value-added structure reinforces the same conclusion. In the EU-27, large enterprises account for nearly half of total added value (49.1%) while micro, small and medium-sized enterprises together account for the other half. The value-added distribution among SME categories is relatively balanced: micro-enterprises generate 19.5%, small firms 15.5%, and medium-sized firms 16.0%. This is a diversified structure in which large firms provide scale, while SMEs provide depth, flexibility, and supplier capacity.

Ukraine's structure is very different. Large enterprises generate only 29.8% of added value, while medium-sized enterprises alone generate 36.5%. This is more than twice the EU-27 share of medium-sized firms in added value. Micro-enterprises generate 18.7% and small firms 14.9%, broadly close to the EU shares, but this does not mean that Ukraine has an equally healthy SME base. Rather, the combination of low firm density and similar value-added shares suggests that Ukraine has fewer firms carrying a relatively heavy economic load. The enterprise base is not broad enough, and the growth pipeline from micro to small and from small to medium remains too narrow.

For the EU value-chain agenda, this has direct implications. Ukraine does have companies capable of supplying the EU market, especially among established medium-sized enterprises and selected advanced SMEs. These firms can already produce and export, and potentially scale up their capacities. However, they represent a limited layer of the economy. Beneath them, the base of micro-employer and small enterprises is too thin to generate a broad wave of new suppliers quickly. Above them, the shortage of large firms limits Ukraine's capacity to anchor entire supplier ecosystems, invest heavily in technology, and compete at scale in capital-intensive segments.

This means that Ukraine's challenge is deeper than market access. Better access to the EU market, integration into procurement networks, support with certification, trade finance, and partnerships will matter, but they will not be sufficient on their own. The domestic enterprise structure itself is a bottleneck. If Ukraine wants to use EU demand as a driver of industrial renewal, it needs more firms that are able to move from self-employment into employer businesses, from micro into small firms, and from small into medium-sized suppliers. That requires a business climate that makes growth rational rather than risky: simpler rules, lower administrative pressure, better access to finance, protection of property rights, fair competition, and predictable taxation.

Ukraine's SME sector should not be treated as a broad, ready-made reservoir of export capacity. It is more accurate to see it as a narrow but important base of capable firms, surrounded by a large layer of self-employment and a weak pipeline of scaling businesses. For EU value-chain integration, policy should therefore combine external market-entry support with internal enterprise-development reform. Without expanding the layer of micro-employer and small firms, Ukraine may be able to produce individual success stories, but it will struggle to turn EU demand into a broad-based SME growth engine.

Table 3.
Number of companies by size in EU countries and Ukraine, per 100,000 inhabitants

	Micro (self-employed)	Micro (2-9 employees)*	Small (10-49 employees)	Medium (50-249 employees)	Large (above 250 employees)
Ukraine (41.0 million people)	2935	1142	111	37	1
Ukraine (37.3 million people)	3226	1255	122	40	1
EU-27	3946	3064	348	56	12
Belgium	4152	3123	242	48	13
Bulgaria	2795	3194	398	73	12
Czechia	5948	5997	336	68	16
Denmark	2169	3729	432	82	15
Germany	1776	1514	503	78	18
Estonia	3263	7491	436	77	13
Ireland	3614	3254	450	88	18
Greece	7613	1158	468	51	7
Spain	4256	2553	315	46	10
France	3237	3895	226	37	9
Croatia	2460	3584	386	61	11
Italy	5013	2289	358	46	8
Cyprus	3388	5684	535	83	13
Latvia	3456	4072	461	81	13
Lithuania	4715	7507	434	87	16
Luxembourg	2287	3299	643	135	32
Hungary	3510	5545	333	51	11
Malta	5189	4333	505	106	20
The Netherlands	6267	6796	296	61	16
Austria	3073	2987	439	69	17
Poland	6466	954	255	43	10
Portugal	3997	9162	441	71	12
Romania	4176	956	238	41	9
Slovenia	4125	5192	365	69	13
Slovakia	5499	6573	234	47	12
Finland	3355	4785	314	62	13
Sweden	2405	5522	317	61	16

** - self-employed excluded*

Note: EU data for 2024, Ukraine data for 2022; official estimate of Ukrainian population was on the level of 41 million people; alternative estimates by the Ministry of Digital Transformation, based, among other sources, on mobile operators' SIM-card data, defined Ukraine's actual population at 37.3 million people. Methodological caveat: There is a methodological difference between the definition of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises in Ukraine and in the EU. While the EU defines micro-enterprises as having fewer than 10 employees, small enterprises 10-49 employees and medium-sized enterprises 50-249 employees, Ukrainian methodology defines micro-enterprises as having up to 10 employees, small enterprises up to 50 employees, and medium-sized enterprises up to 250 employees, combined with different income thresholds. This difference means that SME group statistics for Ukraine and the EU are not strictly comparable; however, for the purposes of this research, this methodological discrepancy is not critical.

Source: Eurostat, State Statistics Committee of Ukraine own estimates

Table 4.
Added value by size in the EU-27 and Ukraine, % of total value-added

	Micro (up to 9 employees)*	Small (10-49 employees)	Medium (50-249 employees)	Large (above 250 employees)
Ukraine	18.7	14.9	36.5	29.8
EU-27	19.5	15.5	16.0	49.1
Belgium	25.1	14.6	16.2	44.1
Bulgaria	22.7	19.5	20.3	37.5
Czechia	21.4	15.3	19.1	44.3
Denmark	13.8	16.5	20.1	49.6
Germany	14.4	16.3	15.3	54.0
Estonia	28.8	22.6	24.5	24.0
Ireland	19.4	6.7	11.4	62.6
Greece	21.4	19.0	17.9	41.7
Spain	23.0	16.5	15.8	44.7
France	19.8	12.4	11.8	56.0
Croatia	28.1	18.9	16.9	36.1
Italy	25.1	19.0	17.6	38.3
Cyprus	23.9	26.4	25.0	24.7
Latvia	21.9	21.1	24.2	32.7
Lithuania	17.3	19.8	25.0	37.9
Luxembourg	13.1	17.8	26.3	42.7
Hungary	20.0	16.8	17.0	46.2
Malta	25.8	20.3	19.7	34.3
The Netherlands	23.0	13.9	18.5	44.6
Austria	17.7	18.1	19.6	44.6
Poland	20.0	13.9	15.1	51.0
Portugal	24.4	19.5	20.9	35.2
Romania	20.4	17.1	17.1	45.4
Slovenia	23.6	18.6	22.3	35.6
Slovakia	21.7	13.9	19.5	44.9
Finland	19.0	18.4	19.6	42.9
Sweden	15.2	13.7	18.6	52.6

Note: EU data for 2023, Ukraine data for 2020

Source: Eurostat, State Statistics Committee of Ukraine own estimates

Review of the Ukrainian SME experience in EU market access

A number of recent reports already examine the experience, ambitions, and constraints of Ukrainian SMEs in entering foreign markets, including the EU market. They show that Ukrainian SMEs increasingly think in export terms, especially because the domestic market is constrained by war, declining purchasing power and uncertainty, but their ability to become regular EU suppliers is limited by compliance costs, weak partner networks, financing gaps, skills shortages and insufficient institutional support for integration into value chains.

The EBRD-comissioned survey *SMEs in wartime: trends, challenges and needs* captures how entrepreneurs themselves describe their needs. It shows that, under wartime uncertainty, many firms are trying to pivot toward more predictable external markets. Companies are seeking consulting support to establish exports, enter foreign trading platforms, obtain international certification, and, in some cases, open branches abroad. The same logic runs through the list of non-financial needs identified by SMEs, which include help with EU certification procedures, finding clients, developing export models, promoting Ukrainian businesses abroad, etc. This suggests that Ukrainian entrepreneurs are looking for practical instruments that would help them move step by step from the stage of being interested in exporting to the stage of being able to sell, certify, deliver, and service products in the EU.

The OECD's *SME Policy Index: Eastern Partner Countries 2024* places this experience in a broader policy framework. Its central message is that access to international markets is constrained by a combination of unequal access to information, financial limitations, insufficient expertise, complex procedures, etc. For Ukraine, the report acknowledges significant support for SME internationalisation even under extremely difficult wartime conditions. Yet, it also shows that systematic support for integrating SMEs into global value chains remains at an early stage. While Ukraine has introduced a range of export-promotion tools and proposals to support SME integration into global value chains, the OECD assessment suggests that these efforts have not yet evolved into a systematic supplier-development pathway capable of moving domestic SMEs into verified supplier roles for EU or multinational buyers.

Put differently, if Ukraine wants SMEs to plug into EU value chains, the task is to help firms become credible suppliers in specific product and service segments such as machinery components, food-processing equipment, energy hardware and other B2B categories. In these segments, buyers require conformity assessment, technical documentation, repeatable quality, warranty capacity, logistics reliability, and evidence that the supplier can fulfil recurring orders.

The OECD report is particularly useful on standards and technical regulation as prerequisites for entering the EU market. It records meaningful progress by Ukraine, including continued work toward the Agreement on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of Industrial Products (ACAA) with the EU, the action plan for technical regulation development until 2025, adoption and alignment of technical regulations, CEN/CENELEC affiliate status for Ukraine's national standards body, and the adoption of multiple European normative documents. These reforms reduce the institutional distance between Ukraine and the EU single market. However, the report also points out that SME access to standardisation remains weak. Ukraine has basic SME support and some training on standards and technical regulations, but no systematic training infrastructure; the digitalisation of metrology and market surveillance still requires targeted measures. For manufacturing SMEs, this is critical, as CE marking, EN and ISO standards, ATEX, FSSC/FSC, CPR, ErP directives, conformity assessment, and technical documentation are often the real entry barriers into EU supply chains. A practical implication for Ukraine would be to introduce financial instruments such as certification, standards, or technical-documentation vouchers to help production-oriented SMEs cover the cost of compliance.

The UNDP's *Assessment of the Impact of the War on Micro-, Small-, and Medium-sized Enterprises in Ukraine* as of the end of 2023 adds that export barriers are not only a matter of EU-side requirements but also of the capacity of Ukrainian SMEs themselves. The report shows that micro-, small, and medium-sized enterprises

(MSMEs) are the backbone of Ukraine's economy, accounting for almost all registered business entities, most employment, and a large share of added value. Yet, most firms remain domestically oriented. According to UNDP, 57.2% of MSMEs operate exclusively on the domestic market, while 73.8% are not involved in the supply chains of international companies, up from 71.1% before the full-scale invasion, meaning that only 26.2% participate in such supply chains today, compared with 28.9% prior to the invasion. The report also notes that 43% of companies are either already active in international markets or plan to enter them, while more than half do not consider this path at all.

Among the barriers identified by the UNDP include a lack of European clients and partners, insufficient financial resources, weak legislative harmonisation and compliance, and limited competitiveness. These findings resonate strongly with the EBRD survey. Both show that Ukrainian SMEs need buyer access, partner matching, trade-fair support, certification assistance, technical advisory services, export-risk insurance, and logistics support, pointing to the absence of an integrated export-readiness and supplier-readiness pathway as the core bottleneck.

The EU4Business report *Better Market Connectivity of Ukraine to the EU* moves from general barriers to sector prioritisation. Its approach was designed to identify sectors in which Ukraine has both export potential and an SME base suitable for targeted support. The report shortlists five sectors considered to have the strongest potential for export to the EU, which include food products, wood products and furniture, electrical equipment, textiles and apparel, and information and communication technologies.

Ukrainian SMEs have clear export ambitions, and individual company-level cases in this report show that EU market entry is possible; however, the broader SME sector remains far from being systematically integrated into EU value chains. The literature reviewed here identifies clear problems on both sides with entry barriers including certification, standards, and broader compliance requirements and limited capacity within the Ukrainian SME sector itself to become a reliable exporting force. The reports also note openly that the development of SME export capacities, including donor and state support, is still at an early stage, though some steps are already being implemented.

Methodology

This report uses a screening-based micro-level research approach to understand how Ukrainian enterprises attempt to enter the EU market and integrate into European value chains. We do not aim to produce a statistically representative survey of all Ukrainian exporters, but concentrate instead on collecting a sufficiently broad set of observable cases and identifying recurring patterns across them. By examining company-level trajectories, the study seeks to understand what entry models are emerging, which barriers firms face, what types of support appear to matter, and how far different companies have progressed from export ambition to actual market penetration.

The research sample consists of 41 Ukrainian companies identified through open-source internet searches. The selection was intentionally focused on firms that do not belong to oligarchic business groups and are likely to be SMEs, or companies that started as SMEs and later grew into larger businesses. All selected companies publicly claimed, in one form or another, to be entering, preparing to enter, or already operating in EU markets. The degree of confirmation differs substantially across cases. In some instances, EU entry is supported by alternative evidence, such as foreign legal entities, public registers, EU certifications, named distributors, exhibition participation, customer references, project portfolios, or documented deliveries. In other cases, the available evidence is limited to the company's own statements or media coverage, making it difficult to determine whether the case represents a strategic intention, a one-off export shipment, an early pilot contract, or an established and repeatable sales channel.

The analytical focus was placed on companies producing higher value-added goods rather than raw materials. The study deliberately excluded Ukraine's traditional bulk export categories, such as grain, timber,

iron ore, basic metals, and most agricultural commodities. These sectors remain important for Ukraine's export economy, but they are structurally different from the SME value-chain question addressed here and are often subject to strong protective pressures in the EU. Instead, the screening focused mainly on machinery, industrial equipment, construction products, engineered components, energy-related hardware, processing equipment, and other manufactured goods with the potential to become inputs into EU supply chains. The emphasis was also placed on goods rather than services, because goods-based entry requires firms to overcome a more complex set of barriers, which include logistics, customs, certification, product adaptation, technical documentation, warranty and after-sales service, warehousing, and often some form of physical or institutional presence in the EU.

Each case was assessed through a common analytical lens: company profile, product, buyer type, entry model, regulatory and commercial gates, frictions, enablers, confirmed outcomes, scalability and evidence reliability. The study distinguishes between several levels of market-entry maturity: pre-export preparation, such as certification, participation in trade fairs or opening a representative office; first confirmed export contract or pilot delivery; regular distribution or project-based sales; and deeper integration through EU subsidiaries, warehouses, production sites, certified partners, or repeat customers.

A key limitation of the study is its reliance on publicly available information. The sample is biased toward companies that communicate actively, maintain developed websites, participate in public programmes, speak to media, or publish their export achievements. Many successful exporters are likely absent from the sample simply because they operate quietly, do not publicise client relationships, or sell through intermediaries that make their role invisible in open sources. Conversely, some companies that publicly declare EU ambitions may still be at a very early stage of entry.

No interviews or direct verification with company representatives were conducted. As a result, conclusions about success factors, barriers, buyer relationships, and motivations are based on public evidence and are analytical interpretation. This creates room for error, especially where company statements could not be independently confirmed. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this report, such limitations are acceptable. The study is designed as an exploratory screening exercise, not a final audit of each company's export performance. Its value lies in identifying visible patterns, formulating hypotheses and creating a structured basis for further research, including interviews, company surveys, and more systematic verification of commercial outcomes.

Descriptive Statistics for Case-Studies

For this report, we collected a pool of Ukrainian company case-studies that illustrate different ways in which Ukrainian firms entered or attempted to enter EU markets and EU value chains. The initial longlist included 45 publicly identified 'success stories' in which owners or company representatives claimed some form of successful EU market entry. After screening, the final analytical sample was reduced to 41 observations.

Four cases were removed from the final sample. Two cases were excluded because the available evidence suggested that they were closer to declarations of intent or pre-export preparation than to confirmed EU market entry. A big machinery producer, Lubnymash, was also excluded. Although its EU-entry story is useful and industrially relevant, the company is an older Soviet-era enterprise and does not fit the focus of this report on new, non-oligarchic SMEs or firms that developed from an SME base. PDTools Superabrasives, also relevant for the purpose of the reports, was excluded because the owner of the company was convicted for cooperation with Russia, which made the case unsuitable for inclusion in a positive SME export-success sample.

The final dataset therefore consists of 41 case-studies. These cases should not be interpreted as a statistically representative sample of all Ukrainian exporters. They are a set of documented or semi-documented stories of Ukrainian companies that were publicly visible as EU market entrants. The purpose of the dataset is to understand what products companies bring to EU markets, which channels they use, how deeply they penetrate EU value chains, and what barriers recur across cases.

SME Status and Interpretation of Firm Size

The sample is SME-oriented, but not restricted only to companies that currently employ fewer than 250 people. Several firms in the sample have already grown beyond the classical SME threshold or appear to be close to it. However, they were retained where their development path clearly started from a new, non-oligarchic entrepreneurial base rather than from an inherited Soviet industrial platform, state enterprise, or politically connected conglomerate.

In other words, the report treats SME relevance dynamically. We did not concentrate much on whether a company was strictly below the 250-employee limit. The more important question is whether the company represents a business model that started from an SME-type base and used EU market access as one of the mechanisms of growth. Zavod Kobzarenko is the clearest example of a company that is no longer an SME by headcount but one that developed from a family manufacturing SME into an EU-integrated agricultural machinery group. Similar caution applies to companies where the current operating model may involve franchise networks, project-based employment, subcontracted installation teams, or separate EU entities, making simple employee-count classification incomplete.

Public information on employee numbers is not consistently available. In only a small number of cases did the collected materials provide a direct or near-direct headcount figure. The study did not conduct a full independent headcount verification for each company because most companies in the sample clearly fall within the intended research focus of non-oligarchic Ukrainian firms producing goods or industrial solutions and showing some degree of EU market activity.

The only case in the final sample with a clearly stated headcount above 250 is Zavod Kobzarenko, which is reported as employing more than 800 people. It was retained because it illustrates how a Ukrainian family SME can scale into an EU-integrated manufacturing group. Two other cases—Dnipro-M and VITAGRO Group—should be treated cautiously if a strict legal SME definition is applied. Dnipro-M has a large retail/franchise footprint, while VITAGRO is a large agro-industrial group. However, the case files did not provide a direct employee count that would allow a simple headcount-based exclusion.

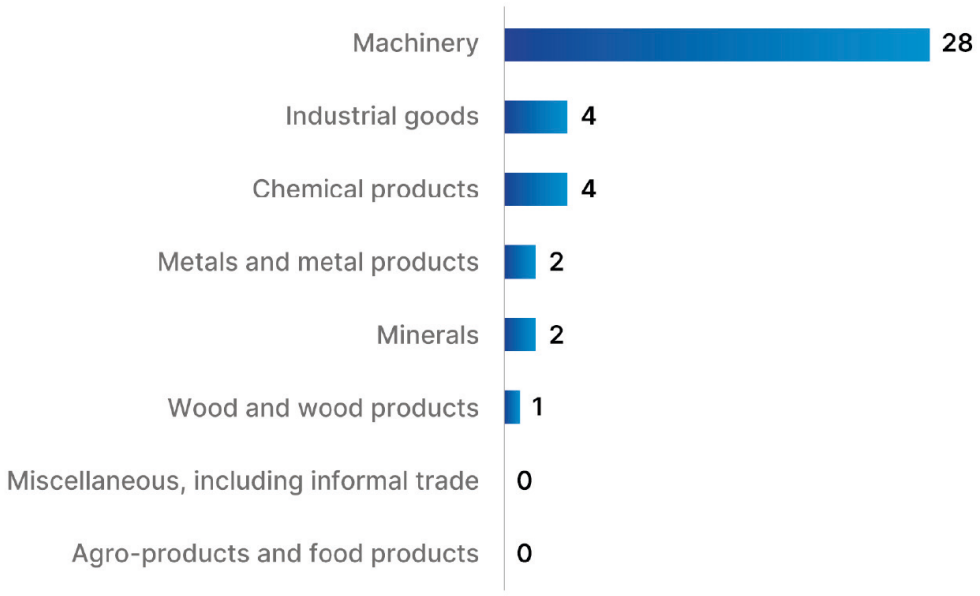
Sectoral Profile of the Sample

The sample is strongly concentrated in industrial and manufacturing activities. All 41 observations relate to companies that manufacture physical products, industrial equipment, components, materials, energy products, or hardware-software systems.

For comparability with macroeconomic export statistics, the cases were sorted using the broad commodity-group classification used by the National Bank of Ukraine in its analysis of goods exports and imports. This classification includes such groups as food products and raw materials for their production; mineral products; chemical and related products; wood and articles of wood; industrial goods; ferrous and non-ferrous metals and articles thereof; machinery, equipment, vehicles and instruments; and miscellaneous goods, including informal trade.

This classification is highly aggregated. Each group includes a wide range of product categories. It is nevertheless useful for this report because it allows the case-study evidence to be compared with the macroeconomic structure of Ukrainian goods exports discussed in other sections of the report.

Figure 4.
Number of case-studies by commodity export group

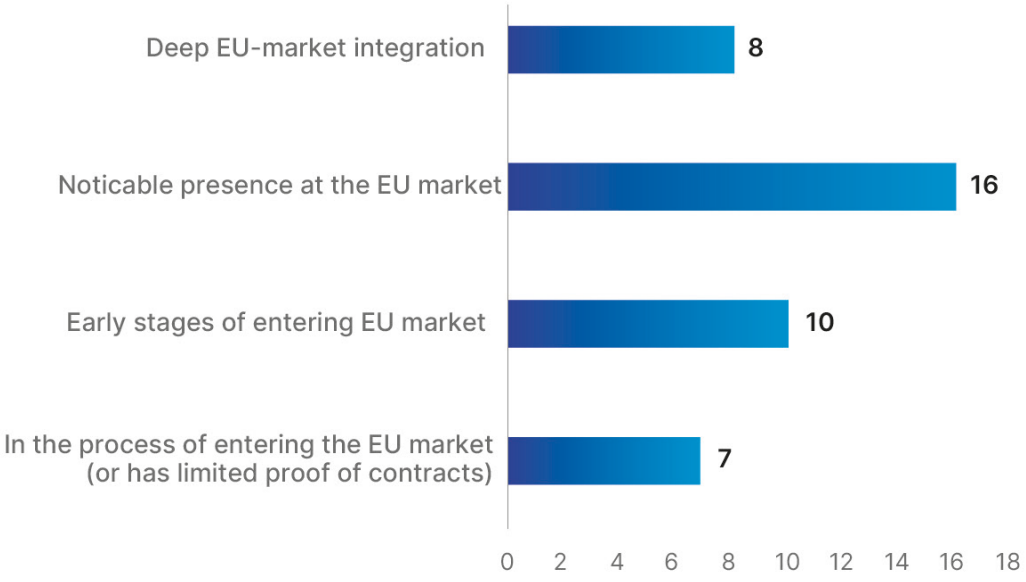


The largest group by far is machinery, equipment, vehicles, and instruments. It includes 28 of the 41 cases, or 68.3% of the sample. This group covers a broad range of companies such as agricultural machinery, irrigation systems, elevators, industrial fans, and others. The second group consists of chemical and related products and includes four cases. They are mostly polymer-based, plastics-based, or construction-material products. The third group, industrial goods, also includes four cases. This group includes abrasive wheels, acoustic interior products, office pods, and food packaging. Two cases fall under the mineral products tag and which are exporters of biomethane or bio-LNG to the EU market. Two other cases are grouped in the metals and metal products category. And one case of a company producing paper, pulp, and packaging produced from fallen leaves is mapped to wood and articles of wood.

Depth of EU Market Penetration

The case-studies differ significantly in the depth of EU market penetration. The assessment of the level of penetration is based on publicly available information collected for the case-studies. It should not be interpreted as a fully verified commercial audit. In many cases, public data do not disclose contract values, revenue shares, buyer names, or repeat-order volumes. .

Figure 5.
Distribution of case-studies by the level of EU market penetration



Seven case studies look to be in the process of entering the EU market or have limited proof of supplies. The companies from this group are clearly preparing for EU entry but have weak evidence of success. Next, 16 companies have first-confirmed sales or other evidences of early partners, but scaling remains limited. For 10 case-studies, repeated export supplies are confirmed—they have warehouses in the EU, a local representative or other operational presence in the EU. Eight companies already can report strategic integration into EU value chains with regular product deliveries or EU-based production.

Entry Models to the EU Market

The case-studies collected for this report do not point to a single 'winning' strategy for entering the EU market. In most cases, EU market entry was not achieved through one isolated action such as certification, a distributor agreement, participation in a trade fair, or a first export contract. Successful entry usually resulted from a combination of several elements, such as product quality, EU regulatory compliance, a credible local channel, a signal of reliability for buyers, logistics, after-sales service, and, in the more advanced cases, local representation or production capacity inside the EU.

Certification is often the most visible step in the story, because it is formal, documentable, and easy to describe. However, certification alone does not create market access. It only makes the product legally and technically acceptable. Commercial access requires a buyer who trusts the product, a channel that can sell or install it, a service mechanism that reduces risk, and a business model that makes the Ukrainian supplier understandable to the European customer.

The case-studies also show that entry models are linked to the type of product and the maturity of the company. Standardised products can be scaled through distributors or online channels once certification and local support are in place. Complex industrial equipment often enters through direct B2B projects. Products that require installation or service usually need a local representative, warehouse, installer network, or a technical partner. Highly regulated energy products, such as biomethane or bio-LNG, enter through certification, infrastructure access, and trading procedures. The deepest forms of EU integration usually require local production, a production platform, or an EU-based operational structure.

Based on the 41 case-studies in the final sample, seven dominant entry models can be identified.

1. Certification-Led Distributor and Channel Model

The first model is built around certification as a signal to EU buyers that the product complies with relevant standards and can formally operate on the EU market. The company first makes the product acceptable through CE marking, technical documentation, sector-specific certification, testing, or conformity assessment. On this basis, it builds a network of distributors, dealers, installers, or other sales channels that help bring the Ukrainian product to customers.

In this model, certification is the entry ticket. Once the product is certified and the channel works, the same product can be sold repeatedly across several markets. This model is especially suitable for standardised or semi-standardised products.

The strength of this model is scalability. The same product can be sold repeatedly through distributors, and one partner can potentially open access to many buyers. The weakness is dependence on partner quality. A weak distributor can underperform, damage the brand, fail to provide proper service, or push the product into low-margin price competition. .

2. Direct Project-Based B2B and Turnkey Engineering Model

The second model is direct entry through a specific industrial or commercial project. In this case, the company sells engineering capacity, which includes a machine, line, system, plant or complex production solution adapted to the needs of a specific customer.

This model is typical for producers of industrial machinery, processing lines, grain-processing equipment, etc. The Ukrainian supplier becomes part of a specific investment project or production upgrade. The value proposition includes engineering, customisation, installation, commissioning, training, after-sales support or process adaptation.

This route can reduce the barrier of an unknown Ukrainian brand. In many cases, the Ukrainian product is sold as a component of a broader industrial project in which the buyer evaluates the technical capability, price-quality ratio, and delivery reliability more than brand image. However, this model is difficult to scale quickly. Each project is partly unique. It requires technical negotiations, adaptation to the buyer's site, documentation, installation support, and long sales cycles.

3. Local Commercial Representation and EU Soft Landing

The third model is the creation of a local commercial presence in the EU. This can take the form of a legal entity, representative office, warehouse, showroom, online shop, service point, or other EU-facing operational layer. The purpose is to reduce distance between the Ukrainian producer and the local buyer.

This model is especially important where the product requires service, warranty, installation, demonstration, returns, or local-language communication. For a European buyer, a local office or warehouse reduces perceived risk. It means that the supplier has a point of responsibility inside the EU market.

The main limitation of this model is cost. A legal entity, warehouse, staff, service capacity, tax compliance, and local marketing require working capital. For many SMEs, this is a serious barrier.

4. EU Production and Deep Localisation

The fourth model is the deepest form of market entry and includes production in the EU, a production platform, a pilot line, and acquisition or integration into an existing EU-based producer. This model changes the company's market status. The firm is no longer only an exporter from Ukraine. It becomes a producer, project executor, platform operator, or industrial partner inside the EU.

The strength of this model is deep integration into EU value chains. The company can reduce buyer concerns about wartime logistics, improve service proximity, comply with local requirements more easily, and participate in EU-based supply chains on more equal terms. The weakness is that it is capital-intensive and difficult for most SMEs. It requires investment, management capacity, local labour, legal and tax compliance, etc. It also means that part of the jobs, value-added and tax base moves to the EU rather than remaining fully in Ukraine.

5. Entry under Another Brand, Private Label or Component-Supplier Model

The fifth model is entry through another brand or partner already known to the market. In this model, Ukrainian firms enter as manufacturers for another brand, private-label suppliers, component suppliers, or technology providers for a downstream EU producer.

This route is especially useful in conservative markets where buyers prefer familiar brands. A European distributor or platform owner can sell under a known name, while the Ukrainian company supplies the product, component, subsystem, or production capacity behind it. This reduces the trust barrier and can be one of the fastest ways to access the EU market.

However, the model has a structural weakness because Ukrainian brands may remain invisible. The company may scale production, but the final buyer may never know that the product or component is Ukrainian. Over time, this creates dependence on the partner. At a later stage, the company may need to decide whether to remain a hidden manufacturer or invest in its own brand visibility.

6. First Entry through Support Programmes

The sixth model is first entry through support programmes. Several firms in the sample used EU, EBRD, EU-4Business, Horizon Europe, or other advisory and grant programmes to make their first practical steps towards the EU market. These programmes financed or supported certification, market research, technical documentation, and other opportunities.

This route can move a company from general export ambition to a practical market-entry plan. It helps smaller firms overcome the first-cost barrier. However, support programmes do not guarantee success. In our sample, companies that relied most visibly on support programmes are mostly at the early stages of EU market penetra-

tion. More advanced players often moved largely through their own commercial capacity, even if some of them also used external support at particular stages. .

7. Regulated Renewable-gas Market Entry

The seventh model applies to two cases of biomethane or bio-LNG export to the EU. These companies entered the EU market through a regulated energy-market route. For those cases, this included important certification, regulatory recognition, access to infrastructure, trader capacity, customs procedures, sustainability documentation, and the ability to operate within energy-market rules.

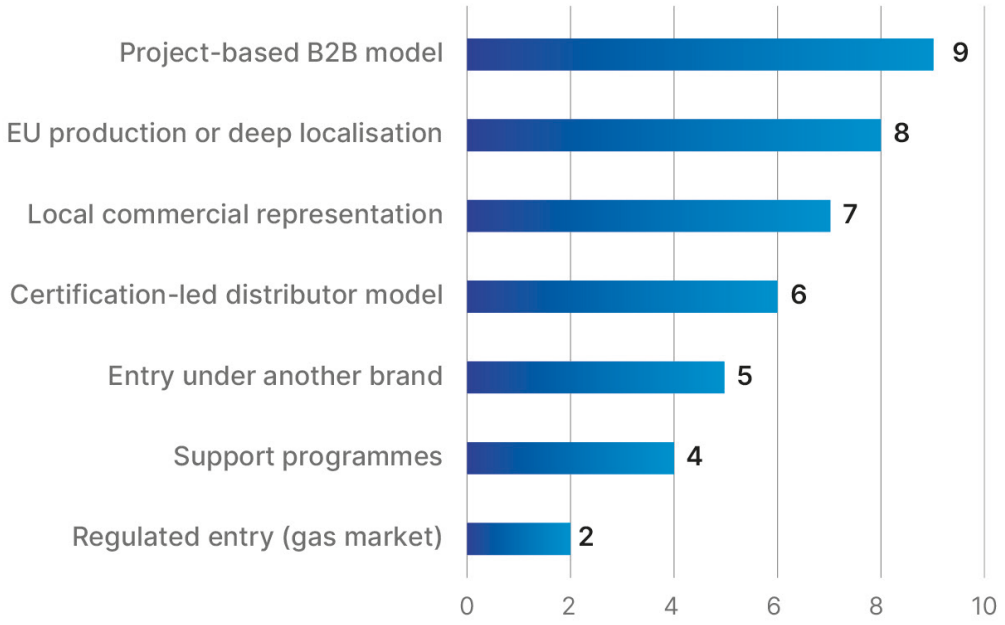
In this model, brand recognition is much less important than compliance and market access infrastructure. The buyer needs proof that the renewable gas meets the sustainability and quality requirements and can be transported, documented, and recognised under EU rules. The scaling potential is significant because EU demand for renewable gases is growing. However, the barriers are also high including certification costs, regulatory uncertainty, incomplete integration of Ukrainian biomethane into EU recognition systems.

Frequency of Entry Models

The sample is not representative of all Ukrainian exporters. However, it shows a useful distribution of observed entry models.

The most frequent route in the sample is direct project-based B2B or turnkey engineering, with nine cases. This is followed by EU production or deep localisation, with eight cases, and local commercial representation, with seven cases. Certification-led distribution accounts for six cases, while entry under another brand or as a component supplier accounts for five. Four cases are primarily first-entry cases through support programmes, and two cases follow the regulated renewable-gas route.

Figure 6.
Frequency of entry models (with our sample)



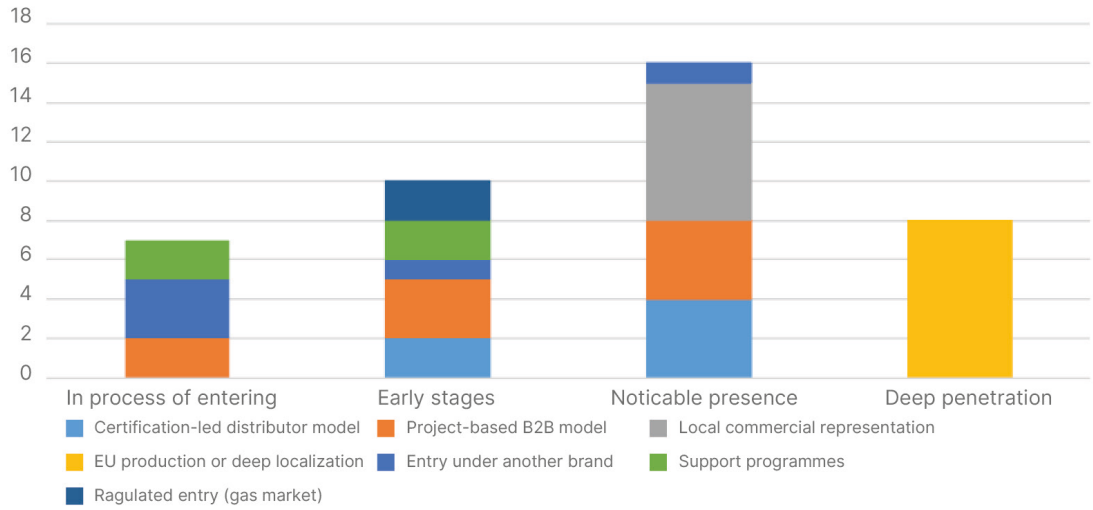
Entry Models by Depth of EU Market Penetration

The relationship between model and penetration level is straightforward. The deepest level of EU integration is associated with production in the EU or deep localisation. All eight deep EU integration cases fall into this model. Local commercial representation is strongly associated with operational EU presence. Certification-led distribution also performs well at the operational level, with four of six cases demonstrating a high level of penetration.

Project-based B2B entry is more mixed. Some firms reach an operational presence through repeat projects, while others remain at earlier stages because each project requires new technical negotiations and buyer trust. Entry under another brand, support-programme entry, and renewable-gas entry are concentrated at lower penetration levels in this sample.

These findings should be interpreted with caution. The dataset is based on publicly available and company-declared information. The model observed at the current stage may not be the same model the company used at the very beginning. A firm that now has EU production may have started with distributors; a firm that now has a local office may have begun with one direct project. The model classification therefore captures the dominant logic visible in the case-study, not the full historical evolution of every company.

Figure 7.
Entry models by depth of EU market penetration



Public Procurement and the Tender Route

One notable observation is that none of the 41 companies in the final SME-oriented sample presents public procurement or tender participation as the main model of EU entry. Some firms mention orders from public, municipal, or infrastructure-related buyers, and several operate in sectors where public procurement may become relevant. However, they do not claim that public procurement was the route for their entering the EU market.

This does not mean that tenders are irrelevant for Ukrainian firms. In this context the Lubnymash case is relevant. It was removed from the final sample because it is an older industrial enterprise with roots in the Soviet industrial base and does not fit the SME-oriented focus of the report. However, its EU-entry path appears to have been much more tender-linked than the cases in the final sample.

The company first won a tender to supply equipment for Malteurop, a French company building a malt house in the Chernihiv region. This project was located in Ukraine, but the buyer was international and exposed Lubnymash to European-style technical and project requirements. Much later, the same relationship helped open an EU-based opportunity. The French customer invited Lubnymash to participate in a tender to supply equipment for a facility in Belgium. This tender opportunity pushed the company to complete EU conformity certification and enabled its first EU shipment with around 30 units of scraper conveying equipment to Belgium. After that, Lubnymash continued direct B2B work in France and Belgium, including supply and installation of equipment for a French brewery.

This is a different route from the SME cases. It suggests that tender-based entry may be more accessible to larger, administratively stronger industrial producers. To compete in tenders, a firm needs production capacity, certification, technical documentation, financial resilience, installation teams, and a professional administrative team capable of preparing bids and responding to formal procurement requirements. Many Ukrainian SMEs do not have this capacity at the beginning of their EU-entry journey.

Time Needed to Reach an Operational Presence or Deep Integration

Another useful angle is the time needed to move from the first EU-entry effort to a meaningful level of EU market penetration. This can only be roughly estimated, because publicly available materials do not always clearly define when EU-entry efforts began. Still, the pattern is informative.

Among the 24 cases that reached either an operational EU presence or deep integration, the largest group needed around three to five years. This applies to 12 of the 24 cases, or 50%. Six cases, or 25%, appear to have reached this level in up to two years. A smaller group needed six years or more.

The shortest paths are observed among companies that immediately built an operational presence in the EU, opened EU production, or used a structure that looked local from the buyer's perspective. By contrast, the long-

est paths are observed among companies that began as exporters from Ukraine and only later moved toward local representation and deeper localisation.

Trust Barrier, Buyer Conservatism, and Local Preference

A final cross-cutting issue is buyer conservatism in the EU market. The case-studies repeatedly show that formal regulatory barriers are not the only issue Ukrainian companies face on its way to the EU. European buyers often prefer local producers, known brands, and familiar distributors or suppliers with an established service record. This is not necessarily formal protectionism. Often, it is just a preference because a local supplier is easier to contact, return products to, and explain to the final customer.

This creates a double trust deficit for Ukrainian firms. On the one hand, EU buyers face absolutely new brands, while on the other, Ukrainian producers strive for a reputation as reliable producers of high-quality industrial products. Different companies addressed this problem in different ways.

As described above, one route was entry under another brand or through a trusted partner. It allows the Ukrainian producer to enter the supply chain through a name the customer already recognises.

A second route was a local commercial presence. A Polish company, EU warehouse, service point, or showroom makes the supplier feel closer and more accountable. This is especially important for products that require installation, repair, returns, or local support.

A third route was working through trusted professional intermediaries such as architects, designers, dealers, etc. These actors first need to be convinced of the product's quality and value. If they trust the product, they become ambassadors to their own clients.

A fourth route was investment in local installation and technical-support teams. For complex equipment, trust is often built after the first successful installation and after the buyer sees that warranty, spare parts, and service are available.

A fifth route was the use of European components and materials. For several firms, familiar European inputs acted as a trust signal. Buyers may be more willing to test a Ukrainian product if key components, materials, fittings, drives, or pumps come from known European suppliers.

Finally, in a small number of cases, diaspora demand helped open the first door. Two companies from our case-studies benefited from Ukrainian customers and professionals abroad who already knew the brand. This created an initial trust base. However, diaspora demand can only be a beachhead. Real scale requires moving beyond Ukrainian customers abroad and becoming acceptable to local EU buyers.

How Reliable Financial Partners can Help Ukrainian SMEs Plug into EU Value Chains

Across all the entry models described above, access to reliable financial partners emerges as a critical enabling condition, one that Ukrainian SMEs must address alongside regulatory compliance, certification, and local commercial presence. Moving from the Ukraine market to EU markets requires not only product adaptation and partner

networks but also banking infrastructure that can support cross-border transactions, trade finance, guarantee instruments, and working-capital needs across multiple jurisdictions.

Ukrainian SMEs must approach expansion into the European Union with reliable financial partners in place. For Ukrainian SMEs there are several decisions to be taken, starting with whether to open a representative office or a branch, or to establish a company registered under one of the member state's laws, not to mention selecting the strategy to be pursued abroad. But it is inevitable that one must be backed by reliable financial partners, as the current laws limiting the operations of Ukrainian banks abroad affect Ukrainian SMEs. It is also important to emphasise that even if those limitations are to be lifted in the future, financial partners operating in the European Union have one particular advantage—the EU single passport—allowing them in principle to act in all EU member states across borders. Having said that, the choice of Ukrainian SMEs is limited to a relatively small pool of Ukrainian banks owned by EU-based banks. Further, taking into account the main trade partners for Ukrainian SMEs, the choice is narrowed down to one natural pairing, namely KredoBank and PKO Bank Polski. Indeed, it does not change the legal limitations that must be observed by KredoBank in Ukraine, but it offers the chance for Ukrainian SMEs to maintain reliable cooperation in the country itself as well as within the European Union with PKO Bank Polski, which is the largest financial institution in Poland and one of the largest financial groups in Central and Eastern Europe.

KredoBank, which has been operating on the Ukrainian market for more than 35 years, has been recognised by the National Bank of Ukraine as a systemically important bank in Ukraine and is a member of the PKO Bank Polski Group. KredoBank offers a full range of financial services to retail customers and to small, medium-sized, and large businesses across Ukraine. It actively finances SMEs and large enterprises, providing a variety of dedicated lending programmes and grants in cooperation with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the European Commission, the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), the European Investment Bank (EIB). It also actively participates in government support programmes for Ukrainian businesses. Through these partnerships, KredoBank has secured substantial guarantee facilities that enable increased lending to Ukrainian businesses, particularly in strategically important sectors. The bank actively supports companies investing in modernisation, energy efficiency, export development, and business recovery during wartime. Many financing programmes also include access to grants, investment incentives, and advisory support that help businesses improve competitiveness and align with European standards.

KredoBank is also a strong partner for companies engaged in international trade. Leveraging the expertise and international network of PKO Bank Polski, it provides trade finance instruments, foreign trade services, guarantees, letters of credit, and cross-border banking support that help Ukrainian businesses expand into European and global markets. By combining local market expertise, international banking capabilities, and access to global financial institutions, KredoBank helps businesses not only overcome current challenges but also build sustainable growth, strengthen competitiveness, and seize new opportunities in Ukraine and abroad.

PKO Bank Polski's first foreign corporate branch was opened in Frankfurt am Main in 2015, responding to the strong presence of Polish businesses in Germany. This was followed by branches in Prague, Bratislava, and Bucharest, supporting companies operating across Central and Eastern Europe. Its international presence has been further strengthened through representative offices in Sweden, Lithuania, and Austria. These offices support business development, facilitate relationships with local markets and institutions. Together with KredoBank in Ukraine, PKO Bank Polski's international network enables the group to support clients in key European markets while providing access to one of the largest banking groups in Central and Eastern Europe.

Today, PKO Bank Polski is not only the largest financial institution in Poland but also a strategic partner for compa-nies pursuing international growth. By combining local market expertise with one of Central and Eastern Europe's strongest banking platforms, it helps clients expand confidently across Europe, develop new business relation-ships, execute cross-border investments, and strengthen their competitive position in international markets.

Recommendations for Ukrainian SMEs

The case-studies reviewed in this report allow several practical conclusions to be drawn for Ukrainian SMEs that are only beginning to test their opportunities in the EU market. The main lesson is that EU entry should not be approached as a single export transaction. It is a staged process of becoming visible, understandable, and trusted by European buyers, partners, and intermediaries.

The first recommendation is to do the 'homework' before entering the market. In almost all cases, companies that moved beyond intention had first invested in pre-export preparation. The most important part of this preparation is product compliance. Some certifications are mandatory because they are required by EU legislation and determine whether the product may legally be placed on the market. Others are voluntary, but they are still commercially important because they signal that the producer follows recognised standards. CE marking, EN standards, ISO systems, Ecodesign, ATEX, FSC/FSSC, ISCC, food-contact documentation, or sector-specific conformity assessments work as signals to EU market players. They help buyers, distributors, installers, and contractors understand whether a Ukrainian product is reliable, documented, and suitable for professional use. This homework also includes visibility-building. Participation in trade fairs, sectoral associations, professional platforms, export-support programmes, and industry networks does not guarantee orders. In many cases, it may not even generate an immediate contract. However, without such steps a Ukrainian SME may simply remain invisible to the market. Certification, documentation, and visibility do not ensure success, but they are often the necessary condition for being allowed to participate in the game.

The second recommendation is to look for partners who have an interest in the success of the product. The EU market is conservative. Buyers often trust familiar brands, local suppliers, and existing distribution channels more than new foreign producers. For Ukrainian SMEs, certification may open the door, but it rarely creates demand by itself. A company still needs to attract attention, persuade buyers to test the product and reduce the perceived risk of working with a new Ukrainian supplier. In many sectors, the path from first contact to first order may take years.

The case-studies show that this process can be shortened through partners. These may be distributors, installers, architects, or larger companies that can bring the Ukrainian product into their own offer. In some cases, it may be reasonable to sell under a joint brand or even under another brand at the first stage. In others, the best route is to enter professional project networks and become part of a wider solution delivered to the final customer. The central point is that a company should not try to break into a conservative market alone if a trusted partner can help translate the product into local business practice.

The third recommendation is to plan the company's 'European wrapper'. The more deeply Ukrainian companies penetrate the EU market, the more often they develop some form of local presence such as a representative office, legal entity, warehouse, showroom, service base, installer network, or even partial production inside the EU. This development has a clear commercial logic. Local presence reduces logistics costs, shortens delivery time, makes returns and warranty service easier, and gives buyers a point of responsibility inside the EU market.

It also helps overcome buyer conservatism. A Ukrainian-origin company may be more acceptable to EU customers if it is institutionally present in the EU, uses familiar European components, offers local-language communication and can be reached for service, replacement, installation or legal issues. For many buyers, the question is whether the supplier will be close enough and reliable enough if something goes wrong.

Finally, SMEs should treat EU entry as a long-term investment and plan financing accordingly. Working capital is needed both at the first-entry stage and later, when the company starts moving from pilot orders to regular supply. In this context, a reliable financial partner becomes part of the market-entry model itself. For Ukrainian SMEs, KredoBank can play such a role by combining knowledge of the Ukrainian business environment with the broader cross-border capacity of the PKO Bank Polski Group. This is particularly important for companies whose EU ambitions require financing for certification, logistics, local presence, and gradual integration into European value chains. The cases analysed in this report show that Ukrainian SMEs can succeed in the EU, but success depends on disciplined preparation, trusted partners, a credible European presence, and reliable finance behind each stage of expansion.

Annex: Detailed Overview of Selected Case-Studies

#	Case-study	Main product	Export-goods group
1	Dnipro-M	Power tools, hand tools, compressors, welding equipment and related hardware	Machinery
2	ECOFACTOR	EV charging stations and charging-management hardware/software	Machinery
3	EnginUP / Paskal	Solid-fuel and pellet boilers, heat accumulators and modular boiler rooms	Machinery
4	Euroformat	Elevators and accessibility lifting equipment	Machinery
5	EVERLAST	Tanker semi-trailers and slurry tankers	Machinery
6	Favorit LTD	Seed drills, disc harrows and cultivators	Machinery
7	Fibermix	Polypropylene fibres for concrete reinforcement	Chemical products
8	INSORTEX	Equipment for washing, sorting, grading and processing berries, fruit and vegetables	Machinery
9	Konstrack	Industrial aspiration and dust-cleaning systems	Machinery
10	OLIS	Grain-processing, cereal, flakes and laboratory equipment	Machinery
11	Variant Agro Build / Variant Irrigation	Irrigation machines and grain-storage equipment	Machinery
12	GEOTERM.PRO	HDPE components for geothermal heat-pump systems	Chemical products
13	Kyiv Fan Plant	Industrial fans, smoke exhausters and ventilation equipment	Machinery
14	Skyeton	Unmanned aerial systems / UAV platforms	Machinery
15	Hydroshpriz	Meat-processing equipment, sausage fillers and automated snack lines	Machinery
16	i3 Engineering	Smart-building automation controllers, modules and software-enabled hardware	Machinery
17	LogicPower	UPS systems, LiFePO4 batteries, inverters, voltage stabilisers and energy-storage systems	Machinery
18	MetaliX	Steel-and-glass doors, partitions and interior metal systems	Metals and metal products

19	NovoAbrasive	Abrasive cutting and grinding wheels	Industrial goods
20	Polygood / The Good Plastic Company	Panels made from recycled plastic	Chemical products
21	PRANA	Decentralised ventilation systems with heat recovery	Machinery
22	Releaf Paper	Paper, pulp and packaging made from fallen leaves	Wood and wood products
23	Re:Quiet	Acoustic panels, room dividers and acoustic furniture	Industrial goods
24	S-Engineering	Switchgear, electrical cabinets and industrial automation systems	Machinery
25	SheMax	Manicure dust collectors, UV/LED lamps and salon equipment	Machinery
26	Silentbox	Acoustic office pods and meeting booths	Industrial goods
27	Sine Engineering	UAV communication, positioning and control modules	Machinery
28	SOLARsk / Solar Steelconstruction	Steel mounting systems for solar power plants	Metals and metal products
29	STIF Eastern Europe	Bucket-elevator components, belts and bulk-handling parts	Machinery
30	StudioPack	Aluminium-foil and cardboard food packaging	Industrial goods
31	Symvol	Sliding bearings and anti-friction metal components	Machinery
32	Teplo-Polis	Plate heat exchangers and individual heating units	Machinery
33	Termojet	Hydraulic separators, manifolds and pump groups	Machinery
34	Thermo Projects Ukraine	HVAC systems for armoured vehicles and military shelters	Machinery
35	TMEC	Reactors and thermal/materials engineering equipment	Machinery
36	TWERD Energo-Plus	Frequency converters, inverters, EV charger modules and power electronics	Machinery
37	Agro-Simo-Mashbud	Turnkey grain-processing, cereal, flour and flakes plants	Machinery
38	BUDZIRKA	HPL panels and façade/interior materials	Chemical products
39	VITAGRO Group	Pipeline biomethane	Minerals
40	YM Liquid Gas	Bio-LNG / liquefied biomethane	Minerals
41	Zavod Kobzarenko	Chaser bins, trailers, tankers, spreaders and agricultural machinery	Machinery

Dnipro-M: Building a Ukrainian Tool Brand Inside the EU Retail Market

Executive Summary

Dnipro-M is a Ukrainian power-tools and hardware brand that entered the EU through its own branded retail and franchise model. After earlier B2B exports to EU countries, the company opened physical stores in Poland and Slovakia from 2023, supported by a Polish logistics hub. Its success rests on a proven direct-to-consumer model, brand loyalty among Ukrainian users abroad, quality control, service, and franchise scalability. The main barriers are competition, EU compliance, localisation, staffing, and the challenge of moving beyond the Ukrainian diaspora customer base.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

Dnipro-M is the consumer-facing brand of KT Ukraine, founded in 2011 by Oleksandr Kolisnyk. The company became one of Ukraine's best-known tool brands, with hundreds of mono-brand stores across Ukraine and a strong position in the non-professional tools segment. Its domestic model was unusual for this market since after initially selling through large retailers, the company moved in 2016 toward direct-to-consumer sales through its own 'salons of craftsmanship'. These stores combined retail, product advice, service, testing zones, and brand experience.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

Dnipro-M sells power tools, cordless and corded tools, hand tools, garden equipment, welding equipment, compressors, accessories, and related hardware. In simple terms, these are tools used by home improvers, repair workers, builders, small contractors, electricians, welders, and professional crews. A drill, screwdriver, angle grinder, compressor, welding machine, or garden trimmer is daily work equipment for people who renovate homes, maintain property, build, repair, and run small workshops.

For macro-export classification, the core power-tool category which includes hand-held pneumatic, hydraulic, or motor-powered tools. Some related products may fall into other headings depending on the exact item, but the correct macro-level framing is machinery, tools, and mechanical appliances.

Dnipro-M is a Ukrainian brand, R&D, retail, service, and quality-control story, but not a pure 'made in Ukraine' manufacturing case. Many components are produced in China, Taiwan, India, Turkey, Poland, and Ukraine, while design, engineering, supplier selection, quality control, brand development, and retail model are controlled by the Ukrainian company.

3. EU market entry model: from B2B export to branded franchise retail

Dnipro-M's EU entry developed in two stages. The first stage began in 2018, when the company started B2B exports to countries including Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. This gave the company early practical knowledge of EU customs, logistics, product compliance, and customer expectations.

The second stage began in 2023, when Dnipro-M opened its first EU store in Wrocław, Poland, followed by stores in Warsaw, Namysłów, Łódź, and Bratislava. The entry model can be described as D2C branded franchise retail export. Instead of selling only through distributors or placing products on shelves under a third-party retailer, Dnipro-M brought its Ukrainian mono-brand store format into the EU. The company controlled the brand, assortment, supply, marketing, service standards, and training, while local franchisees carried part of the capital and operating risk.

Poland was a logical first market. It was geographically close, easier to supply, culturally familiar, and had a large Ukrainian community. Wrocław was especially attractive because it had a large Ukrainian population and therefore a ready base of potential customers who already knew the brand from Ukraine. The Polish logistics centre was the operational backbone of this model. Without EU-based warehousing and distribution, a store network would have remained a marketing ambition rather than a scalable retail operation.

4. The basis of success

The secret of Dnipro-M's success is the combination of a familiar product, a disciplined retail format, and a ready bridge into the EU market. Tools are easy to understand, but hard to sell well. Buyers want to touch them, test them, compare them, ask questions, and know where to go if something breaks. Dnipro-M's 'salon' format answered that need by turning tool retail into a service experience.

A second success factor was prior domestic scaling. Before entering the EU retail market, Dnipro-M had already tested its franchise model, store design, staff training, logistics, and customer-service logic in Ukraine. That reduced the learning burden abroad.

A third factor was diaspora-first demand. For many Ukrainian builders, repair workers, and do-it-yourself users in Poland or Slovakia, Dnipro-M was a familiar brand. This gave the company an initial trust base that most new entrants do not have.

ECOFACTOR: EV-Charging Company

Executive Summary

ECOFACTOR is an Odesa-based Ukrainian EV-infrastructure company producing charging stations and operating a charging-management software platform. Its EU entry combined several channels which include an inbound SaaS client in Spain, hardware supply through a Czech partner for Amazon, a Polish legal entity, and integration into European charging platforms. Its success rests on combining certified hardware, software, and operator experience in one ecosystem. The model is scalable, but further growth depends on certification, service capacity, local partners, grid connections, working capital, and trust in a competitive European market.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

ECOFACTOR began as an enthusiast-driven Ukrainian electromobility project and grew into a manufacturer and software provider for electric-vehicle charging infrastructure. The company is associated with Odesa and with founders Serhii Velchev and Volodymyr Revera. The company grew from practical experience with electric cars and the visible absence of charging infrastructure into a company producing charging stations, managing charging software, and operating charging networks.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

ECOFACTOR sells electric-vehicle charging stations and charging-management software. AC chargers are usually used for slower charging at workplaces, parking areas, residential buildings, hotels, offices, or logistics depots. DC chargers are faster and are used where vehicles need to recharge quickly, for example along transport corridors, at hubs, or by fleet operators.

The software layer is equally important. ECOFACTOR's charging point management system allows operators to monitor stations, set tariffs, manage users, process payments, identify technical problems, and connect different charging points into one network. For a city, logistics company, utility, or charge-point operator, the product is a functioning infrastructure system. For macro-export classification, the physical charging hardware belongs to electrical machinery and equipment. Under the official classification, the most relevant category electrical static converters. The software is also an important element of the value-added model.

3. EU market entry model through several doors

ECOFACTOR entered European markets through several routes. The first was software. Around 2018, a Spanish municipal utility reportedly approached the company with a request to adapt its platform for an electric fleet.

The second route was partner-led hardware export. The strongest confirmed case is the Czech Amazon project, in which ECOFACTOR supplied AC charging stations through a local partner, Auto-Charge s.r.o. In plain language, ECOFACTOR did not have to persuade Amazon alone. The local partner helped handle the client relationship, installation context, and local deployment, while ECOFACTOR provided hardware and platform capability.

The third route was local anchoring. ECOFACTOR registered a Polish entity in 2022, which gave the company a closer institutional base for EU operations. The fourth route was integration into wider charging platforms and roaming systems, which helps drivers use charging points through familiar third-party platforms.

4. The basis of success

The basis of success is vertical integration. ECOFACTOR knows the EV-charging market inside and out: the equipment, the software, and the people who run the networks. This is a strong position because many buyers want not only a charger but also a solution that works and can be managed remotely, billed, and serviced. The second success factor is timing. European demand for charging infrastructure is structurally growing because electric vehicles need reliable public, workplace, residential, and fleet charging.

EnginUP / Paskal: Heating Equipment Producer

Executive Summary

EnginUP / Paskal is a Ukrainian family-linked heating equipment group producing solid-fuel and pellet boilers, heat accumulators, underfloor heating systems and modular boiler rooms. Its EU entry is built around certification-first market preparation, TÜV and Ecodesign Class 5 compliance, participation in leading EU trade fairs, and original equipment manufacturer/private-label offers for European distributors. Its success rests on technical readiness, a clear energy-transition niche, export infrastructure and cluster cooperation. The model is scalable, but further growth depends on contracts, service networks, distributor trust, certification costs, logistics and production capacity. .

1. Company profile and why this case matters

EnginUP is a Ukrainian trading and manufacturing group built around two main assets: Svit Tepla, a long-standing heating-equipment trading company, and Paskal, a manufacturing company producing solid-fuel heating equipment. The group is associated with Oleksii Leshchinskyi, who publicly describes EnginUP as combining the Svit Tepla trading business and the Paskal production business. Paskal's manufacturing story began in 2015 and developed from a small workshop into a producer of boilers, heat accumulators, underfloor heating systems, and modular boiler rooms.

This case illustrates a realistic path for a Ukrainian SME manufacturer trying to enter the EU industrial and residential equipment value chain. Paskal has passed a key technical gate on its export path—TÜV / Ecodesign Class 5 certification—and presented its products at major European industry platforms, including ISH Frankfurt and Instalacje Poznań. The case is therefore should be seen as a 'certification-first' market entry story. Before claiming customers, the company first made itself technically legible to EU buyers.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

Paskal produces solid-fuel and pellet boilers, industrial boilers, heat accumulators, underfloor heating components and autonomous modular boiler rooms. Pellet boilers use compressed biomass pellets and are relevant for households, public buildings, small businesses and industrial facilities that need alternatives to fossil-gas heating.

The product is in demand because heating is one of the most politically and economically sensitive parts of Europe's energy transition. Many European countries are trying to reduce dependence on fossil fuels, modernise inefficient heating systems, and improve energy performance in buildings. A certified pellet or solid-fuel boiler can therefore enter a value chain that includes installers, HVAC distributors, construction companies, municipal renovation projects and energy-efficiency programmes.

For macro-export classification, the product belongs to machinery and mechanical appliances, especially central-heating boilers.

3. EU market entry model: certification, trade fairs and original equipment manufacturer channels

Paskal's EU entry model can be described as trade-fair-led B2B market access with original equipment manufacturer or private-label manufacturing.

The first step was technical credibility. For heating equipment, European buyers need proof that the product is efficient, safe, and compliant. Paskal's TÜV and Ecodesign Class 5 certification made it possible to speak to EU buyers as a manufacturer with documentation that fits European expectations.

The second step was visibility. Paskal participated in Targi Instalacje in Poznań in 2024 and ISH Frankfurt in 2025. For an HVAC manufacturer, these are not ordinary marketing events. They are places where distributors, installers, wholesalers, engineering companies, and procurement managers look for suppliers. Participation at such platforms moves a company from an 'unknown producer' to a 'visible candidate supplier'.

The third step was de-risking through original equipment manufacturer or private label. Instead of insisting that EU buyers immediately sell under the Paskal brand, the company offers to manufacture products under a customer's own label and specifications. This is a practical entry route because European distributors may trust their own brand more than a new Ukrainian brand, while still using Ukrainian production capacity.

4. The basis of success

The basis of success is disciplined sequencing. Paskal did not start by trying to sell uncertified equipment into a highly regulated market. It first invested in certification, then prepared English-language materials and an export function, then entered trade-fair channels.

The second success factor is product-market fit. Pellet and biomass heating equipment addresses the need for lower-carbon heating, replacement of outdated boilers, and diversification away from gas, which are real European needs. Paskal's product category therefore has a clearer demand logic.

The third factor is collective capacity. EnginUP/Paskal is connected to the Ukrainian Thermal Energy Cluster, which brings together producers in the sector. For small manufacturers, a cluster can reduce isolation, improve trust, support learning and make participation in international platforms more credible.

Euroformat: Elevator Manufacturer Entering EU Construction and Infrastructure Value Chains

Executive Summary

Euroformat is a Kyiv-based Ukrainian elevator manufacturer producing passenger lifts and accessibility lifting equipment. Its EU entry began with a Polish representative office, CE certification, and first installations in Poznań, followed by supply to Polish railway infrastructure projects through a local contractor. Its success rests on certification discipline, a local EU presence, product adaptation to EN standards, and a clear value proposition which presumes durable elevators at competitive quality. The model is scalable, but constrained by certification costs, service capacity, trust, construction cycles, and wartime demand shocks.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

Euroformat is one of Ukraine's leading elevator manufacturers. The company was founded in the early 2000s and developed from metalworking and R&D into serial production of passenger elevators. Its main products are passenger lifts with or without machine rooms, as well as lifting equipment for people with reduced mobility.

Elevators are safety-critical infrastructure embedded into buildings, housing projects, railway stations and public facilities. A foreign elevator supplier must pass strict technical requirements, prove safety, provide documentation, and reassure builders that installation and service will be reliable. Euroformat's case therefore shows how a Ukrainian producer of complex equipment can move from the domestic market into EU construction and infrastructure value chains.

The company's industrial base is also relevant. Euroformat developed a large production site in Kyiv and launched a 40-metre elevator test tower, described as the only one in Ukraine and the largest in Eastern Europe. This gave the company testing and engineering credibility.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

Euroformat produces elevator equipment for residential and commercial buildings, including passenger lifts, machine-room-less elevators, and accessibility lifts. Elevators are essential for construction, safety, accessibility, and urban development. For macro-export classification, elevators belong to machinery and mechanical appliances.

3. EU market entry model: Polish office plus direct B2B supply

Euroformat's EU entry can be described as representative-office-based B2B export. The company did not begin by selling through an anonymous distributor. It opened a representative office in Poznań, Poland, which became the bridge between the Ukrainian factory and European customers.

At the first stage, the company learned that EU certification would be harder than Ukrainian standards. The CE certification process reportedly took about one and a half years. Second, after certification, Euroformat installed its first elevators in a residential complex in Poznań in 2016. Third, it moved into a more demanding B2B infrastructure channel. In 2017 it signed a contract with Trakcja PRKiI S.A., a Polish railway infrastructure contractor, to supply elevators for railway stations. One of the first confirmed installations was at the Włoszczowa Północ station.

4. The basis of success

The core of Euroformat's success was certification discipline. In the elevator sector, ambition is meaningless without conformity. The company passed the CE route, then adapted to the newer EN 81-20 and EN 81-50 standards through conformity assessment with TÜV SÜD. This made the Ukrainian product legible and acceptable to EU contractors.

The second success factor was local presence. A Polish office helped reduce the psychological and operational distance between a Ukrainian producer and EU customers. Developers and contractors need someone local to talk to, coordinate with, and hold accountable.

The third factor was positioning. At Interlift-2017, Euroformat presented itself around durability, emphasising a 25-year service life. For EU buyers, this helped shift the conversation from 'cheap Ukrainian equipment' to a 'competitive and long-lasting elevator solution'.

EVERLAST: How a Ukrainian Tanker-Trailer Producer Found a Niche in Europe's Organic-Fertiliser Logistics

Executive Summary

EVERLAST is an Odesa-based Ukrainian producer of tank trucks and tanker semi-trailers. Its EU entry was built around a specialised slurry tanker for transporting liquid organic fertiliser, presented at Agritechnica and sold through emerging dealer channels. Its success rests on a clear niche, European components, stainless-steel quality, a lower price than premium EU competitors, and trade-fair-based market validation. The model is scalable, but further growth depends on service capacity, dealer depth, certification, logistics, and overcoming trust barriers towards Ukrainian machinery.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

EVERLAST is a Ukrainian manufacturing company from Odesa, founded in 2002 on the basis of a repair workshop of a transport company. Over two decades it developed into one of Ukraine's leading producers of tank

trucks, tanker semi-trailers, trailers and truck-mounted tanks for fuel, gas, chemicals, food liquids and agricultural liquids. Its domestic clients include petrol-station networks and large agroholdings.

This case matters because EVERLAST did not enter the EU with a generic product. It found a narrow but real European need in road transport of liquid organic fertiliser, or slurry, between farms, storage lagoons, biogas plants and fields. In this value chain, the buyer is solving a logistics problem inside modern livestock, organic fertiliser and biogas agriculture. The confirmed outcome so far is around 20 units reportedly sold in Europe, with equipment working in France, Czechia, Belgium and Finland.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

The lead EU product is a stainless-steel slurry tanker semi-trailer with a volume of around 28-33 m³. In simple terms, it is a large road tanker for transporting liquid manure and other liquid organic fertilisers. Such material is heavy, corrosive, difficult to pump and unpleasant to handle, but it is valuable for farms because it returns nutrients to the soil and supports circular agriculture.

The tanker is made from AISI 304 stainless steel and uses European components such as BPW or SAF axles, WABCO braking systems, and Börger or Vogelsang pumps. This matters because European farmers and dealers recognise these components and can service them more easily. The tanker is designed for road transport with a truck, not only for tractor work in the field. That makes it relevant for larger farms, contractors, and biogas-linked logistics, where slurry must be moved over longer distances.

For macro-export classification, the product belongs to transport equipment, which includes trailers and semi-trailers.

3. EU market entry model: trade fairs plus dealers

EVERLAST's EU entry model can be described as trade-show-driven indirect export through dealers. The company used Agritechnica in Hannover as the first major public European testing ground. At Agritechnica 2023, it presented a 28 m³ stainless-steel slurry tanker, studied buyer reactions, and started negotiations with potential dealers.

The early dealer geography included Germany, Czechia, and Poland, with additional dealer discussions in Latvia and Germany. Romania also became a regional channel through OTTO TRAILER SRL in Constanța, which presented EVERLAST equipment alongside other agricultural trailers. This shows that the company is not building its own EU branch network; it is using local dealers and platforms where machinery buyers already search for equipment.

A further step was the Ukrainian-German Industrial Alliance, or UGIA, created by EVERLAST, the Ukrainian trailer producer VARZ, and Germany-based NMLS. The alliance presented a slurry tank product at Agritechnica 2025 and points toward deeper integration with EU partners. Plans for partial localisation in Germany were publicly mentioned, but should be treated as a strategic intention rather than a confirmed completed fact.

4. The basis of success

The basis of EVERLAST's success is the combination of product fit and credibility signals. European farmers already understand slurry logistics, which means that EVERLAST did not need to educate the market from zero.

The second factor is component credibility. By using recognised European axles, brakes, pumps, and fittings, EVERLAST reduces the fear that a Ukrainian machine will be hard to maintain. In practice, the Ukrainian manufacturer is combining lower-cost production and engineering with familiar EU supply-chain elements.

The third factor is price-quality positioning. The company positions the stainless-steel tanker as comparable to premium German alternatives, but at least around 20% cheaper. One anecdote from Agritechnica describes a German farmer inspecting the tanker and becoming visibly interested once he heard that a stainless-steel unit cost about as much as a simpler black-metal tank. This captures the commercial logic of EVERLAST that suggests it is not the cheapest product, rather that it offers premium-like specifications at a lower price.

Favorit LTD: Soil-Preparation and Seeding Equipment Producer

Executive Summary

Favorit LTD is a Ukrainian manufacturer of seeding and soil-preparation machinery, which include seed drills, disc harrows, cultivators, and related equipment. Its EU entry is based on certification readiness, export to nearby EU markets, trade-fair promotion in Poland, and cooperation with local distributors. Its success rests on a practical product, competitive price-quality positioning, and movement toward EU-compliant serial production. The model is scalable, but further growth depends on brand trust, service partners, certification costs, logistics, and competition with established European machinery producers.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

Favorit LTD, also known as AK Favorit, is a Ukrainian agricultural machinery producer from the Kirovohrad region. The company has operated for more than two decades and manufactures seed drills, disc harrows, cultivators, and other soil-preparation equipment. In the Ukrainian market, it is positioned as a practical domestic machinery producer offering a combination of price, quality, and reliability for farms that need affordable alternatives to expensive imported equipment.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

Favorit produces machinery used before and during planting. A seed drill places seeds into the soil at a controlled depth and spacing. A disc harrow breaks up and levels soil after ploughing or harvesting. A cultivator loosens soil, controls weeds and prepares the seedbed. For farmers, these machines directly affect sowing quality, fuel use, crop emergence and yields. The product group belongs to agricultural machinery. In macro-export terms, Favorit's products fall under machinery and mechanical appliances, which include agricultural, horticultural or forestry machinery for soil preparation or cultivation.

3. EU market entry model: certification plus dealers

Favorit's EU entry model can be described as hybrid dealer-led export with certification preparation as a first step. The company has targeted nearby EU agricultural markets, especially Poland and Romania. These are logical first markets that are geographically close, with large farming sectors, and more familiar to Ukrainian machinery producers.

The first step was technical and regulatory preparation. In 2023, Favorit began the procedure for obtaining a type-approval certificate for serial production. Specialists from the relevant Ukrainian testing and certification body inspected the company's production site and confirmed that the production process could meet the required standards. The company later reported that it had certificates for nine model ranges. This is a key gate for scaling into serious export.

The second step was market visibility. Favorit has been represented at Polish agricultural exhibitions, including AgroShow, through local partners such as ADI / Krzysztof Dwórznik. This is important because farmers usually buy machinery through trusted dealers, demonstrations, and field recommendations.

The third step was distribution. Favorit's model combines direct export, online and catalogue presence, and cooperation with local dealers. The company has not built its own subsidiary, it relies on partners who already know local farmers, language, documentation, and service expectations.

4. The basis of success

The basis of Favorit's success is practical product-market fit. The company sells equipment that farmers understand and need every season. A Ukrainian seed drill or harrow can be attractive if it performs reliably and costs less than Western European equivalents.

The second success factor is certification discipline because export requires documented repeatability. Favorit's move toward type approval and certification of model ranges shows that it is trying to convert workshop-based production into serial export readiness.

Fibermix: Concrete-Fibre Producer

Executive Summary

Fibermix, operating within the Clight Group structure, is a Ukrainian producer of polypropylene fibres for concrete under the ArmoTec, FiberMix and PolyMesh lines. Its EU entry combines construction product regulation and CE compliance, EN 14889-2 certification, direct cross-border export, specialised dealers, and localised e-commerce. Its success rests on turning a small construction additive into an easy-to-buy EU-ready product. The model is scalable, but further growth depends on certification depth, distributor quality, logistics, localisation, working capital, and the ability to support contractors in multiple EU markets.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

Fibermix is best understood as a Ukrainian construction-materials case built around Clight Group, a producer of synthetic fibres. The company manufactures polypropylene fibres used as reinforcement additives in concrete. Public materials identify three product lines: ArmoTec, FiberMix and PolyMesh.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

Fibermix sells polypropylene fibres for concrete. In simple terms, these are small synthetic fibres added into concrete mixes to improve performance. Microfibres help reduce shrinkage cracks and surface cracking. Macrostructural fibres such as ArmoTec can partly replace welded mesh or conventional reinforcement in certain applications, depending on project design and engineering requirements. The product is used in floors, slabs, industrial pavements, warehouses, driveways, farm buildings, precast concrete, shotcrete and other concrete works. For contractors, the value is that fibres are mixed directly into concrete, which can reduce cracking, speed up work and sometimes reduce labour connected with laying steel mesh. For smaller builders and private users, packaged fibre makes concrete reinforcement easier to apply in small projects.

For macro-export classification, the product belongs to synthetic fibres / man-made staple fibres. The precise customs code depends on product form and packaging, but the macro-level framing is polypropylene synthetic fibre.

3. EU market entry model: compliance plus specialised intermediaries

Fibermix's EU entry model is hybrid. The first layer is direct cross-border export from Ukraine. The company maintains a multilingual European-facing website with export contacts and information in several languages, including English, German, Polish, Romanian, and Hungarian. The site presents products, delivery options to customer facilities or warehouses. This is a manufacturer-led export channel.

The second and most visible layer is distributor-led market entry. The strongest public example is Levron Kft/BetonBooster in Hungary. BetonBooster presents ArmoTec as an original product sold through an official dealer channel. The same platform extends the product into Slovakia, Poland, and Germany through localised websites, Allegro in Poland, and Amazon.de in Germany. This matters because the Fibermix product is translated into local retail and contractor formats.

The third layer is sectoral catalogue entry. In Greece, Domylco Construction Chemicals includes Fibermix/ArmoTec in its construction-chemicals and concrete-additives portfolio. This gives the Ukrainian product a place inside a local professional offer to builders and concrete users.

4. The basis of success

The core of Fibermix's success is that the company made a technical product commercially legible. Polypropylene fibre is not self-explanatory for every buyer. The company and its partners had to explain where the product is used, how much is needed, what it replaces, and what documents support it.

The second success factor is compliance. The company prepared construction product regulation and CE documentation and EN 14889-2 certification for construction fibres through a notified body in Bratislava. For EU construction markets, this is a decisive credibility gate. Without a Declaration of Performance, CE documentation and test evidence, even a useful product would remain difficult for serious distributors and contractors to sell.

The third factor is channel translation. BetonBooster repackaged the product into 1 kg, 3 kg, 12 kg, and 24 kg formats, offered delivery, project pricing, and local-language explanations. This turned an industrial additive into a product that could be bought by small contractors, private builders and project users.

INSORTEX: Berry-Processing Equipment Producer

Executive Summary

INSORTEX is a Poltava-based Ukrainian SME producing industrial equipment for sorting, washing, grading, inspecting, and processing berries, fruit and vegetables. Its EU entry combined two tracks, which include distributor-led expansion into nearby berry-producing markets and a direct B2B project in France for Releaf Paper. Its success rests on narrow specialisation, CE and ISO certification, customisation, price competitiveness, and rising demand for higher-quality berry processing. The model is scalable, but constrained by production capacity, after-sales service, distributor quality, labour shortages, and the need to build stronger EU visibility.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

INSORTEX LLC is a Ukrainian manufacturing company founded in Poltava in 2019 by Daler Saidov. It produces industrial equipment for post-harvest handling and processing of berries, fruit and vegetables. In only a few years, the company built a portfolio of more than 50 equipment types and more than 150 clients, becoming one of Ukraine's visible niche producers of berry-processing machinery.

INSORTEX found a narrow niche, developed customised machinery, passed basic certification gates and then used distributors, client referrals and project-based opportunities to reach EU and EU-adjacent markets.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

INSORTEX produces machines and lines for berries, fruit, and vegetables including washing systems, brush washers, vibrating sieves, inspection conveyors, calibrators, de-stemmers, separators, polishers, metal detectors, screw conveyors, packaging lines, and customised processing solutions.

This equipment helps a berry grower or processor turn freshly harvested berries into a cleaner, better sorted, and more marketable product. For export markets, this matters because European buyers care about uniform quality, cleanliness, traceability, and reliable processing. A raspberry or blueberry depends on how the berry is cleaned, sorted, inspected, frozen, packed, or prepared for further processing.

INSORTEX also proved that its engineering competence can be used beyond berries. In 2024, the company produced equipment for Releaf Paper France, helping clean and prepare fallen leaves for a pilot industrial line in Les Mureaux near Paris. This shows that the company's core competence includes customised equipment for handling delicate biological raw materials.

For macro-export classification, the core product belongs to machinery and mechanical appliances.

3. EU market entry model: distributors plus direct project sales

INSORTEX's EU entry followed two parallel routes.

The first was distributor-led expansion. The company's first international market was Moldova in 2020, through OzonTech, which acted as an official local distributor providing sales, installation, and support. The same logic later shaped expansion toward Romania and other regional markets. This model was practical for a small SME as a local distributor helps find clients, understands the language and business culture, and supports equipment after installation.

The second route was a direct B2B project in France. Releaf Paper France, a Ukrainian-founded circular-materials startup backed by European innovation funding, needed non-standard equipment for preparing fallen leaves for processing. INSORTEX supplied part of the production line, which was launched in France in November 2024. This was a project-based industrial equipment contract with an EU-based client.

4. The basis of success

The basis of success is narrow specialisation. INSORTEX did not try to become a general machinery producer. It focused on the practical bottlenecks of berry and fruit processing, where customers need customised solutions rather than anonymous catalogue machines.

The second factor is certification. CE and ISO 9001 certification helped reduce the trust barrier for EU buyers. For machinery used around food products, documentation and safety are part of the purchase decision.

The third factor is price-quality positioning. Public materials describe INSORTEX equipment as cheaper than Polish and European alternatives, while still offering customisation and engineering flexibility. This matters for SMEs and mid-sized farms that cannot always afford Western European machinery.

The fourth factor is client-driven learning. The first strawberry washer order in 2019 pushed the company into the berry niche; later client needs expanded the product line across raspberries, blueberries, sea buckthorn, elderberry, and other crops.

Konstrack: Industrial Air-Cleaning Engineering Company

Executive Summary

Konstrack is a Ukrainian producer and engineering supplier of industrial dust- and gas-cleaning systems. Its confirmed EU entry is a direct B2B engineering project for SIA VOKA in Latvia, where the company developed non-standard aspiration equipment for a sandblasting workshop. Its success rests on custom engineering, price-quality competitiveness, industrial references, and practical experience with EU equipment through Airpol. The model is scalable in project niches, but constrained by certification transparency, limited public EU references, and service logistics.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

Konstrack, or KonsTrack LLC, is a Ukrainian industrial engineering company associated with production sites and offices in Zelenodolsk, Dnipro, and Kyiv. The company produces industrial air-cleaning, aspiration, and dust-collection systems, and also provides engineering, installation, and service support. Its portfolio includes bag filters, cartridge filters, cyclones, spark arresters, rotary valves, dampers, and complete turnkey dust- and gas-cleaning solutions. Konstrack is a Ukrainian engineering SME supplying a customised industrial system directly to an EU-based manufacturer. It is a project-based entry, where the Ukrainian company sells engineering competence, design adaptation and equipment for a specific production site.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

Konstrack produces equipment that removes dust, particles, and polluted air from industrial processes. In simple terms, when a factory cuts, grinds, blasts, burns, mixes, or processes materials, dust and harmful particles can enter the air. An aspiration or dust-collection system captures that polluted air, filters it, and helps the factory operate more safely and cleanly.

The company's equipment is used in sectors such as metallurgy, cement, chemicals, machine building, food processing, and others. For the Latvian project, Konstrack developed non-standard aspiration equipment for a sandblasting workshop. Sandblasting creates heavy dust from abrasive material, coatings, and metal particles. In other words, air-cleaning equipment is part of workplace safety, environmental protection, and process quality. For macro-export classification, the product should be mapped to machinery and mechanical appliances.

3. EU market entry model: direct B2B engineering project

Konstrack's confirmed EU entry model is direct B2B engineering project export. The company developed a non-standard system for a specific industrial customer and production process.

The buyer was SIA VOKA, a Latvian company based in Talsi and active in grain-processing complexes, steel structures, and metalworking. Konstrack's role was to develop aspiration equipment for VOKA's sandblasting workshop. In value-chain terms, Konstrack entered as a specialist industrial supplier helping an EU manufacturer improve or operate its own production process.

4. The basis of success

The core of the success story is custom engineering. Konstrack's competitive advantage is that it can design a system for the customer's specific process, layout, airflow, dust load, and industrial constraints.

The second success factor is price-quality competitiveness. EU industrial air-cleaning markets include established Polish, German, and other European suppliers. A Ukrainian company can compete if it offers acceptable technical quality at a more attractive cost.

The third factor is reference credibility. Konstrack's Ukrainian client base includes large industrial names and subsidiaries of international groups, including HeidelbergCement Ukraine. Even if these are domestic references, they help show that the company can work with demanding industrial clients.

The fourth factor is EU-business familiarity. Konstrack is an official representative of Airpol, a Polish compressor producer, in Ukraine. This does not prove that Airpol was a channel for EU sales, but it does show that Konstrack has experience working with an EU industrial supplier, EU documentation, and cross-border B2B practice.

OLIS: Grain-Processing Equipment Producer

Executive Summary

OLIS is an Odesa-based Ukrainian manufacturer of grain-processing equipment, from separators and laboratory devices to turnkey cereal and flakes plants. Its EU entry included direct turnkey projects in Estonia, Lithuania and France, official dealers in Lithuania and Romania, and trade-fair lead generation. Its success rests on engineering maturity, patented technology, price-quality competitiveness, repeat customers, and demand for healthy and organic grain products. The model is scalable, but constrained by war-risk perceptions, logistics, CE documentation transparency, working capital, dealer quality, and skilled-labour shortages.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

OLIS is a Ukrainian engineering company from Odesa founded in 2005 by Oleksandr Vereshchynskyi, who has a doctorate in technical sciences. Over two decades, the company has grown from a small engineering start-up into a producer of more than 200 types of grain-processing and laboratory equipment. Its public profile points to around 211 employees, more than 70,000 units of equipment manufactured over 20 years, around 3,000 units in 2024, export sales of about 25%, localisation of roughly 75%, and export geography reaching about 40 countries.

OLIS supplies complete technological lines that allow European farmers and food processors to convert grain into higher-value food products.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

OLIS produces grain-processing equipment. The company's product range includes drum separators such as LUCH, flat-screen separators, oat and buckwheat processing lines, cereal plants, flakes lines, mills and OLISLAB laboratory equipment for checking grain and grain-product quality.

For EU markets, the strongest confirmed cases are turnkey plants. In Estonia, OLIS supplied an Optimatik G-24 cereal plant for Tõrvaaugu Mahe Talu, designed to process up to 24 tonnes of buckwheat per day. In Lithuania, OLIS supplied a line for Galinta ir partneriai to process oats into groats and flakes. In France, it supplied a line for processing oats and buckwheat.

For macro-export classification, OLIS belongs to machinery and mechanical.

3. EU market entry model: multi-channel project-based integration

OLIS's EU entry combines four routes.

The first route is direct turnkey project sales. For larger plants, OLIS works directly with the end customer. This is visible in Estonia, Lithuania, and France, where the company supplied complete processing lines. In this mod-

el, OLIS functions as an engineering integrator that helps design the process, adapt the equipment to the client's building and raw material, supply the line, and support launch.

The second route is dealer-led export. OLIS has verified local dealers in Lithuania and Romania. UAB Agrosistemos represents the company in Lithuania, while Sc Iuriaghi SRL represents it in Romania. These dealers help localise sales, present equipment at exhibitions, and reduce the distance between an Odesa manufacturer and EU buyers.

The third route is trade-fair presence. OLIS appears systematically at European agricultural exhibitions, including Agritechnica in Germany, Ka Pasesi in Lithuania, OKRA in Finland and AgriPlanta-RomAgroTec in Romania. For industrial equipment, these events are where buyers inspect machines, meet engineers, compare competitors, and create project leads.

The fourth route is association-based access through Ukrainian industry networks such as Ukragromash and the Millers of Ukraine. These associations support visibility, collective representation, and participation in sectoral events.

4. The basis of success

The core of OLIS's success is engineering maturity. The company was founded by a scientist-engineer, has around 20 patents, and maintains its own R&D capacity. Grain-processing equipment must be adapted to different crops, impurities, moisture, building layouts, and desired end products.

The second factor is price-quality competitiveness. OLIS uses Ukrainian engineering and labour-cost advantages while incorporating European components such as motors, gearboxes, and coatings. This allows the company to compete against suppliers from Turkey, China, Switzerland, Poland, and Canada.

The third factor is repeat-customer logic. Galinta ir partneriai in Lithuania is especially important because it reportedly ordered an oat-processing line after an earlier buckwheat project. A repeat order shows that the first project created enough trust for the buyer to return.

The fourth factor is demand fit. European consumers and retailers increasingly value healthy, organic and niche grain products. OLIS's ability to build lines for green buckwheat, oats, and flakes connects Ukrainian machinery to EU food trends.

Variant Agro Build / Variant Irrigation: From Ukrainian Agricultural Equipment Producer to EU-Based Irrigation Manufacturer

Executive Summary

Variant Agro Build is a Kharkiv-based Ukrainian agricultural-equipment producer from the Shufani-family industrial group. Its EU story developed in stages that include first direct B2B exports of grain-storage and irrigation equipment to Romania, then dealer-led sales across Eastern Europe, and finally a greenfield irrigation-equipment factory in Romania. Its success rests on EN 1090/ISO certification, strong metalworking capacity, local dealers, Romanian subsidy demand, and relocation closer to the EU. The model is scalable, but constrained by certification, logistics, service capacity, working capital, and local partner quality.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

Variant Agro Build LLC was registered in Kharkiv in 2014 and belongs to the Shufani family's wider industrial group. The company developed two related agricultural-equipment lines such as grain-storage equipment under Variant Agro Build and irrigation equipment under Variant Irrigation.

The grain-storage line included silos, conveyors, elevators, grain dryers, and grain-transfer bunkers. In April 2021, this elevator-equipment direction was merged with KMZ Industries. Therefore, the long-term EU integration story of Variant Agro Build after 2021 should be read primarily through Variant Irrigation, while the earlier elevator-equipment exports remain part of the company's EU-learning history.

Variant moved from direct export to dealer networks and then invested around EUR 2 million in a Romanian plant, becoming a local producer in an EU member state.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

Variant Irrigation produces large irrigation machines, including circular and linear sprinkler systems. These are large metal structures with pipes and wheels that move across a field and distribute water evenly over crops. They are used by farms growing maize, grain, oilseeds, and other crops in regions where drought makes rain-fed farming risky.

For macro-export classification, irrigation machines should be linked to machinery and mechanical appliances.

3. EU market entry model: from direct export to Romanian production

Variant's EU entry developed in three stages.

The first stage was direct B2B export. Before February 2020, the company had already supplied elevator equipment to Romania. In February 2021, the first of five planned Grain Truck transfer bunkers was shipped to a Romanian customer.

The second stage was irrigation export with local field service. In 2020, Variant completed installation and testing of an irrigation machine on a maize field near Sascut, Romania, and planned additional shipments. At this stage, the company was still learning the market directly via selling to farmers, installing machines, and training users.

The third stage was dealer-led scaling. By the end of 2020, Variant reported dealers across Eastern Europe. In 2021, it signed an exclusive dealership agreement with Titan Machinery for Romania. This was important because irrigation equipment needs local sales, installation, spare parts, and after-sales service.

The fourth stage was EU production. In June 2023, Variant Irrigation opened a plant in Târgu Jiu, Romania. This turned the company from an importer into a local EU manufacturer.

4. The basis of success

The basis of success was a sequence of credibility-building steps.

First, Variant had a strong metalworking base. The wider group included multiple metalworking enterprises and had experience producing structures and components for demanding customers.

Second, the company passed key certification gates. EN 1090 and ISO 3834 certification in 2018 gave it the legal and technical basis to place steel structures on the EU market with CE marking logic. For a producer of large, welded metal equipment, this was a real market-access condition.

Third, the company entered Romania at the right time. Severe drought and Romanian public support for irrigation investment created a demand window. Participation in AFIR subsidy mechanisms made Variant's equipment more accessible to farmers.

Fourth, the company moved closer to customers. The Zakarpattia site reduced logistics friction after 2022, while the Romanian plant reduced it much more radically.

GEOTERM.PRO: Geothermal Components Producer

Executive Summary

GEOTERM.PRO is a Ukrainian producer of HDPE components for geothermal heat-pump systems: U-turns, manifolds and collector boxes used in ground-source heating installations. Its EU entry was based on a consulting-enabled first-contract model when reportedly after EU4Business/PMCG export support, the company signed its first export contract. Its success rests on a narrow green-technology niche, field-tested products, EU-grade polyethylene and rising European heat-pump demand.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

GEOTERM.PRO LLC is a Ukrainian company founded in 2019 and linked to the older company Teplovi Nasosy, which has worked with heat-pump installation since the mid-2000s. The founder and director is Ostap Kucheruk. Unlike companies that produce complete heat pumps, GEOTERM.PRO manufactures specialised plastic components used in geothermal heat-pump systems.

For EU market entry GEOTERM.PRO LLC used a ready niche product, export-readiness consulting, market research, partner identification, and a first confirmed export contract. This is not yet a full-scale EU value-chain integration story, but it is a useful example of how targeted advisory support can move a technically capable SME from intention to first export outcome. Still, the case should be treated carefully, as the only confirmation for EU market entry was a PMCG report under the EU4Business export-support project.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

GEOTERM.PRO produces components for the ground loop of geothermal heat-pump systems. In simple terms, a ground-source heat pump uses stable underground temperatures to heat or cool buildings. Pipes are placed in boreholes or underground loops; liquid circulates through them and exchanges heat with the ground. GEOTERM.PRO supplies the 'invisible' plastic parts that make this system work.

Its products include U-turns for geothermal probes, distribution manifolds, geothermal collector boxes for indoor installation, wall-mounted blocks and auxiliary fittings such as PE-to-thread transitions, flow meters, ball valves and couplings. These parts are used by drilling companies, heat-pump installers and technical distributors rather than by final household consumers.

The company emphasises the use of virgin PE 100-RC polyethylene produced in the EU. This is important because underground geothermal components must be durable, pressure-resistant, and suitable for long-term installation. If a component fails underground, repair is expensive and disruptive. For macro-export mapping, the product should be linked to plastics and articles thereof, especially tubes, pipes, hoses and fittings of plastics.

3. EU market entry model: consulting-enabled first contract

GEOTERM.PRO's EU entry model can be described as consulting-enabled direct B2B entry, although the exact buyer channel is not public. The first step was internal product readiness. The company had a manufacturing base and products that had been tested through the practical experience of the parent heat-pump installation business. This gave it a stronger starting position.

The second step was export-readiness support. Under the EU4Business Export Support Component, implemented by PMCG, the company passed through a structured process that included export-readiness assessment, export-market research, and export strategy. The company's export readiness was assessed at around 70%, meaning that it had a real product and capacity but lacked a clear market plan.

The third step was partner targeting. The advisory support helped define suitable markets, target customers, and potential partners. As a result, GEOTERM.PRO signed its first export contract.

4. The basis of success

The basis of success was the combination of a narrow technical niche and structured export support. GEOTERM.PRO was selling specialised components for a growing European market what included ground-source heat-pump systems.

The second success factor was inherited technical credibility. The company emerged from a heat-pump installation background, so it understood what installers need in practice what makes the product more credible.

The third factor was EU-compatible input material. By using EU-produced virgin polyethylene, the company could reduce buyer concerns about raw-material quality and long-term durability.

The fourth factor was external advisory discipline. The company's director publicly noted that before the programme the company had many questions, unclear priorities and no action plan. The EU4Business process helped convert general export ambition into a concrete strategy.

Kyiv Fan Plant: Industrial Fan Producer

Executive Summary

Kyiv Fan Plant is a Brovary-based Ukrainian producer of industrial fans, smoke exhausters and specialised ventilation equipment. Its EU entry followed a standards-first direct-export model, which included CE certification in 2017, online-driven B2B sales, and later deliveries to Estonia, Latvia, Romania, Czechia, France, and Finland. Its success rests on early EU compliance, a strong online sales platform, niche engineering capability and EIB/EU4Business-supported access to finance. The model is scalable, but constrained by certification costs, working capital, buyer trust, war risk, and limited EU service infrastructure.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

Kyiv Fan Plant LLC, or KVZ, is a Ukrainian manufacturer of industrial ventilation equipment based in Brovary, Kyiv region. The company's story began in 2009 with online trade in industrial ventilation products. It moved into own manufacturing in 2015 and reached a new stage in January 2021 with the launch of a 9,000 m² factory.

Kyiv Fan Plant LLC built a modern production base in Ukraine, invested early in CE conformity, developed an online B2B sales channel, and then sold directly to industrial customers across Europe.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

KVZ manufactures industrial fans and related ventilation equipment. Its product range includes radial and axial fans, smoke exhausters, counter-rotating fans, tunnel and metro fans, explosion-proof fans for mines, cyclones, dust collectors, heat curtains, and custom engineering products such as wind tunnels.

An industrial fan is part of the infrastructure that moves air, smoke, dust, or gases in factories, tunnels, mines, warehouses, shopping centres, etc. In many cases, such equipment is linked to safety, fire protection, worker health, or the reliability of industrial processes.

KVZ's more specialised products are especially relevant for EU value chains, such as smoke exhausters for industrial and energy facilities, tunnel fans with fire-resistance characteristics, explosion-proof ventilation for mines, and custom high-spec engineering equipment.

For macro-export classification, the core products belong to machinery and mechanical appliances.

3. EU market entry model: standards-first direct export

KVZ's EU entry model can be described as a standards-first, online-native direct B2B export.

The first step was production capability. The company moved from online sales into own manufacturing and built a full-cycle production model, which includes cutting, welding, configuration, and painting. This gave KVZ control over quality, customisation, and delivery.

The second step was certification. In October 2017, KVZ completed CE certification under several EU directives and EN standards. This was a strategic investment before the company's broader EU expansion. It meant that when EU buyers appeared, the company could show documented technical conformity.

The third step was direct sales. KVZ's online platform, Ventilator, functioned as a digital B2B shop window. Buyers could find the company without a traditional dealer network. Public materials confirm deliveries to EU markets including Estonia, Latvia, Romania, Czechia, France, and Finland, while Germany and Lithuania are also listed in the wider geography of deliveries.

4. The basis of success

The first success factor was early compliance. CE certification turned a Ukrainian industrial product into one that could be discussed seriously by EU industrial buyers.

The second factor was digital visibility. KVZ's origins in online trade gave it a different route to customers. For many industrial SMEs, the bottleneck is to become visible for foreign buyers. KVZ partly solved this through a specialised online platform.

The third factor was niche engineering. The company can handle demanding custom orders, including tunnel fans, smoke exhausters, and wind tunnels.

The fourth factor was access to finance. In 2019, an EIB/EU4Business-backed credit line through ProCredit Bank helped the company survive a liquidity crisis caused by delayed payment from a major industrial client. Without that liquidity support, later EU expansion would likely have been much harder.

Skyeton: a Ukrainian Combat-Proven UAV Producer

Executive Summary

Skyeton is a Ukrainian defence-tech company producing the Raybird long-endurance unmanned aerial system. The company built production in Slovakia, created an Estonian holding structure, and entered partnerships in France and Denmark. Its success rests on a combat-proven platform, wartime scale-up, EU manufacturing, and partner-mediated access to NATO-oriented buyers. The model is scalable, but constrained by defence procurement cycles, export-control rules, airworthiness requirements, intellectual property rights, security concerns, and high capital needs.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

Skyeton is a Ukrainian aviation and defence-tech company founded in Kyiv in 2006 by Oleksandr Stepura. It began with light aircraft and later shifted toward unmanned aerial systems. Its flagship product is Raybird-3, also known as ACS-3, a long-endurance tactical reconnaissance drone.

Skyeton is a multi-jurisdictional defence company that combines the Ukrainian R&D and production base, a Slovak manufacturing entity, an Estonian holding structure, and partnerships with European defence-tech firms.

The company has confirmed Slovakia-based production, EU/NATO partner deliveries, Nasdaq CSD registration of the Estonian holding, and partnerships with Harmattan AI in France and Quadsat in Denmark.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

Skyeton produces unmanned aerial systems for long-range reconnaissance, surveillance, and intelligence missions. Raybird is a small aircraft-like drone that can stay in the air for many hours, collect visual or sensor data, and support military decision-making without risking a crewed aircraft.

Modern warfare and border security depend on persistent intelligence. A drone that can fly for more than a day, cover long distances, and carry different sensors becomes part of the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance chain. The system includes ground-control equipment, antennas, payloads, cameras or sensors, training, software, maintenance, and operational know-how.

For macro-export classification, Skyeton's core product belongs to unmanned aircraft under the category of aircraft, spacecraft, and parts.

3. EU market entry model: production subsidiary plus partnerships

Skyeton's EU entry has several parallel tracks.

The first is an EU production subsidiary. In 2024, the company launched production in Slovakia through Skyeton s.r.o. in Košice. This was a decisive move: a product manufactured in the EU can be sold to European or NATO partners without relying only on Ukrainian wartime export procedures.

The second track is an EU holding and capital-market structure. Skyeton Holding AS was registered in Estonia, and its shares were registered through Nasdaq CSD. This gives the group a European corporate structure suitable for investors and cross-border scaling.

The third track is partner-mediated access to European defence buyers. In France, Skyeton partnered with Harmattan AI to integrate French sensor technology into Raybird for French and wider NATO markets, with first operational use reported as expected in 2026. In Denmark, Skyeton partnered with Quadsat around electromagnetic spectrum monitoring and demonstrated the combined concept at a Danish drone event.

4. The basis of success

The basis of Skyeton's success is battlefield validation. Raybird drones have hundreds of thousands of combat flight hours and extensive deployment by Ukrainian forces. For European defence buyers, this is a powerful trust signal because the product has been tested in the most demanding real-world environment.

The second factor is strategic relocation without abandoning the Ukrainian core. Slovakia gives Skyeton an EU production bridge, while Ukraine remains the source of accumulated wartime engineering and operational knowledge.

The third factor is the partnership model. Defence procurement is slow and conservative. By working with European partners that already understand local procurement systems, Skyeton lowers the barrier to entering national defence supply chains.

Hydroshpriz: A Micro Ukrainian Meat-Processing Equipment Producer

Executive Summary

Hydroshpriz is a Kharkiv-based Ukrainian producer of meat-processing equipment: sausage fillers, forming systems, and automated snack lines. Its EU entry was built without its own EU company, through CE certification in Slovakia, partner warehouses in Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia, B2B distributors, and IFFA Frankfurt visibility. Its success rests on a narrow product niche, compatibility with established European fillers, affordable automation and digital demonstrations. The model is scalable for micro-manufacturers, but constrained by service capacity, legal form, certification costs, logistics, and a lack of own EU infrastructure.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

Hydroshpriz, also marketed as HySpriz, is a Ukrainian producer of equipment for the meat-processing industry. The company is associated with Oleg Kashkarov. Its production and business footprint is split between Kharkiv and Lviv. Kharkiv is the original industrial base, while Lviv gives the company a production and logistics point closer to the EU border.

The company produces vacuum fillers, forming systems for casing-free meat snacks, robotic snack lines, loading systems and accessories for sausage, meat-stick, fish-stick, and pet-treat production. Over seven years, Hydroshpriz reports more than 300 projects worldwide, with geography including the EU, United Kingdom, United States, Australia, the UAE, and Central Asia.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

Hydroshpriz sells machines that help food producers fill, shape, and cut meat products. A sausage filler pushes minced meat or other food mass into a casing or forming system. A forming system shapes the product into sticks, strips or small salami-type snacks. An automated snack line can combine filling, forming, cutting, conveying, and tray loading.

In plain language, this is equipment for factories and small food producers that want to make meat snacks, pet treats, fish sticks, or casing-free mini salami. Snack formats are growing in the food industry and producers want convenient, portioned, high-protein products that can be made efficiently and consistently. For macro-export classification, Hydroshpriz belongs to machinery and mechanical appliances, especially food-processing machinery.

3. EU market entry model: certification, partner warehouses and B2B distributors

Hydroshpriz's EU entry model is best described as partner-based B2B export without an own EU entity.

The first step was certification. Hydroshpriz states that CE-related testing is conducted through the TSU Certification Center in Slovakia, covering electromagnetic safety, protection against electric shock, and food-safety requirements. For machinery used in food production, this is a critical entry gate.

The second was partner warehousing. Hydroshpriz lists EU warehouse points in Vilnius, Kraków, and Zvolen. This changes the buyer's perception because, instead of ordering from a distant Ukrainian workshop, an EU buyer can see equipment as available from EU stock or through a nearby partner.

The third was B2B distributors and industry partners. Confirmed EU-related partners include REGIS/Smakovita in Poland, DAYTON UAB in Lithuania, and PSG plus in Slovakia. Hydroshpriz also has a confirmed EU customer in Sweden, KERO HUNDTUGG AB, a pet-food producer. The company's participation in IFFA Frankfurt 2025 added visibility in the world's leading meat and protein-processing equipment exhibition.

4. The basis of success

The basis of success is a very narrow and useful product niche. Hydroshpriz is not trying to replace large premium European machinery producers such as Handtmann or REX. Instead, it offers affordable forming and snack systems that can complement existing equipment. Its systems are presented as compatible with Handtmann and REX vacuum fillers, which lowers the buyer's risk meaning that a European meat processor can add a Hydroshpriz forming module without replacing its whole line.

The second success factor is digital proof. The company uses YouTube demos, WhatsApp, Viber, and online catalogues to show the machine working. For a small Ukrainian producer, this is a low-cost trust-building tool. A potential buyer can see a Polish mini-salami application or a meat-strip demo before entering a sales conversation. The third factor is speed and flexibility. Large European equipment may be expensive or slow to obtain. Hydroshpriz occupies the entry-to-mid range which is good enough for SME processors that need automation, but cannot justify premium capital expenditure.

i3 Engineering: How a Ukrainian Smart-Building Hardware Producer Entered EU Value Chains

Executive Summary

i3 Engineering is a Ukrainian producer of wired smart-home and building-automation systems built around Atom DIN-rail controllers, expansion modules, software, and the i3 Home mobile app. Its EU entry is best described as a partner-led, installer-enabled model: i3 supplies the hardware-software platform, while local dealers, integrators, and certified installers bring it into buildings. Its success rests on CE-compliant hardware, a clear profes-

sional channel, partner training, and a Polish soft landing. The model is scalable, but depends on trust, installer capacity, local service, certification, logistics, and channel discipline.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

i3 Engineering is a Ukrainian hardware-software company producing solutions for smart homes and building automation. Its product is a professional wired automation ecosystem for houses, apartments, offices, hotels, restaurants, and other commercial facilities.

i3 shows a realistic path for a Ukrainian technology SME that manufactures a physical product and enters the EU through the professional layer around buildings: dealers, electrical firms, smart-home integrators, security-system providers, and installers.

The confirmed EU footprint includes a Warsaw office, a Polish legal entity, a market-facing Polish presence, official dealers in several EU countries, and public reference projects in Poland and Italy.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

i3 Engineering produces a wired automation platform. In simple terms, its controllers and modules are installed in an electrical cabinet and allow a building to manage lighting, climate, curtains, energy use, security functions and other engineering systems through software and a mobile application. The key product line is the Atom series of DIN-rail controllers and extensions.

Modern buildings increasingly need automation that is reliable, integrated, and manageable from one interface. For a homeowner, this may mean controlling lights, heating, or security from a phone. For a commercial property owner, it may mean lowering energy use, standardising building operations, and giving technicians a structured system to manage.

For macro-export mapping, this case should be treated conservatively as electrical machinery and equipment. On the one side, it is not a pure IT-services export, because the market entry depends on physical controllers, modules, and installation. On the other, it is more than ordinary electrical equipment, because the value proposition combines hardware, software, documentation, training, and integration support.

3. EU market entry model: dealers plus certified installers

i3's EU entry model is partner-led and installer-enabled. The company builds a network of official dealers and partners in target countries. These local actors understand their own market, speak the customer's language, know local building practices, and can work with electricians and installers.

i3 acts as the product owner and manufacturer. A local dealer or integrator takes the product into the market. Certified installers or trained technical partners install and configure the system in a real building. The final buyer may be a private homeowner, apartment owner, commercial property operator, hotel, office, restaurant, or other facility owner.

Poland appears to be the strongest soft-landing market. A Warsaw office and Polish legal presence help reduce distance between a Ukrainian producer and EU buyers. Public EU reference objects include a beauty salon in Wrocław, Poland, and private apartments in Fondi, Italy. These projects show that Ukrainian controllers are embedded into operating buildings through local project channels.

4. The basis of success

The basis of i3's success is the combination of product readiness, compliance, and channel design.

First, the product has a clear professional use case. Wired automation solves practical problems inside buildings.

Second, the company passed the basic trust gate for EU hardware by documenting compliance of the Atom line with relevant CE-related requirements, including low-voltage, electromagnetic compatibility, and radio-equipment frameworks. For electrical devices, this is point is critical because without compliance, serious EU dealers, and installers cannot confidently build a business around the product.

Third, i3 understood that a product requiring installation needs a market channel, not just advertising. Its partner programme offers technical support, marketing support, training through i3 Automation Academy, catalogues, brochures, and lead transfer to local partners. This is crucial because the company is helping dealers learn how to sell, install, and support it.

The World Smart Home Award 2022 also worked as a trust-building asset. For a Ukrainian brand entering conservative EU technical channels, external recognition helps reduce the hesitation around an unfamiliar supplier.

LogicPower: Ukrainian Backup-Power Producer

Executive Summary

LogicPower is an Odesa-origin Ukrainian company producing backup-power and energy-storage equipment: UPS systems, LiFePO4 batteries, inverters, voltage stabilisers, and solar solutions. Its EU entry combined a Polish legal entity and online shop, distributor-led expansion, certification, EU4Business support, and a western-Ukrainian production hub near the EU border. Its success rests on wartime demand for energy resilience, product specialization, CE/IEC/EN compliance, and channel-building. The model is scalable because products are standardised, but constrained by certification, battery regulation, service coverage, brand trust, and working capital.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

LogicPower is a Ukrainian manufacturer and brand of backup-power systems. The company started in 2006-2007 as a small distributor of electronics and UPS equipment, and later moved toward its own product portfolio: uninterruptible power supplies, LiFePO4 batteries, inverters, stabilisers, solar equipment, and energy-storage systems. By the 2020s, it had grown into a 200+ person energy-equipment business with manufacturing capacity in Ukraine.

LogicPower's EU entry is a staged model built around certification, a Polish company, e-commerce, logistics and service proximity, and distributor relationships in several EU markets.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

LogicPower sells equipment that keeps electricity available when the grid fails or when a user wants to combine solar generation with battery storage. A UPS protects a house, office, server, medical device, or small business from power interruptions. An inverter converts battery or solar electricity into usable current. A LiFePO4 battery stores electricity safely and for many charge cycles. Stabilisers protect appliances from voltage fluctuations.

LogicPower sells energy security for households and small businesses. This is why the product became especially important during blackouts. It is also relevant for the EU energy transition since more households install solar panels, demand grows for batteries, inverters, and storage systems that make renewable electricity usable after sunset or during outages.

For macro-export mapping, LogicPower belongs to the group of electrical machinery and equipment. More specifically, its battery products are related to electric accumulators, while UPS and inverter systems belong to the broader power-conversion and electrical-equipment segment.

3. EU market entry model: Polish hub plus distributors

LogicPower's EU entry model combines three channels.

The first is a Polish soft landing. In June 2022, LogicPower registered Logicpower Sp. z o.o. in Poland. The Polish presence reduced the distance between a Ukrainian manufacturer and EU customers, which allowed local communication, online sales, delivery, payment, returns, and service logic. The Polish online shop became a direct retail and small-B2B channel for customers buying UPS systems, batteries, inverters, and solar solutions.

The second channel is distributor-led expansion. LogicPower also entered or targeted markets such as Romania, Greece, and other EU countries through partners, solar integrators, and wholesale buyers. This is important because energy equipment is often bought through installers, resellers, or solar companies, not only through retail websites.

The third channel is trade-show and grant-supported market entry. With EU4Business support, the company developed export documentation, certification and strategy, and reported entry into five new EU markets.

4. The basis of success

The basis of LogicPower's success is the combination of timing, readiness, and institutional support.

The timing was exceptional since the energy crisis and wartime blackouts turned backup power from a niche purchase into a mass need. But timing alone would not have been enough. LogicPower had spent years building competence in UPS systems, batteries, and power electronics. When demand surged, it already had product knowledge, suppliers, service experience, and a recognisable Ukrainian brand.

The second success factor was certification. For the EU, energy equipment cannot be sold without safety, electromagnetic compatibility and technical documentation. EU4Business support helped LogicPower pass CE-related certification, prepare IEC/EN documentation, and modernise production.

The third factor was localisation. A Polish company and Polish online shop made the product more accessible to EU buyers than cross-border sales from Ukraine alone. This is a key lesson: EU entry for hardware SMEs often requires a local commercial wrapper.

MetaliX: Steel-and-Glass Interior Manufacturer

Executive Summary

MetaliX is a Lviv-based SME producing custom steel-and-glass doors, partitions, and room dividers for homes, offices, and commercial spaces. Its EU entry appears to be export-led from Ukraine and built through designers, architects, dealers, and direct sales to such markets as Germany and Italy. Its success rests on narrow specialisation, custom design, European hardware, and project-based sales. The model is scalable within premium interior fit-out niches, but limited by custom production, installation logic, compliance uncertainty, logistics, and the need for trusted local partners.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

MetaliX is a Ukrainian manufacturer of interior zoning systems made of steel and glass. The company publicly presents itself as founded in Lviv in 2020 by Taras Barshchovskyi and Taras Otkovych. Product classification manufacture of metal doors and windows.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

MetaliX produces custom steel-and-glass doors, partitions, room dividers, fixed interior windows, and related interior zoning systems. In simple terms, these are design-driven structures that divide space without visually closing it. They are used in apartments, private houses, offices, restaurants, showrooms, and commercial real estate where clients want both separation and openness.

The product sits at the intersection of construction, interior design, and custom metal fabrication. Its value is in the full project package: design drawings, quality control, and installation support. This makes MetaliX part of the European interior fit-out value chain rather than a supplier of anonymous metal parts.

An important trust-building element is the use of European components. MetaliX combines its Ukrainian steel fabrication with recognizable European hardware from Germany and Portugal, including sliding, folding, pivot, and handle systems. EU buyers receive a Ukrainian-made custom product that is built around familiar European fittings.

3. EU market entry model: project channels, partners, and outbound sales

MetaliX's entry model can be described as channel-led B2B2C export. In plain language, this means the company mainly does not sell through a mass online shop directly to final consumers. Instead, it works through the professionals who influence or control interior projects: designers, architects, dealers, contractors, and project decision-makers. These actors then bring the product to the final client.

The publicly visible model has three layers. The first is an English-language export front-end: global website, brochure materials, and a partner page aimed at designers, architects, and dealers. The second is a partner

channel: MetaliX openly invites designers, architects, and dealers to cooperate with the brand and represent it in their regions. The third is direct outbound sales in priority markets. In 2025, the company searched for a Sales and Business Development Manager for the German market, with tasks including finding partners through LinkedIn, websites, and social media, negotiating with decision-makers, attending trade fairs, and travelling abroad.

4. The basis of success

The basis of success is narrow specialisation. MetaliX does not present itself as a general metalworking shop. It focuses on one visually clear product category of steel-and-glass zoning systems. That focus makes the product easier to sell abroad because designers and dealers immediately understand what problem it solves.

The second success factor is customisation. In project markets, clients rarely want a standard catalogue item. They need a partition, door, or divider adapted to the dimensions and style of a specific interior. MetaliX's process matches this project-based demand.

The third factor is European compatibility. By using European hardware and presenting the product through English-language materials, MetaliX makes a Ukrainian-made product look understandable to EU partners. This is not the same as having a local EU plant, but it helps bridge the trust gap.

NovoAbrasive: Ukrainian Abrasive Tools Producer

Executive Summary

NovoAbrasive is a Ukrainian producer of abrasive cutting and grinding wheels founded in 2012 in Nova Vodolaha, Kharkiv region. Its EU entry was built through certification, distributor partnerships, EUR.1 customs preferences, and private-label production for foreign brands. Its success rests on European-level product quality, MPA Hannover certification, Federation of European Producers of Abrasives membership, modern equipment and competitive pricing. The model is scalable because its products are standardised and repeatable, but further expansion depends on brand trust, logistics, distributor quality, working capital, and resilience under wartime production risks.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

NovoAbrasive is a Ukrainian manufacturer of abrasive discs and industrial cutting, grinding, and polishing tools. The company was established in 2012 in Nova Vodolaha in the Kharkiv region and developed into one of the largest abrasive-disc producers in Eastern Europe. Its production capacity is reported at more than 30 million items per year, with a product range covering cutting wheels, grinding wheels, flap discs, fibre discs, diamond discs, brushes, and related tools.

NovoAbrasive does not depend on a single buyer or a one-off shipment. It sells through distributors, industrial dealers, and private-label arrangements. This means that Ukrainian production is embedded into the daily supply chain of workshops, construction firms, metalworking companies, and tool distributors across EU and wider international markets.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

NovoAbrasive produces abrasive wheels and tools. In simple terms, these are consumable industrial discs used to cut, grind, sharpen, polish or clean metal, stone, concrete and other materials. A cutting wheel allows a worker to cut steel pipes, profiles, or sheet metal. A grinding wheel removes material, smooths welds, or prepares surfaces. A flap disc is used for finishing and polishing.

Abrasive tools are used in construction, machinery repair, metal fabrication, ship repair, automotive workshops, equipment maintenance, and many other industrial activities. They are consumed continuously, so distributors need reliable suppliers that can deliver stable, quality products in predictable packaging and repeat volumes.

For macro-export classification, NovoAbrasive's core products belong to millstones, grindstones, grinding wheels and similar articles of natural stone, agglomerated abrasives or ceramics. This places the case in the export group of articles of stone, cement, asbestos, mica, or similar materials.

3. EU market entry model: distributors plus private label

NovoAbrasive's EU entry model is best described as distributor-led export combined with private-label production. The company sells its own branded products through foreign distributors that receive a protected territory, factory pricing, marketing support, and bonus incentives. Local distributors then sell to industrial clients, tool shops and dealer networks in their country.

The second channel is private label. In this model, NovoAbrasive manufactures discs under a partner's own brand. This is important because some European distributors already have their own brand, customers and packaging logic. Instead of forcing them to promote an unknown Ukrainian name, NovoAbrasive can enter the market as a manufacturer behind the customer's brand. This model allowed the company to reduce the classic trust barrier faced by Ukrainian exporters. In some markets, the buyer sees the local distributor or private label first, while NovoAbrasive supplies the industrial manufacturing capacity behind it.

4. The basis of success

The foundation of NovoAbrasive's success is product credibility. Abrasive discs are safety-sensitive tools: if a disc breaks during use, it can injure the worker. Therefore, European buyers need standards, testing and confidence.

NovoAbrasive addressed this by obtaining MPA Hannover certification, complying with EN 12413, implementing ISO 9001:2015, using oSa marking logic, and joining FEPA, the European federation of abrasive producers. These signals made the Ukrainian product legible and acceptable to European buyers.

The second success factor was production modernisation. The company uses modern Italian equipment and European raw materials from suppliers in countries such as Austria and Germany. This allowed it to position itself not as a low-quality cheap substitute, but as a cost-competitive producer with European-level inputs and process discipline.

The third factor was commercial flexibility. NovoAbrasive did not rely on its own brand but offered exclusive distribution and private-label manufacturing. In this way it adjusted to how the abrasive-tool market actually works.

The Good Plastic Company: How a Ukrainian-European Circular Materials Producer Entered EU Value Chains

Executive Summary

The Good Plastic Company is a hybrid Ukrainian-European materials company producing Polygood panels from 100% recycled and recyclable plastic. Its EU entry was designed from the start around a European commercial anchor in the Netherlands, Ukrainian-linked production capacity, certification, architectural specification, strong distributors, and direct work with global brands. Its success rests on turning recycled plastic into a certified, design-ready B2B material. The model is scalable, but further growth depends on certification, traceable supply, fabricator training, local A&D networks, and production reliability.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

The Good Plastic Company is best understood as a hybrid Ukrainian-European value-chain story. EBRD describes it as a Ukrainian innovative company, while the company itself presents its corporate origin as the Netherlands, where it was founded in 2018, with production sites in the Netherlands and Ukraine. This structure matters because from the beginning, the company was built with a European commercial wrapper and access

point, while Ukrainian production and operational capacity became part of the scale-up story. In other words, the company do not simply produce material in Ukraine and search for buyers abroad. It entered the European architecture, design, retail, and fit-out ecosystem at the stage where materials are selected for projects. The company inserted itself into the value chain before procurement when architects, designers, brands, and contractors decide what material will be specified.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

Polygood panels are surface materials made from 100% recycled plastic and designed to be recyclable again. The company does not collect and recycle plastic waste internally as its core business. Instead, it buys recycled polystyrene from established recycling centres across Europe and transforms it into high-value decorative panels for interiors, furniture, retail fixtures, wall cladding, etc.

In simple terms, Polygood turns plastic waste into a premium design material. This matters because the European construction, retail, and interiors sectors increasingly need materials that are documented as circular, traceable, and safe. In macro-export terms, this belongs to the recycled materials/circular construction and interior materials segment, which is a higher value-added green manufacturing category.

The product is not sold merely as 'plastic sheets'. The company sells a project-ready package which includes technical documentation, design customisation, project management, etc. That means the buyer is not only purchasing panels but also the proof and support needed to integrate those panels into a real commercial project.

3. EU market entry model: from EU anchor to specification markets

The company's EU entry had several channels working in parallel.

The first was its European anchor in the Netherlands. The Dutch presence gave the company credibility and proximity to European buyers, material libraries, architects, and brands. It also helped overcome the trust gap that Ukrainian-origin producers can face when selling to conservative EU buyers. For this type of product, being visible in a European showroom or material library is part of the sales channel. Designers and architects need to touch, compare, test, and specify materials before a project is built.

The second channel was direct work with major brands and multi-location roll-outs. A 'global roll-out' means that the same material is used across many stores, pop-ups, or branded locations, so the supplier must deliver consistent quality, pattern, documentation, and logistics repeatedly. Polygood products were used in projects for Nike, Adidas, LUSH, and Samsung across European locations. In this model, the buyer is not just the brand; the downstream chain includes design teams, retail fit-out contractors, shopfitters, fabricators, and installers.

The third channel was local distributors with access to A&D networks. A&D means architects and designers—the people who influence which material enters the project specification. In France, Spain, Sweden, Denmark, and the wider Nordic market, Polygood worked through distributors that could provide local showrooms, stock, samples, documentation, and relationships with specifiers. This solved the 'last-mile' problem: a sustainable material must be available, understandable, documented, and locally supported before it is used in projects.

The fourth and newer channel is direct specification work in priority markets. The company's 2026 search for an A&D Specification Manager for Germany, Denmark, and Italy shows a move toward building its own specification force. This role means working with architects, designers, contractors, and fabricators from the first project conversation until delivery, so that Polygood is written into the project requirements.

4. The basis of success

The basis of success is that Polygood entered the EU as a certified circular design solution. Its competitive offer combines sustainability credentials, design flexibility, industrial-scale production, and project support.

'Industrial-scale technology' means the ability to produce panels in repeatable quality and significant volumes, not only as small craft batches. This is important for brands that want the same material across dozens of stores or offices. The company also had to develop its own processing technology because suitable ready-made equipment for industrial-scale plastic-waste transformation was not available.

A major enabler was certification support. The Good Plastic Company received support through the EBRD/EU Climate Innovation Vouchers programme. EBRD later stated that part of the grant was invested into critical certifications, helping the company build trust with global customers.

PRANA: How a Small Ukrainian Ventilation Equipment Producer Entered EU Value Chains

Executive Summary

PRANA is a Lviv-based small hardware SME producing patented decentralised ventilation systems with heat recovery, built around a copper heat exchanger. Its EU entry followed a gradual model starting with trade fairs, later moving to a first embedded partner in Poland, CE/ErP certification, EBRD-supported management upgrade, and a network of exclusive national distributors. Its success rests on a clear product need, patented technology, compliance with EU standards, and access to Polish subsidy schemes. The model is scalable, but further growth depends on certification, distributor quality, brand recognition, production capacity, and resilience under wartime constraints.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

PRANA is a Lviv-based manufacturer of energy-efficient ventilation and heat-recovery systems. The core operating company, PRANA PLATINUM LLC, was registered in 2012, with Roman Kuzych and Dmytro Krotov identified as co-founders and managers. PRANA is a classic SME by size: the company employed roughly 45-81 people in recent years, depending on the reporting year. The case shows that even a relatively small Ukrainian hardware producer can enter EU markets if it combines technology, certification, local partners, and management discipline.

The company emerged from a recognition of the need for proper ventilation in insulated rooms to avoid mould. The founders noted that after buildings became warmer and more airtight following insulation, they also became more vulnerable to moisture, poor air circulation, and mould. The first ventilation prototypes were reportedly tested in the founders' own apartments. From that practical problem grew a patented ventilation product that is now sold through partners in multiple EU markets.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

PRANA produces recuperators—ventilation units that bring fresh air into a room while recovering heat from the outgoing air. In simple terms, the device allows a building to breathe without losing as much heat. This is important in modern energy-efficient buildings: once windows, walls, and façades are insulated, natural air exchange often becomes insufficient. Without ventilation, indoor air quality deteriorates and moisture can create mould.

PRANA's core product is a decentralised wall-mounted recuperator. 'Decentralised' means that the unit can serve a room or small space without a complex building-wide duct system. This matters for apartments, private homes, schools, kindergartens, offices, medical facilities, shelters, and renovated buildings where installing full central ventilation would be too expensive or disruptive. The company's technological differentiator is a patented copper heat exchanger, supported by its own R&D and climate laboratory. In export terms, this belongs to the HVAC/energy-efficient building equipment segment, a higher value-added green technology category.

3. EU market entry model: from exhibitions to embedded distributors

PRANA's EU entry developed step by step. The first step was visibility. The company participated in international exhibitions, where it could show that the product was not only assembled in Ukraine but also designed, developed, and improved by the company itself. These exhibitions helped PRANA find partners and also understand how the EU market works: certification, grants, donor support, public programmes, and local distributors are often as important as the product itself.

The second step was Poland. In 2014, Prana Group was established in Poland and became the company's first deep EU market platform. This was more than a reseller relationship. The Polish structure included distribution, installation/service capacity, and later R&D functions through related entities such as Ecoventeam, Prana Polska, and Prana FutureLab. Poland became the most advanced example of what may be called an 'embedded distributor' model which means that PRANA did not build its own factory in the EU, but it worked through a local partner capable of certification, installation, after-sales service, and access to public programmes.

The third step was wider replication. In other countries, PRANA built a network of exclusive or authorised national distributors with local market identities: PRANA ITALIA, Air Prana Germany, Ecostream Ireland/UK, PranaVent

Lithuania/Estonia, and others. This model allowed a small Ukrainian producer to reach many markets without owning full subsidiaries in each country.

4. The basis of success

The basis of PRANA's success is the combination of a real market need and a disciplined path to credibility. The product addressed a growing European problem: energy-efficient buildings need controlled ventilation. But a good product alone was not enough. The company had to become legible to EU buyers through CE/ErP conformity, energy labelling, ISO 9001, product documentation, and local representatives.

A decisive enabler was external advisory support. The EBRD advisory project helped PRANA introduce a corporate management information system, improving order processing and reducing operational bottlenecks. The company representatives claim that EBRD support translated into an 86% increase in turnover. A later EBRD/EU Climate Innovation Voucher supported smart ventilation features—IoT control, mobile app functionality, and automatic response to air quality—which strengthened the product's green-tech positioning and helped the company win recognition at Polish industry exhibitions.

The Polish Clean Air programme was another turning point. Once PRANA products became eligible for Polish subsidy-supported purchases, the product moved from ordinary private demand into a policy-supported market. The case shows that EU entry among others is about understanding how multiple support mechanisms could be used expand sales at the market.

Releaf Paper: How a Ukrainian Circular Materials Venture Entered EU Packaging Value Chains

Executive Summary

Releaf Paper is a Ukrainian-origin circular materials venture that turns fallen leaves into pulp, paper and packaging. Its EU entry was built through a French operational base, EIC Accelerator funding, a pilot production line near Paris, platform access through Uber Eats' packaging marketplace, and converter/distributor partnerships. Its success rests on a clear sustainability problem, proprietary technology, EU localisation and access to corporate buyer networks. The model is scalable, but constrained by capital needs, industrial validation, raw-material collection, certification, cost, availability, and buyer adoption.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

Releaf Paper was built around a simple but powerful idea that fallen urban leaves can become a raw material for paper and packaging instead of being treated as waste. The company is associated with Ukrainian inventor Valentyn Frechka, who developed the technology while still very young and later turned it into a materials business.

By 2024, Releaf had launched a pilot production line and Innovation Center in Les Mureaux near Paris. France became the best documented anchor market for the company's EU value-chain entry.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

Releaf produces pulp, paper, and packaging materials from fallen leaves. In simple terms, the company takes a waste stream that cities already collect from streets, parks and residential areas and turns it into fibre for paper products. The output can be paper in rolls for converters, kraft paper, paper bags, wrapping paper, corrugated packaging and finished packaging for brands or retailers.

Packaging buyers in Europe face growing pressure to reduce plastic, lower environmental impact, and find alternatives to wood-based paper. Releaf sells a circular material story about how city waste becomes a packaging input, while the final product can be used by restaurants, retailers, consumer brands, and packaging converters.

For macro-export classification, Releaf's visible commercial outputs belong to the official paper and paperboard group, which includes covering paper and paperboard and articles of paper pulp, paper or paperboard.

3. EU market entry model: French anchor plus platform and converter channels

Releaf's EU entry model can be described as hybrid localisation. The company established a French operating structure, received European Innovation Council support, and built a pilot production line in France. This gave the company a physical base inside the EU.

The second layer was platform-mediated buyer access. Releaf entered the French restaurant packaging channel through Uber Eats' sustainable packaging marketplace. For a packaging startup, this matters because restaurants do not normally search globally for experimental materials. They buy through approved supplier channels. By entering such a platform, Releaf became visible inside a real procurement workflow.

The third layer was converter and distributor partnerships. In Romania, for example, Releaf's material entered the market through a local paper-bag partner that could import, convert and distribute Releaf-based products. This is important because packaging value chains are local and practical meaning that a material needs converters, printers, bag makers, distributors, and final buyers.

4. The basis of success

The basis of success is the combination of invention, EU anchoring, and buyer relevance. The technology alone was not enough. Releaf had to show that fallen leaves could be collected, processed, turned into pulp, converted into paper, and accepted by buyers.

The EIC Accelerator was a decisive enabler because it helped finance the industrial step between laboratory innovation and buyer-ready production. The French pilot line also reduced the trust gap. European buyers could see a company operating inside the EU, working with local biomass and adapting its technology to industrial requirements.

The third success factor was positioning. Releaf entered a market where brands, restaurants, and retailers were already looking for more sustainable packaging. That created a demand pull, which pure price competition would not have provided.

Re:Quiet: Acoustic Interiors Brand

Executive Summary

Re:Quiet is a Ukrainian brand of acoustic panels, room dividers, ceiling systems, acoustic lamps, and soft furniture for commercial interiors. Its EU entry is best described as design-led and specifier-led direct export from Kyiv, supported by technical files, samples, acoustic project support, EU-facing B2B visibility, and trade-fair exposure. Its success rests on project competence, design quality, and specifier readiness. The model is scalable within commercial interiors, but constrained by logistics, insurance, buyer access, local service, and incomplete public evidence on compliance.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

Re:Quiet is a Ukrainian acoustic-solutions brand operating in the orbit of FDA GROUP, a Kyiv-based commercial-interiors business. The brand produces acoustic materials, systems, and furniture for offices and other commercial spaces. Public export profiles describe the company as a small team with production in Kyiv, a B2B focus, export experience, and clients in EU countries and the United States.

Re:Quiet entered the EU through the professional project chain of commercial interiors such as architects, designers, developers, general contractors, design studios, and direct corporate buyers. In this value chain, the product is specified into an office, hotel, coworking space, restaurant, or business centre before procurement happens.

The confirmed export geography includes Germany, France, the Netherlands, Romania, and Greece. Re:Quiet has also appeared on professional design and contract platforms in Prague, Cologne, and Copenhagen.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

Re:Quiet produces acoustic panels, compositions, wall systems, room dividers, desk screens, ceiling systems, acoustic lamps, and soft furniture. In simple terms, these products make noisy spaces more comfortable. They absorb sound, reduce echo and help people work, meet, eat, or rest in spaces that would otherwise be too loud.

Modern offices, restaurants, coworking spaces, and public interiors often use open layouts, hard surfaces and minimalist design. Such spaces may look good but sound bad. Acoustic solutions turn interior design into a functional environment because they help with concentration, speech comfort, and user wellbeing.

For macro-export mapping, Re:Quiet should be treated conservatively as commercial interior materials and furniture, which includes assembled interior products and acoustic furniture items such as furniture, bedding, lamps and related fittings. Some panel-only items may require product-specific classification by material.

3. EU market entry model: specifier-led project export

Re:Quiet's EU entry model is best described as design-led, specifier-led, project-based B2B export. The company does not appear to rely mainly on mass retail. Instead, it works in the logic of commercial interior projects.

First, the brand must become visible to architects, designers, or project teams. Second, it must provide samples, textures, 2D/3D/PDF files, and acoustic data so the product can be included in a project specification. Third, the order is produced in Kyiv and shipped internationally with export documentation. Fourth, the product is installed or integrated into a finished interior by the project team or local contractors.

This model is visible in Re:Quiet's public-facing assets, which proposes downloadable design files, sample kits, acoustic project support, product specifications, and international delivery information. Trade-fair exposure at platforms such as ORGATEC and design exhibitions also supports the model because commercial interiors are relationship- and visibility-driven markets.

4. The basis of success

The basis of Re:Quiet's success is the combination of design, acoustic functionality, and project readiness. The company sells products that help solve the problem of excessive noise, which is a concrete issue in modern interiors. A second success factor is the connection with FDA GROUP's broader commercial-interiors competence. The group's experience with architects, designers, office fit-outs, and European furniture brands gave Re:Quiet an understanding of how professional specification markets work. The third factor is specifier readiness. For an architect or designer, a product that lacks CAD files, samples, textures, acoustic indicators, or clear delivery terms is hard to use. Re:Quiet reduced this barrier by presenting itself in a format that project teams can actually work with.

S-Engineering: How a Ukrainian Industrial Automation Company Entered EU Value Chains through Siemens, Switchgear, and a Polish Production Base

Executive Summary

S-Engineering is an Odesa-based Ukrainian engineering and manufacturing company producing industrial automation and power-distribution systems. Its EU entry moved through three stages: licensed Siemens-based production, direct B2B export, and a Polish subsidiary with EU-certified own switchgear. Its success rests on trust transfer from Siemens, CE readiness, engineering competence, and own intellectual property rights. The

model is scalable, but constrained by certification, war risk, working capital, local production capacity, engineering talent, and dependence on complex industrial clients.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

S-Engineering is a Ukrainian industrial engineering company founded in Odesa in 2007 by Batyr Annaiev. The company designs, manufactures, installs, and services automation and power-supply systems for industrial facilities. Over 17 years, it has implemented more than 700 projects in 17 countries, including Germany, Austria, Poland, Spain, Bulgaria, Romania, and Czechia.

S-Engineering sells complex industrial solutions such as electrical cabinets, low- and medium-voltage switchgear, automation systems, PLC/SCADA integration and engineering support for factories, ports, terminals and energy infrastructure.

Its EU story evolved from licensed Siemens manufacturing into own-product certification and then into a Polish manufacturing platform. By 2023-2024, S-Engineering had a Polish legal entity, EU-certified OBERON switchgear, status as a permanent supplier to Siemens AG in Germany, and Siemens Grid+ Global Partner status.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

The core product is industrial electrical and automation equipment. In simple terms, S-Engineering makes the 'nervous system' of a factory or infrastructure facility. Switchgear distributes and controls electricity. Automation cabinets connect sensors, motors, machines, and software. SCADA systems allow operators to see and control industrial processes from a screen.

These products are used in grain terminals, food plants, oil and gas facilities, chemical production, logistics, energy distribution, and other industrial sites. If such systems fail, the plant may stop. That is why buyers need safe design, documented components, engineering calculations, programming, installation, and service.

For macro-export mapping, the closest official goods category for S-Engineering's electrical cabinets and switchgear is electrical machinery and equipment, which include boards, panels, consoles, cabinets, and similar bases for electric control or distribution of electricity. Engineering services and EPC work are a separate service-export layer, but the physical product belongs to electrical equipment.

3. EU market entry model: from Siemens partner to EU supplier

S-Engineering's EU entry developed in three stages.

The first stage was the Siemens technology-partner model. From the beginning, S-Engineering worked as a licensed Siemens partner for SIVACON and SIMOPRIME systems. This gave the Ukrainian company access to proven European technology, standards, documentation, and customer trust. Siemens acted as a technological bridge, which enabled S-Engineering to enter the EU market as a trained and licensed manufacturer inside a global industrial ecosystem.

The second stage was direct B2B export. In 2017, the company obtained the right to apply CE marking. In 2018-2019, it expanded exports to EU markets including Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Czechia, Spain, Austria, and Germany. The first EU customers were mainly industrial clients that already understood S-Engineering's capabilities or belonged to multinational groups.

The third stage was deeper localisation. In 2023, S-Engineering Poland Sp. z o.o. was registered in Gliwice, an industrial city in Silesia. In the same period, the company certified its own OBERON medium-voltage switchgear for the EU market and became a permanent supplier to Siemens AG in Germany. In 2024, it launched a full cabinet production cycle in Poland and received EU certification for an upgraded OBERON design up to 17.5 kV.

4. The basis of success

The basis of success was trust. Industrial buyers do not easily change suppliers for electrical systems that control production. S-Engineering solved this trust problem through its Siemens partnership, CE readiness, ISO systems, and a long project record.

The second factor was accumulated engineering competence. The company could design, build, program, install, and maintain full systems. This is valuable for EU buyers because it reduces integration risk.

The third factor was moving from licensed technology to own intellectual property products. OBERON, the company's own medium-voltage switchgear, turned S-Engineering from a Siemens-based integrator into an independent product owner with EU-certified equipment. This improved the company's long-term value position.

SheMax: How a Ukrainian Beauty Equipment Producer Built an Export Business in Europe

Executive Summary

SheMax is a Ukrainian SME producing professional electrical equipment for nail salons: manicure dust collectors, UV/LED lamps, furniture, and accessories. Its EU entry was built through certification, international beauty exhibitions, diaspora-driven demand, online sales, and distributors in EU countries. Its success rests on a niche product with clear demand, European compliance, strong branding, and the role of Ukrainian nail professionals abroad as early ambassadors. The model is scalable, though further expansion depends on the growth potential of the nail beauty market.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

SheMax is a Ukrainian manufacturer of professional equipment for beauty and nail salons. The company was founded by Tetiana and Serhii Shelest from Dnipro in 2017-2018 and later relocated production to Zakarpattia after the start of Russia's full-scale invasion. Its core products are manicure dust collectors, UV/LED lamps, salon furniture, and accessories. The company's production is located in the Uzhhorod area and is presented as certified according to European standards, including CE marking and ISO documentation.

SheMax is a small Ukrainian manufacturing business that found a narrow but fast-growing European niche: professional equipment for nail salons. Its story shows how an SME can move into EU value chains through product specialisation, certification, a strong brand, diaspora networks, exhibitions, and distributors.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

The flagship product is a manicure dust collector. In simple terms, this is an electric suction device used at a nail technician's workstation to collect fine dust created during filing, polishing, gel removal, or artificial nail work. It improves cleanliness, protects the technician and client from breathing fine particles, and makes the workplace look more professional.

SheMax also produces UV/LED lamps, salon furniture, and related accessories, but the dust collector is the product most closely linked to the company's export story. In macro-export terms, this belongs to the group of professional electrical equipment/light industrial beauty equipment. It is a higher value-added niche manufacturing product: small enough for macro-impact, but specialised enough to compete on design, performance, certification, and brand reputation.

The broader demand driver was the expansion of nail salons across Europe. The popularity of manicure services created a growing need for professional salon equipment. SheMax benefited from this trend, especially among Ukrainian beauty professionals abroad, who understood the brand and were willing to recommend it in new European markets.

3. EU market entry model: from large order to distributor network

The first major trigger was a large Italian order in 2020: an Italian company reportedly ordered 1,000 dust collectors worth approximately UAH 5-6 million. For a small manufacturer, this order forced the company to learn how to produce at scale, organise packaging, optimise processes, and work in several shifts. The order confirmed that there was serious European demand for SheMax's product.

After that, the company made a strategic decision to focus on exports. In 2020, SheMax stopped selling in Ukraine and shifted its attention to foreign markets. Promotion relied heavily on beauty industry exhibitions. SheMax participated in around ten European beauty exhibitions in 2022. These events helped the company meet distributors, demonstrate product quality, and build recognition in a very visual, reputation-driven industry.

The second channel was the Ukrainian diaspora and Ukrainian nail professionals in Europe. As Ukrainian women opened salons or worked in beauty services across the EU, some became natural ambassadors for a Ukrainian brand they already trusted. This created a bridge into local markets, with the first layer of credibility built through professional users recommending equipment to other salons and distributors.

The third channel was official distribution and online accessibility. SheMax developed an online store and partner sales channels rather than building its own EU branch network. A European warehouse and distribution

function in Dublin serves Ireland and the United Kingdom, while the company also works through official dealers and wholesale partners.

4. The basis of success

The basis of SheMax's success is the combination of a clear niche, professional branding, and export discipline. The company did not try to sell a generic product into a mass market. It focused on a specific pain point in nail salons. This made the product easy to explain and easy to demonstrate.

Certification was also central. For electrical salon equipment, European buyers need confidence that the product is safe and compliant. SheMax's CE marking (the EU's basic product-safety and market-access proof) and ISO documentation helped reduce the trust barrier for distributors and professional buyers.

The company also invested in credibility through product development. SheMax conducted research into manicure dust and the benefits of dust collectors. This matters because the company was educating a professional market about why the device should become standard salon equipment.

Silentbox: an Office-Pod Producer

Executive Summary

Silentbox is a Kyiv-based Ukrainian producer of acoustic office booths and meeting pods. Its EU entry combined direct B2B sales, a Polish operational layer, EU product-compliance documentation, localised digital channels and partnerships with dealers, architects and office-fit-out actors. Its success rests on a clear post-pandemic office need, compliance readiness, EU warehousing, and channel-building. The model is scalable because the product is standardised, but constrained by certification, logistics, local service, showroom access, distributor quality and capital needed for inventory and EU fulfilment.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

Silentbox is a Ukrainian manufacturer of acoustic office booths, also known as office pods or meeting pods. Forbes Ukraine described the company in 2024 as Kyiv-based, employing 18 people, and exporting to more than 11 countries after shifting its focus toward EU markets following Russia's full-scale invasion.

Silentbox entered EU value chains through a branded, design-and-compliance-sensitive product for modern offices. In particular, Silentbox's product enters the chain through office furniture dealers, architects, designers, fit-out companies, and construction representatives—the actors that shape how European offices are refurbished and equipped.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

Silentbox produces acoustic phone booths and meeting pods for one to four people. In simple terms, these are small self-contained cabins placed inside open offices so employees can make calls, hold online meetings, work privately, or discuss confidential topics without disturbing others.

The product became relevant because modern offices often combine open-space layouts, hybrid work, and constant video calls. A company may not want to rebuild its office walls every time its team structure changes. A pod gives privacy and acoustic comfort without major construction.

Silentbox products also include electrical and technical elements such as lighting, ventilation, power connections, and acoustic materials. For macro-export mapping, the safest high-level category is commercial interior products/office furniture and prefabricated interior solutions, which includes furniture, lighting fittings, and prefabricated buildings.

3. EU market entry model: direct B2B plus Polish operating layer

Silentbox's EU entry is best described as direct B2B export with EU warehousing and channel-assisted scaling.

The first layer is direct digital demand generation. The company operates multilingual websites in English, German, French, Czech, Polish, and Baltic languages. These sites target European buyers searching online for acoustic office booths.

The second layer is a Polish operating contour. Public declarations of conformity and verification documents name ErbiLab Yevgen Serbin in Wrocław as the manufacturer. Silentbox also states that products are made in Ukraine and Poland and that European orders are shipped from a warehouse in Poland. This matters because large office pods are expensive to ship, slow to return, and difficult to service if everything is handled only from Ukraine.

The third layer is channel partnerships. Silentbox's cooperation materials invite office furniture sellers, architects, office designers, and construction representatives to become partners. Silentbox is trying to become part of the standard offer that office-fit-out professionals present to their clients.

4. The basis of success

The foundation of success was a product with a clear use case. A buyer does not need a long explanation of why open offices need quiet spaces. The product solves a visible problem. The second factor was compliance readiness. Silentbox prepared EU Declarations of Conformity for RoHS, Low Voltage and Electromagnetic Compatibility requirements, covering models such as Solo, Duet, and Quartet. A Verification of Conformity also referred to testing and relevant EU directives. For a pod with lighting, ventilation and electrical equipment, this documentation is an entry ticket to serious EU sales. The third factor was EU operational proximity. A Polish warehouse and EU-facing contact layer reduced delivery friction and increased trust. For buyers, the product could be bought and received through a more familiar European operating route.

Sine Engineering: a Ukrainian UAV Technology Supplier

Executive Summary

Sine Engineering is a Ukrainian dual-use hardware-software company developing communication, positioning and control-layer technologies for UAV manufacturers. Its EU entry is a component-led model: Finnish legal and engineering foothold, talent access, defence-technology validation platforms, and integration into UAV producers' value chains. Its success rests on a critical subsystem, wartime product validation, original equipment manufacturer adoption, and trusted EU/NATO-adjacent visibility. The model is scalable, but constrained by dual-use trust, engineering talent, export-control complexity, commercial opacity, and the need to operationalise its EU presence.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

Sine Engineering is a Ukrainian technology company working in the UAV ecosystem. Public sources describe it as a developer of communication, positioning, data-link, mesh-networking, and control-layer solutions for UAVs. In value-chain terms, the company provides critical subsystems that can be integrated into platforms made by other drone manufacturers.

The public evidence base confirms a Finnish legal foothold, engineering hiring signals in Tampere, participation at International Defence Industry Exhibition in Poland, recognition through NATO Innovation Range/DEFINE Finland, and investment backing through the Ukraine Reconstruction Investment Fund. It does not publicly confirm named EU buyers, contract values, first invoice country, or EU revenue split.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

Sine Engineering sells UAV communication and control technologies. In simple terms, these are the systems that help a drone stay connected, transmit data or video, operate in groups, and navigate or maintain control when GPS or ordinary commercial communication links become unreliable. In contested environments, communica-

tion links and positioning systems are often attacked, jammed, or degraded. A reliable subsystem can therefore become more valuable than the airframe itself.

For macro-export mapping, the physical product should be treated conservatively as electrical machinery and electronic equipment. Depending on the exact module, product classification may fall closer to communication apparatus for transmitting or receiving data, radio-navigation apparatus, radio remote-control apparatus, or parts thereof.

3. EU market entry model: foothold, validation and OEM integration

Sine Engineering's EU entry model is best described as component-led insertion through an EU engineering foothold and validation platforms.

The first step was institutional presence. Sine Engineering Oy was established in Finland in 2023. That was a step toward expanding engineering and operational capacity.

The second step was talent access. Tampere is relevant because it is one of Finland's technology and engineering hubs, with Tampere University, Nokia's chip and network-management activities, and a local ecosystem around electronics, embedded systems and microelectronics. For Sine Engineering, a Finnish presence in Tampere could therefore support access to rare engineering talent needed for UAV communication and control technologies.

The third step was visibility and validation. The company appeared at International Defence Industry Exhibition in Poland and received recognition in the NATO Innovation Range/DEFINE Finland context. For dual-use technologies, such validation platforms matter because buyers and partners need trusted proof.

4. The basis of success

The basis of success is the company's position as a critical enabling layer. A supplier of communication and control modules can be integrated into many UAV platforms at once. This makes the model more scalable than building and selling one final drone model.

The second factor is wartime product relevance. Ukraine's drone ecosystem created rapid demand and a feedback loop for communication systems adapted to difficult operational conditions. That gave Sine a strong product-development environment.

The third factor is EU foothold plus credibility. A Finnish node, International Defence Industry Exhibition visibility, NATO-adjacent recognition and URIF investment together reduce the trust gap around a Ukrainian dual-use SME.

SOLARsk: Ukrainian Solar-Mounting Producer

Executive Summary

SOLARsk, or Solar Steelconstruction, is a Dnipro-based Ukrainian producer of steel mounting systems for solar power plants. Its EU entry evolved from direct export of mounting structures to a Polish subsidiary, CE/EN 1090 certification, regional offices, and full EPC delivery, including the 100 MW Jeziorko project in Poland. Its success rests on vertical integration, EU compliance, production scale, Polish anchoring, and wartime execution discipline. The model is highly scalable, but constrained by certification, working capital, logistics, labour compliance, local trust, and the financial demands of large EPC contracts.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

SOLARsk, legally Solar Steelconstruction LLC, is a Ukrainian company founded in Dnipro in 2012 on the basis of steel-profile production. It grew into one of Ukraine's and Eastern Europe's largest producers of mounting systems for solar power plants. The company manufactures steel structures for ground-mounted solar parks,

rooftop systems, carports, agrivoltaic systems, façade systems, and solar trackers, and also acts as an EPC contractor for solar projects.

SOLARsk moved from exporting steel mounting systems to becoming a certified EU-facing supplier, then to delivering full solar-power projects. It climbed from component manufacturing into project execution, engineering, procurement, construction, and regional market presence.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

SOLARsk produces mounting systems for photovoltaic power plants. In simple terms, these are the steel structures that hold solar panels at the right angle, in the right position, and under the required load conditions for years.

The product must withstand wind, snow, corrosion, ground conditions, and long operating cycles. A weak mounting system can endanger the whole project. SOLARsk's offer also includes project design, installation, electrical work, and commissioning, which turns the company from a component supplier into a project partner.

For macro-export mapping, the core product should be classified as steel structures and parts of structures.

3. EU market entry model: from product export to EPC contractor

SOLARsk's EU entry developed in four stages.

The first stage was direct product export. From 2015, the company supplied mounting systems to EU markets as a Ukrainian manufacturer. The buyers were mainly solar developers, EPC contractors and installers that needed certified steel structures for photovoltaic projects.

The second stage was EU anchoring. A Polish company, Solar Stalkonstrukcja Sp. z o.o., was registered in Warsaw in 2017 and became an important operating and commercial platform. In 2020, the Polish presence was officially activated as a representative office. This helped SOLARsk work with EU clients through a more familiar legal and operational interface.

The third stage was certification. CE/EN 1090 certification made the product acceptable for EU structural-steel procurement. This was a key shift when the company became a certified supplier for construction-grade solar structures.

The fourth stage was EPC expansion. By 2023, SOLARsk was able to deliver the 100 MW Jeziorko solar project in Poland in 11 months, acting as a project executor coordinating engineering, supply, construction, and subcontractors.

4. The basis of success

The basis of SOLARsk's success is vertical integration. The company combines production of mounting systems, galvanising capacity, engineering, installation, and EPC management. This gives it control over cost, timing, and quality. The second success factor is EU compliance. For steel structures used in solar projects, developers, financiers, and insurers need proof that the structures meet EU requirements. EN 1090 and CE marking opened the gate to larger and more serious buyers. The third factor is resilience. After Russia's full-scale invasion, the company continued production and export. The Jeziorko project was implemented under wartime pressure, border disruptions, and energy outages. This turned reliability under stress into part of the company's credibility.

STIF Eastern Europe: a Relocated Ukrainian-French Industrial Components Producer

Executive Summary

STIF Eastern Europe is a Ukrainian-French joint venture producing bucket-elevator components for bulk-material handling. After relocating from Kharkiv to Berehove near the Hungarian border, the company used its

French technology base, ATEX-ready product positioning, EU4Business/GIZ support, Europages visibility, and AgromashExpo Budapest participation to build its entry the Hungarian and Romanian markets. Its success rests on relocation, French-brand trust, regulatory preparation, and targeted B2B channels. The model is scalable, but constrained by small production capacity, long industrial sales cycles, compliance documentation, language barriers, and undisclosed EU contracts.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

STIF Eastern Europe LLC is a Ukrainian-French industrial company founded in Kharkiv in 2017. It is linked to S.T.I.F. SAS, a French manufacturer of components for bulk-material handling systems. After Russia's full-scale invasion, the company relocated production from Kharkiv to Berehove in Zakarpattia, close to the Hungarian border.

STIF Eastern Europe supplies components used inside industrial handling systems in agriculture, food processing, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, energy, ports, and wood-processing. Its buyers are industrial companies that move grain, flour, sugar, powders, pellets, or other bulk materials inside factories, elevators, terminals, or storage facilities.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

STIF Eastern Europe produces bucket-elevator components, especially polymer elevator buckets under the JET brand, as well as elevator belts, MANUVRAC tubular systems, VIGILEX explosion-protection systems, and related safety components.

In simple terms, an elevator bucket is a small but essential part of a vertical conveyor. It is fixed to a belt or chain and carries grain, flour, seed, sugar, or other bulk material upward inside an elevator. Without such components a grain elevator, mill, feed plant or port terminal cannot move materials efficiently.

Bulk handling is about reliability, safety, and cost. A better bucket can reduce sticking, improve material flow, lower weight, reduce energy use, and improve hygiene. In dusty environments such as grain handling, explosion safety is also a serious issue, which is why ATEX-related positioning is important for EU buyers.

For macro-export mapping, STIF Eastern Europe's products should be linked to machinery and mechanical appliances, especially material-handling machinery and parts.

3. EU market entry model: relocation-enabled B2B entry

STIF Eastern Europe's EU entry model can be described as relocation-enabled B2B component export supported by grants and platforms.

The first step was survival and relocation. Production was moved from Kharkiv to Berehove, a safer western Ukrainian location only about 15 km from Hungary. This changed the company's logistics and market geography.

The second step was regulatory preparation. In 2024, through ReACT4UA/GIZ consultations, the company worked through EU requirements such as REACH, food-contact materials, ATEX-related rules, general product safety and EUR.1 origin documentation.

The third step was market access. Through the EU4Business grant programme, the company developed export strategies for Hungary and Romania, adapted its website into several EU languages, registered on Europages, participated in AgromashExpo 2025 in Budapest and launched an additional production line for a new type of elevator bucket.

4. The basis of success

The first success factor is the French joint-venture structure. STIF Eastern Europe entered the EU as a player connected to a recognised French industrial components group and uses French technology. This reduces the trust gap for conservative industrial buyers.

The second factor is product-market fit. Grain, food, and chemical producers need reliable components for moving bulk materials. This demand is recurring because buckets and belts wear out and must be replaced, while new plants also need full component packages.

The third factor is targeted institutional support. The EU4Business grant financed the practical market-entry package, which included research, website localisation, Europages, exhibition participation, and production expansion. For a company with only 5-10 employees, this is the difference between general export ambition and an operational entry plan.

StudioPack: Food-Packaging Producer

Executive Summary

StudioPack is a Ukrainian producer of aluminium-foil and cardboard food packaging for retail, HoReCa, food manufacturers, and packaging distributors. Its EU entry is best understood as direct B2B supplier entry from Ukraine, supported by food-contact readiness, FSC and FSSC certification, EAFA membership, Polish-language market localisation, free samples, and private-label/custom printing. Its success rests on making Ukrainian packaging acceptable to European buyers' procurement systems. The model is scalable, but constrained by certification costs, buyer trust, production capacity, price competition, and wartime logistics.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

StudioPack is a Ukrainian manufacturer of food packaging that has operated since 2006. The company produces disposable packaging from aluminium foil and cardboard, and positions itself as a B2B supplier for retail, HoReCa, food production, and packaging distribution.

StudioPack entered the EU market as an upstream supplier of packaging solutions used by restaurants, catering operators, retailers, semi-finished food producers, bakeries, confectionery companies, and ready-meal channels. In such value chains, packaging is a part of food safety, logistics, shelf presentation, delivery experience, and brand identity.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

StudioPack sells food-contact packaging which include aluminium trays and containers, cardboard trays, bowls, boxes, lunchboxes, delivery packaging, and customised packaging for take-away, catering, retail, and food manufacturing.

Food businesses need packaging that is hygienic, stable, practical, printable, suitable for logistics, and acceptable to customers. A restaurant wants packaging that keeps food presentable during delivery. A retailer wants packaging that supports shelf display and private-label branding. A food manufacturer needs packaging that fits production lines, documentation, and food-safety expectations.

StudioPack's EU value-chain offer includes buyer-specific branding such as printed lids, printed bowls, personalised packaging sets, full-colour printing, and production under a customer's own trademark.

For macro-export classification, StudioPack should be mapped by material. For instance, aluminium food containers are classified as aluminium articles. Cardboard boxes, bowls, and packing containers fall under the group of paper and paperboard and articles.

3. EU market entry model: direct B2B supplier from Ukraine

StudioPack's EU entry model is best described as direct B2B supplier export from Ukraine, with strong custom-packaging and private-label elements.

Poland is the clearest public market-facing beachhead. The company has a Polish-language storefront, Polish catalogue content, a dedicated Polish phone number, and a market-facing email for commercial inquiries. Austria and Belgium are also mentioned in public B2B marketplace descriptions as partner countries, but without named buyers or contract details. Germany is visible as outreach through a German-language storefront, but not as confirmed contract penetration.

4. The basis of success

The basis of success is certification plus customisation. For food packaging, European buyers ask whether the producer has controlled processes, traceable materials, food-safety documentation, and reliable quality systems.

StudioPack's FSC Chain-of-Custody certification supports cardboard packaging where buyers care about traceable forest-based sourcing. Its FSSC 22000 certification covers production of disposable food containers from aluminium foil and cardboard as packaging material. Membership in the European Aluminium Foil Association adds another trust signal: StudioPack is visible in the professional ecosystem of foil-container producers.

Symvol: a Relocated Ukrainian Industrial Components Producer

Executive Summary

Symvol is a Ukrainian industrial-components producer founded in Luhansk in 2010 and relaunched in Chernihiv after forced relocation in 2014-2015. It produces sliding bearings from its ACHM200 anti-friction cast-iron alloy, using recycled ferrous scrap as an alternative to bronze and babbitt. Its EU entry followed a grant-enabled innovation path: EU support helped finance laboratory capability, certification, and European patents, which opened direct B2B partnerships in Hungary and Czechia. The model is scalable in principle, but constrained by production capacity, capital needs, and long industrial qualification cycles.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

Symvol is a Ukrainian metalworking and industrial-components company led by Dmytro Akishyn. The company was founded in Luhansk in 2010. After Russia's occupation of parts of Luhansk region in 2014, Symvol had to stop operations and evacuate equipment. It first moved part of its production to Vinnytsia and then restarted in Chernihiv in 2015.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

Symvol produces sliding bearings and technical components from metal alloys. Its key product is a sliding bearing made from ACHM200, an anti-friction modified cast-iron alloy developed by the company. In simple terms, a sliding bearing is a component that allows a shaft or moving part to rotate or slide under heavy load with less friction. Such bearings are used inside machines and equipment in mining, metallurgy, machinery, and energy.

Bearings are small compared with the whole machine, but failure of a bearing can stop expensive industrial equipment. Traditionally, such components are often made from bronze or babbitt. Symvol's idea was to replace these materials with a cheaper, more durable and more resource-efficient alloy made from recycled ferrous scrap.

For macro-export mapping, Symvol's core product falls under the category of machinery and mechanical appliances. More specifically, plain shaft bearings fall within the category of bearing housings and plain shaft bearings.

3. EU market entry model: grant, patent, direct B2B partnership

Symvol's EU entry model can be described as grant-enabled innovation partnership.

The first step was survival and capability rebuilding. EU support for internally displaced businesses helped the company acquire laboratory equipment and resume more complex alloy production after relocation.

The second step was participation in the Climate Innovation Vouchers programme, supported by the EBRD and the EU. In 2018, Symvol received a grant that helped finance production certification and European patents for its ACHM200 technology.

The third step was direct industrial partnership. Public EU4Business materials state that after restarting bearing production and developing special anti-friction alloys from scrap metal, the company signed contracts with partners from Hungary and Czechia.

4. The basis of success

The basis of Symvol's success was a technically differentiated product with a clear industrial problem behind it: cheaper, longer-lasting sliding bearings for heavy-duty equipment.

The EU patent was a key trust signal. In a conservative industrial market, a buyer needs confidence that a new material is not just an experimental claim. Patent protection, production certification, and cooperation with Ukrainian materials-science institutions helped make Symvol's product more credible to European partners. In a public interview, Akishyn explained that after the European patents were obtained, partners interested in cooperation on the European market appeared.

Teplo-Polis: Heat-Exchange Equipment

Executive Summary

Teplo-Polis is a Kharkiv-based micro-manufacturer of plate heat exchangers and individual heating units for industry, utilities, food processing, and building heat systems. The company states that it exports to the EU, Moldova and Kazakhstan. The case illustrates a 'silent exporter' path in which a technically capable small B2B producer using European components reaches the EU market, but remains constrained by certification costs, limited scale, war-related supply risks, low visibility, and weak EU market infrastructure.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

Teplo-Polis is a Ukrainian producer of heat-exchange equipment based in Kharkiv. The current operating company, Teplo-Polis LTD, is a small enterprise with only 6-7 employees in 2023-2024. The company traces its business history to 2004 and presents itself as a long-standing specialist in heat exchangers and heating equipment. The company's own English-language materials state that it exports to the EU, Moldova, and Kazakhstan.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

Teplo-Polis produces plate heat exchangers, brazed plate heat exchangers, free-flow heat exchangers, individual heating units, and related service, repair and modernisation work. In simple terms, a heat exchanger transfers heat from one fluid to another without mixing them. This is essential in heating systems, hot-water supply, ventilation, cooling, food processing, chemical production, and many industrial processes.

An individual heating unit is a factory-assembled system that connects a building or facility to a heat network and helps regulate heating, hot water, and ventilation circuits. For a municipality, factory, school, food plant or apartment building, such systems help reduce heat losses, stabilise operations, and make heating infrastructure easier to maintain.

For macro-export mapping, Teplo-Polis should be linked to machinery and mechanical appliances.

3. EU market entry model: likely direct B2B export through technical buyers

Teplo-Polis's EU entry model cannot be fully reconstructed from open materials. The most defensible description is declared direct B2B export, probably through technical buyers, trading intermediaries, or engineering distributors. That means the buyer is likely to be an engineering company, installer, industrial enterprise, heating utility, distributor, or system integrator rather than a retail customer. The company states that it uses European components in production and that brazed heat exchangers are supplied through cooperation with Polish and German firms. This may support buyer trust, because EU-origin plates, seals, or components can make documentation and material traceability easier.

4. The basis of success

The basis of Teplo-Polis's potential success is a narrow technical niche. The company does not present itself as a general metalworking shop. It focuses on heat-exchange equipment and related heating-system solutions.

The second factor is customisation. Heat exchangers often have to be selected or designed for a specific process. A small producer that can adapt capacity, materials, and configuration may be attractive to buyers that need a practical alternative to premium Western brands.

The third factor is price-quality positioning. Teplo-Polis presents itself as offering European-quality heat-exchange equipment at a more affordable price, using European components. If this is accepted by buyers, it creates a defensible niche between expensive premium suppliers and low-cost imports.

Termojet: a Ukrainian Family HVAC Equipment Producer

Executive Summary

Termojet is a Ukrainian family manufacturing company that grew from a small garage-based producer of hydraulic separators into a B2B manufacturer of quick-installation systems for boiler rooms. Its EU entry combines direct supply from Ukraine, CE/PED compliance for pressure equipment, and a Polish legal entity acting as a distribution and promotion hub. Its success rests on a narrow engineering niche, standardised products, certification, and proximity to Polish HVAC distributors.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

Termojet is a Ukrainian family-owned manufacturing business founded in Kyiv in 2002. The operating company behind the brand is Sofiyivka-Montazh LLC, registered in Ukraine in 2010. The company's story is a classic SME upgrading path: it started from a small garage-scale production of hydraulic separators and gradually grew into one of Ukraine's significant producers of boiler-room quick-installation systems, including hydraulic separators, manifolds, and pump groups. It has a staff of around 100 people and annual production of more than 70,000 units.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

Termojet produces quick-installation systems for boiler rooms. In simple terms, these are ready-made components that help heating installers assemble boiler rooms faster, more cleanly, and with fewer errors.

The key product is the hydraulic separator. This is a component used in heating systems to separate the boiler circuit from the heating circuits inside a building. It helps stabilise flow, reduce pressure conflicts between pumps, and make the system work more reliably. Termojet also produces manifolds—distribution headers that divide heating flow into several circuits—and pump groups, which combine pumps, valves, and fittings into ready-to-install units.

The product is used by HVAC installers, heating contractors, plumbing wholesalers, and boiler-room specialists in residential, commercial, and industrial buildings. The final customer may never know the Termojet brand, but the installer does: these components sit inside the heating infrastructure that makes buildings function.

For macro-export mapping, this is best treated as engineering/HVAC equipment within the broader official industrial logic of machinery and central-heating equipment. The company's Ukrainian activity is recorded as manufacture of radiators and boilers for central heating.

3. EU market entry model: certification plus Polish hub

Termojet's EU entry has two main elements.

The first is a Polish legal and commercial presence. Termojet Sp. z o.o. is registered in Zabrze, Silesia. This Polish presence matters because Termojet's buyers are installers, wholesalers, and heating-system professionals who need local contact, technical documentation, predictable delivery, and after-sales communication. A Polish-language site, local sales infrastructure, and dealer contacts reduce the distance between a Ukrainian producer and EU buyers.

The second element is compliance. In 2020, Sofiyivka-Montazh received an ECM Certificate of Compliance for hydraulic separators of SH and KM series under the EU Pressure Equipment Directive 2014/68/EU. Without conformity documentation and CE marking logic, a Ukrainian manufacturer would struggle to sell such equipment through serious EU B2B channels.

4. The basis of success

Termojet did not try to enter the EU with a broad, undefined catalogue of metal products. It focused on a narrow professional niche: components that make boiler-room installation faster and more standardised.

This product-market fit is important. European installers value time, predictability, and technical reliability. A pre-assembled or standardised boiler-room component saves labour and reduces installation risk. For a Ukrainian SME, this creates a defensible position: the company is selling a system that helps professionals work faster.

The Polish hub was another enabler. Poland is geographically close, has a large construction and heating-equipment market, and is a natural first step for Ukrainian industrial SMEs. Silesia, where Termojet's Polish entity is located, is an industrial region with relevant B2B networks.

Thermo Projects Ukraine: a Ukrainian Defense-HVAC Producer

Executive Summary

Thermo Projects Ukraine is a Brovary-based Ukrainian developer and producer of HVAC systems for armoured vehicles such as MRAPs, mobile shelters, and military camps. Its EU entry is best described as a defence-sector pipeline model, which includes an EU legal entity in Bavaria, ISO 9001 certification, participation at Eurosatory 2024, and NDA-based talks with French and German defence manufacturers. Its success rests on its Webasto heritage, own product development, battlefield validation, and EU-facing representation. The model is highly scalable, but constrained by AQAP certification, defence procurement cycles, war risk, and export-control complexity.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

Thermo Projects Ukraine, LLC is a Ukrainian company founded in 2005 and historically linked to vehicle climate systems. It started as an official Webasto representative and dealer in Ukraine, then rebranded in 2018 and moved toward its own engineering and manufacturing of climate-control solutions for armoured vehicles and mobile military infrastructure.

Thermo Projects Ukraine is trying to enter the EU through the military and defence value chain, where suppliers are selected through trust, documentation, non-disclosure agreements, testing, quality systems, and long procurement cycles. It is a useful case for understanding how Ukrainian wartime industrial capabilities can become relevant for EU and NATO-adjacent production systems.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

Thermo Projects Ukraine produces heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning systems for military vehicles, armoured platforms, mobile tents, and temporary structures. Its product line includes HVAC and climate-control systems such as the Kharkiv 90/95, Kyiv 50, Odesa 90, and Borey Tent.

In simple terms, these systems allow soldiers and crews to operate in armoured vehicles or mobile shelters under extreme heat, cold, dust, and field conditions. This is not ordinary car air conditioning. In armoured vehicles, climate control affects crew endurance, electronics, mission readiness and the ability to operate inside a sealed or protected cabin for long periods.

For macro-export mapping, the product should be treated conservatively as machinery and mechanical appliances.

3. EU market entry model: trade-show diplomacy plus EU legal presence

Thermo Projects Ukraine's EU entry model can be described as trade-show diplomacy plus an EU representative layer.

The first step was capability building at home. The company moved from distribution of foreign brands to its own products for Ukrainian defence needs. Its systems were integrated into platforms such as Kozak armoured vehicles, and a non-EU export case is linked to Kozak-5A vehicles supplied to Saudi Arabia. This created an export and field-use credential before the EU push.

The second step was formal readiness. In May 2024, the company received ISO 9001:2015 certification through Bureau Veritas. For defence buyers, ISO 9001 is not the final gate, but it is an important starting point.

The third step was direct exposure to EU defence buyers. At Eurosatory 2024 in Paris, Thermo Projects Ukraine presented its own climate solutions and reported NDA-based talks with major manufacturers from France, Germany and Canada. In this sector, NDA is a critical element of making business.

4. The basis of success

The foundation of the case is the company's unusual combination of European technology heritage and Ukrainian battlefield validation. Its Webasto background gave Thermo Projects Ukraine familiarity with vehicle HVAC standards, components, installation logic, and customer expectations. Its post-2018 shift to own products gave it a valuable position.

The second success factor is product relevance. Russia's full-scale invasion turned Ukrainian defence manufacturing into an accelerated testing environment. Equipment that works under real wartime conditions has a credibility that is difficult to reproduce.

The third factor is EU-facing structure. Thermo Projects GmbH in Bavaria gives potential EU partners a more familiar contact point and reduces some legal and communication friction.

TMEC: Deep-Tech Engineering SME

Executive Summary

TMEC is a Dnipro-based Ukrainian deep-tech engineering company working in thermal engineering, reactor design, high-temperature processing, and materials science. Its EU entry is best understood as consortium-led deep-tech integration: a Polish bridge entity, Horizon Europe projects, a reactor-engineering role in SiGNE, and a strategic Finnish partnership track in graphite purification. Its success rests on rare engineering competence, EU institutional embedding and relevance to battery/critical-materials chains. The model is scalable, but constrained by customer qualification, process economics, and permitting.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

TMEC, or Thermal & Material Engineering Center, is a Ukrainian engineering company from Dnipro that works at the intersection of thermal engineering, industrial reactor design, chemical catalysis, graphite and carbon-material processing, and high-temperature materials technologies. The company has both a Ukrainian engineering base and a Polish legal and contact presence in Opole.

TMEC enters through a deep-tech route, where the 'product' is often a reactor, a process design, a laboratory or pilot-scale installation, or a technological function inside a European R&D and industrial consortium.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

TMEC sells thermal and materials-engineering capability. In simple terms, it helps industrial and research customers design equipment and processes that use heat, reactors and controlled environments to change, purify or synthesise materials.

One well-documented direction is SiGNE, where TMEC is linked to reactor engineering for silicon nanowires used in advanced lithium-ion battery development. Another direction is graphite and carbon-material purification, relevant to battery anode materials and the wider EU critical-materials agenda.

The value of this product is that batteries, advanced materials, and critical raw materials require equipment that can heat, treat, purify, scale, and repeat the process reliably. TMEC's value proposition sits in that engineering layer.

For macro-export mapping, TMEC products predominantly fall under machinery and mechanical appliances category, especially machinery for treating materials by temperature.

3. EU market entry model: consortium-led deep-tech entry

TMEC's strongest confirmed EU entry model is a consortium-led deep-tech entry with an EU bridge entity.

The first layer is the Polish presence. The Polish structure gives the company a more familiar EU-facing contact point, helps with continuity and lowers the transaction cost for European partners. It does not replace the Ukrainian engineering core but it makes easier to work from inside the EU.

The second layer is Horizon Europe. TMEC participates in EU-funded projects including SiGNE, TechUPGRADE, and STOREDGE. This is not the normal distributor export. In a Horizon consortium, a company must be accepted as a partner, receive a defined role, work under milestones and reporting rules, and deliver a specific technical contribution.

The third layer is strategic partnership. In Finland, Grafintec announced a memorandum of understanding with TMEC around graphite purification and a possible joint-venture structure.

4. The basis of success

The basis of TMEC's success is rare engineering specialisation. European battery and critical-materials actors need partners who can solve very specific thermal, reactor, and scale-up problems.

The second success factor is institutional trust. Horizon Europe participation works as a pre-market credibility mechanism. It shows that TMEC can operate inside formal European R&D-industrial networks and deliver engineering work in a structured consortium environment.

The third factor is the ability to offer a concrete deliverable. In SiGNE, TMEC's role is connected to reactor engineering and process scale-up, moving from smaller laboratory quantities toward larger batches. This is important because deep-tech buyers want repeatable engineering results.

TWERD Energo-Plus: a Ukrainian Energy-Equipment Group

Executive Summary

TWERD Energo-Plus is a Polish power-electronics manufacturer integrated into the Ukrainian ENERGO-PLUS group. The case is a platform-led EU entry where Ukrainian ownership and engineering logic entered EU value chains through an established Polish production, certification, sales, and service base. Its success rests on local EU anchoring, power-electronics specialisation, product compliance, and named Polish reference projects. The model is scalable, but constrained by standards, grid-connection rules, after-sales service, and project integration.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

TWERD Energo-Plus is a power-electronics company based in Toruń, Poland, with roots going back to 1989. The Ukrainian relevance of the case comes from its integration into the ENERGO-PLUS consortium. NPP ENERGO-PLUS EUROPE was registered in Poland in 2021, TWERD joined the ENERGO-PLUS consortium and rebranded in 2023, and in 2024 TWERD publicly reported that the founder's shares had been sold to NPP Energo-Plus Europe, a company linked to Yevhen Korf.

ENERGO-PLUS entered the EU market through a local EU manufacturing platform that already had Polish legal status, production, certification, sales, service, and customer references.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

TWERD produces power-electronics equipment. These are devices that control, convert, or manage electricity in industrial systems, renewable-energy installations, energy storage, and electric-vehicle charging.

The product portfolio includes frequency converters and drives, active-front-end converters, RES inverters, bidirectional AC/DC converters for storage systems, EV fast-charging stations, and EV charger power modules. These products are not visible to final consumers in the way a solar panel or electric vehicle is. They sit inside

the infrastructure that makes machines run more efficiently, connects renewable energy to the grid, charges vehicles, or stabilises energy flows.

For macro-export mapping, the core products belong to electrical machinery and equipment. The group includes static converters, inverters and rectifiers, electrical control cabinets and panels.

3. EU market entry model: platform-led EU presence

The entry model was via the EU market-facing seller TWERD Energo-Plus Sp. z o.o., the Polish producer. It has Polish registration, VAT status, sales contacts, service functions, certificates, and product pages aimed at EU buyers.

This is important because power electronics are standards-intensive and service-intensive products. A European industrial clients buy compliance, grid compatibility, technical documentation, installation support, and post-sale service. A Polish manufacturing base gives the buyer a more familiar contracting and service environment compared to a distant supplier.

4. The basis of success

The basis of success is the combination of Ukrainian group ambition with Polish industrial embeddedness. TWERD already had a long production history, laboratories, test stands, service capability, and EU-facing documentation. ENERGO-PLUS brought a broader consortium logic and the ambition to scale energy-equipment production.

The second success factor is product relevance. Europe's energy transition requires more converters, inverters, EV chargers, storage systems, and grid-compatible power electronics. These are enabling components for renewable energy, industrial automation and electrified transport.

The third factor is compliance depth. TWERD's public materials show ISO 9001, EU Declarations of Conformity under Low Voltage and Electromagnetic Compatibility rules, RoHS references, and NC RfG certificates for selected grid-connected products.

Agro-Simo-Mashbud: Grain-Processing Equipment Producer

Executive Summary

Agro-Simo-Mashbud is an Odesa-based Ukrainian engineering company that designs and manufactures turnkey grain-processing plants: cereal mills, flour mills, oat-processing lines, flake lines, and feed production systems. Its EU entry is based on direct project export, meaning that Ukrainian equipment is supplied to European grain processors together with engineering, installation supervision, commissioning, and technical documentation. Its success rests on deep specialisation, CE declarations, and turnkey delivery. The model is scalable, but constrained by project complexity, logistics, certification, service capacity, and financing of large equipment contracts.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

Agro-Simo-Mashbud is a Ukrainian scientific-industrial company from Odesa, founded in 1992. The company develops and manufactures turnkey complexes for grain processing, which includes cereal plants, flour-milling complexes, oat plants, feed lines, and related equipment for cleaning, sorting, drying, hulling, flaking, packaging, and processing grain and legumes.

The company has repeatedly implemented grain-processing projects in EU countries, including Poland, Lithuania, Hungary, Czechia, and Finland. In July 2025, another combined cereal plant in Poland—an oat-processing plant with a flakes line—was launched using Ukrainian equipment.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

Agro-Simo-Mashbud produces grain-processing equipment and full production lines. In simple terms, these are machines and systems that take raw grain or legumes and turn them into food-grade products: buckwheat groats, oat flakes, flour, millet, lentil products, feed components, and other cereal-based outputs. Agro-Simo-Mashbud's equipment helps customers move from raw agricultural output into food processing.

For macro-export classification, the relevant official trade category is machinery for cleaning, sorting, or grading seed, grain or dried leguminous vegetables, and machinery used in the milling industry or for working cereals or dried legumes. This places the case in the machinery and mechanical appliances group, not in agricultural commodities.

3. EU market entry model: turnkey project export

Agro-Simo-Mashbud's EU entry model can be described as direct turnkey project export. The company does not simply sell individual machines from a catalogue. It sells a functioning production solution: process design, equipment manufacturing, delivery, installation supervision, and training.

This is important because grain-processing lines are not plug-and-play consumer products. A European customer needs a production line that works with a specific crop, capacity, building layout, quality target, and food-safety requirement. Agro-Simo-Mashbud's offer responds to this by selling the full engineering package.

In Poland, the company supplied equipment for a combined cereal plant with oat processing and flakes production. In Lithuania, it implemented a buckwheat-processing plant. In Hungary, it supplied oat and millet-processing projects. In Czechia, it implemented a universal cereal-processing plant.

4. The basis of success

The basis of Agro-Simo-Mashbud's success is deep technical specialisation. The company has worked in grain processing for more than three decades and accumulated experience across different crops, processes, and plant configurations. This allows it to sell confidence that the line will produce the intended output.

The second success factor is turnkey delivery. For a buyer in Poland, Czechia, or Hungary, buying separate machines from different suppliers would create integration risk. Agro-Simo-Mashbud reduces that risk by providing a complete technological line and supporting installation and launch.

The third factor is compliance readiness. Although there is no public information, the company likely has developed (or in the process of development) technical documentation and CE declarations of conformity for its equipment under relevant EU directives, including machinery safety, low-voltage electrical safety, and electromagnetic compatibility requirements. For European buyers, this documentation is part of the purchase decision, without documentation, even good equipment would face barriers in procurement, insurance, installation, and operation. .

BUDZIRKA: a Ukrainian Building-Materials Supplier

Executive Summary

BUDZIRKA is a Ukrainian B2B supplier and processor of premium building and interior materials, best known as the official Ukrainian representative of Austria's FunderMax HPL panels. Its EU entry was triggered by the 2022 Meble Polska exhibition and quickly developed into a Polish subsidiary, Budzirka Polska Sp. z o.o., with a Warsaw-area office and warehouse. Its success rests on an already EU-compliant product, architectural know-how, a strong Ukrainian project portfolio, and fast local presence in Poland. The model is scalable, but constrained by logistics, competition with existing EU distributors, and dependence on partner brands.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

BUDZIRKA, legally known in Ukraine as LLC 'Budivelna Zirka', is a Ukrainian building-materials company founded in 2001. Its core business is the supply and processing of high-pressure laminate panels, especially FunderMax HPL panels produced by the Austrian manufacturer FunderMax. In addition to reselling FunderMaxpanels the company also cuts, mills, and custom-processes panels at its own production site in Boyarka, Kyiv region, turning standard sheet materials into project-ready façade, interior, furniture, and architectural solutions.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

The flagship product is HPL, high-pressure laminate panels. In simple terms, these are durable decorative panels used for ventilated façades, interiors, furniture, wall cladding, countertops, public buildings, commercial premises, and premium design projects. They are valued because they combine visual design, durability, weather resistance, and low maintenance.

BUDZIRKA's broader portfolio also includes other European architectural materials such as fibre-cement panels, architectural ceramics, and ceiling systems. This makes the company more than a single-product seller: it can offer architects and contractors a wider package of façade and interior materials.

For macro-export classification, HPL-type panels are closest to the customs category of plastic plates, sheets and similar materials. The exact code depends on the specific material composition and declaration.

3. EU market entry model: exhibition trigger, Polish subsidiary, local stock

BUDZIRKA's EU entry began with a very practical first step, participation in the Meble Polska exhibition in Poznań in May 2022 as part of the collective 'Furniture of Ukraine' national stand organised by the Ukrainian Association of Furniture Manufacturers. This format lowered the entry cost and gave the company a first real test of the Polish market shortly after the start of Russia's full-scale invasion.

The exhibition became a market signal. BUDZIRKA's CEO Sviatoslav Shylin concluded that Ukrainian companies would have better export opportunities if they had a local presence in Poland and were easier for foreign clients to reach. Later the company registered Budzirka Polska Sp. z o.o. The company also announced an office and warehouse in the Warsaw area.

This model can be described as a wholly-owned subsidiary plus warehouse model. BUDZIRKA did not build production in Poland, processing remained in Ukraine. But Poland became the commercial and logistical gateway: a local legal entity, a local address, Polish-language communication, exhibition presence, and a warehouse closer to clients.

4. The basis of success

The core success factor was that BUDZIRKA entered Poland with an already recognised European product. FunderMax is an Austrian brand with established market credibility and EU certification. This sharply reduced one of the usual barriers for Ukrainian SMEs, which is the necessity to prove that the product meets European technical standards. BUDZIRKA's challenge was therefore less about product compliance and more about channel access, trust, logistics, and project execution.

The second factor was technical competence. The company had already built a track record in Ukraine on large and demanding projects. This mattered in Poland because architects and contractors need confidence that the supplier can process panels correctly, advise on application, and support project implementation.

VITAGRO Group: First Biomethane Exporter

Executive Summary

VITAGRO Group is a large Ukrainian agro-industrial holding from Khmelnytskyi region that became the first Ukrainian company to export biomethane by pipeline to the EU. Its EU entry model included ISCC certification, connection to Ukraine's gas grid, customs clearance, underground storage accumulation, and trading through ERU to Germany. Its success rests on a vertically integrated livestock base, EU-standard technology, and renewable-gas demand in Europe. The model is scalable for livestock-based agro-producers, but constrained by certification costs, Union Database non-integration, trader dependence, war risk, and capital needs.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

VITAGRO Group is a Ukrainian agro-industrial holding founded in 1998 and headquartered in Volochysk, Khmelnytskyi region. The group manages around 90,000 hectares of land and has large livestock operations, including pigs, cattle, and poultry. Through Vitagro Energy, it also operates renewable-energy assets, including solar power, bioethanol, and biomethane production.

In February 2025, VITAGRO became the first Ukrainian producer to export biomethane to the EU through a pipeline. A test batch of 720 MWh, or around 68,000 cubic metres, crossed the Ukrainian-Slovak border and was delivered to the German market. It was the first practical proof that Ukrainian biomethane can pass production, certification, gas-grid, customs, and EU trading gates.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

VITAGRO produces biomethane—upgraded biogas that reaches natural-gas quality and can be injected into the gas grid. In simple terms, animal manure is processed through anaerobic digestion to produce biogas, and then the biogas is cleaned and upgraded into methane-rich renewable gas. It can then replace fossil natural gas in industrial, heating or energy uses.

The product connects agriculture, waste management, energy security, and decarbonisation. Manure that would otherwise create waste and emissions becomes renewable gas, while the remaining digestate can return to fields as organic fertiliser. This creates a closed agro-energy cycle.

VITAGRO's plant uses manure from its own livestock operations as feedstock, membrane upgrading technology and European equipment. Its annual plant capacity is around 3 million cubic metres of biomethane. For macro-export classification, gaseous biomethane injected into the gas grid should be mapped as mineral fuels, specifically petroleum gases and other gaseous hydrocarbons, with natural gas in gaseous state as the closest trade category.

3. EU market entry model: pipeline export through trader intermediary

VITAGRO's EU entry model can be described as pipeline gas export via Ukraine's gas transmission system, supported by an EU-facing trader.

The first step was production readiness. The company built a biomethane plant in Khmelnytskyi region in 2022-2023 and started biomethane production and injection into Ukraine's gas system in 2024.

The second step was sustainability certification. VITAGRO Energy passed ISCC certification in March 2024. This was essential for EU buyers who need proof that the fuel meets sustainability and greenhouse-gas accounting criteria.

The third step was customs and grid procedure. Ukraine introduced the customs-clearance procedure for biomethane transported by pipeline in 2024. VITAGRO then had to accumulate volumes in underground storage, document origin and sustainability, confirm gas quality, and clear the first export declaration.

The fourth step was trading. ERU acted as the key intermediary, helping transport and commercialise the biomethane from the Slovak border to Germany.

4. The basis of success

The core success factor was vertical integration. VITAGRO did not need to buy feedstock on the market. Its livestock operations generated manure, which became the raw material for biomethane. This lowered feedstock risk and made the project economically more predictable.

The second factor was early certification. VITAGRO obtained ISCC certification before the export procedure fully opened. When the regulatory window appeared, the company was ready.

The third factor was the presence of a real EU market pull. Ukraine has almost no domestic biomethane premium or support scheme, while the EU has a policy-driven market for renewable gases. This made the EU effectively the only viable commercial destination.

YM Liquid Gas: How a Ukrainian Bio-LNG Pioneer Opened a Road-Tanker Route to the EU Market

Executive Summary

YM Liquid Gas is a small Ukrainian Bio-LNG producer based around the Yuzefo-Mykolaiv biogas complex in the Vinnytsia region. Its EU entry was built through road-tanker delivery of liquefied biomethane to Germany via an intra-group buyer, Preture Liquid Gas. Its success rests on existing biogas infrastructure, local feedstock, early legal preparation, ISCC compliance, and a GTS-independent logistics model. The model is scalable for biogas operators, but constrained by certification, buyer access, small volumes, Union Database non-integration, and cryogenic logistics.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

YM Liquid Gas LLC is a small private Ukrainian company registered in 2022, with an operational base in Mykhailivtsi, Vinnytsia region. It is linked to the Yuzefo-Mykolaiv biogas complex, which began operating in 2019 on the site of a former sugar-industry cluster. The company positions itself as a pioneer of Bio-LNG production in Ukraine.

The confirmed entry story is modest in volume but important as a precedent. In September 2025, YM Liquid Gas began exporting Ukrainian-produced bio-LNG to Germany. Public sources identify it as the second Ukrainian bio-LNG exporter and one of the first operational biomethane exporters in the sector.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

YM Liquid Gas produces bio-LNG, or liquefied biomethane. Agricultural residues and organic waste are turned into biogas, upgraded into biomethane and then cooled to around minus 162°C so it becomes a liquid. This liquid form is easier to transport by tanker and can be used as a renewable substitute for fossil LNG.

The company's feedstock is linked to a circular agro-industrial model, which includes sugar beet pulp from a nearby sugar plant and poultry manure. This turns local agricultural waste into an exportable renewable fuel.

For macro-export classification, bio-LNG should be mapped conservatively to mineral fuels (liquefied natural gas).

3. EU market entry model: Bio-LNG by road tanker

YM Liquid Gas's entry model can be described as direct intra-group sale plus road-tanker export.

The first step was technological conversion. The existing biogas complex was upgraded toward a bio-LNG chain that includes biogas production, biomethane upgrading, liquefaction and loading into cryogenic road tanks.

The second step was compliance preparation. For EU sale, bio-LNG needs sustainability proof, especially ISCC-related documentation and Proof of Sustainability for each batch. This is what allows the product to be recognised as renewable fuel rather than ordinary gas.

The third step was customs and road transit. Unlike pipeline biomethane, road-tanker bio-LNG can move as cargo under standard transit logic. This reduces dependence on gas-grid infrastructure.

The fourth step was the buyer route. The first disclosed buyer was Preture Liquid Gas, a Cyprus-registered company connected to the same group structure. This lowered the risk of the first EU shipment, but it also means that the first sale should be interpreted as an intra-group market access rather than a fully open market test.

4. The basis of success

The first success factor was existing infrastructure. YM Liquid Gas did not start from a greenfield energy project. It built on an operating biogas complex that already had feedstock, digesters and operational know-how.

The second factor was feedstock integration. Sugar beet pulp and poultry manure are not imported raw materials; they come from the surrounding agro-industrial system. This reduces feedstock cost and supply-chain risk.

The third factor was early legal preparation. The company started working with legal advisers before the regulatory window was fully open. For a new fuel category, this mattered almost as much as the technology itself.

The fourth factor was road-tanker flexibility. A producer that is far from the gas transmission system can still reach EU buyers if it can liquefy biomethane and organise cryogenic logistics.

Zavod Kobzarenko: From a Ukrainian Family SME to an EU-Integrated Agricultural Machinery Group

Executive Summary

Zavod Kobzarenko is a Ukrainian family-born agricultural machinery producer that grew from an SME into a group employing 800+ people and exporting to 32 countries. Its EU entry was not a one-off export success but a staged strategy which started with dealer sales in Poland and Romania, later developed into a creation of a Polish subsidiary in 2013, and a launch of full-scale production in Poland from 2020. Its success rests on a strong product-market fit, EU certification capability, local manufacturing, and a refusal to compete only as a low-cost Ukrainian brand. The main scaling barriers are certification, trust, finance, war risk, and production capacity.

1. Company profile and why this case matters

Zavod Kobzarenko is one of the most convincing Ukrainian examples of how a family manufacturing business can move from domestic production into EU value chains. Founded in 1993 in Lypova Dolyna, Sumy region, the company produces trailed agricultural machinery: chaser bins, tractor trailers, bale trailers, liquid tanks, fertiliser spreaders, and other agricultural and utility equipment. The group as of 2026 has variety of machinery models, around 40,000 m² of production space in Ukraine and Poland, and more than 800 employees.

Strictly speaking, this is no longer a classic SME by EU size criteria. But this is precisely why the case is valuable since it shows how a Ukrainian family SME can scale into an industrial group through export demand, product specialization, EU market learning, and local presence inside the EU. In 2024, the group's sales exceeded UAH 1.9 billion, while the company produced 1,600 units of machinery despite operating its main Ukrainian plant in frontline Sumy region.

2. Product: what the company sells and why it matters

The flagship product is the chaser bin, a large trailer used during harvesting to receive grain from combines in the field and transport it to trucks or storage points. For large farms, this is a productivity tool that reduces combine downtime, speeds up harvesting, and helps handle large grain flows across big land banks. Kobzarenko's tractor-towed grain-transfer bins range from smaller 9 m³ models to large 50 m³ units, including tracked versions. The wider product portfolio also includes dump trailers, aluminium trailers, bale trailers, tankers, and fertiliser spreaders.

In macro-export terms, these products are agricultural machinery/transport equipment segment, a high value-added manufacturing category. That makes the case especially relevant for Ukraine's export upgrading agenda.

3. EU market entry model: from dealers to EU-based production

Zavod Kobzarenko's EU entry developed in three practical stages.

The first stage was a dealer-led entry into Poland and Romania around 2010-2015. The company sold machinery through local dealers, with chaser bins as the lead product. The early buyers were mainly large farms, often with more than 1,000 hectares, for whom the speed and volume of grain handling were commercially important. The product had a clear value proposition: robust machinery with good quality at a lower price than many Western European alternatives.

The second stage was the creation of Kobzarenko Sp. z o.o. in Poland in 2013. At first, the Polish entity helped resell equipment from Ukraine and provide service to EU customers. This was a crucial step since customers sought confidence that spare parts, documents, after-sales support, and registration issues can be handled locally. In 2015, the Polish company began R&D work, and in 2016 the company started supplying chaser bins to Germany through a local importer.

The third stage was direct EU manufacturing. In 2017-2018, the company decided to build a full-scale plant in Żłobnica, Poland. During 2018-2020, it invested in production facilities and equipment; from 2020, the Polish plant began manufacturing tractor-towed grain-transfer bin models in sizes ranging from 9 m^3 to 40 m^3, while the largest 50 m^3 models continued to be made in Ukraine. The Polish plant also obtained certification enabling VIN issuance and trailer frame approval, which was a key milestone for operating within EU vehicle approval rules.

4. The basis of success

The core of the success story is the combination of product fit, institutional learning, and local EU anchoring. The product addressed a real need of large European farms. The Polish subsidiary created trust and service proximity. The Polish factory turned the company from an exporter from a third country into a producer inside the EU market.

Leadership and people capital also mattered. Dmytro Kobzarenko, CEO of the Polish operation, was a key figure with German engineering education and EU market familiarity. That combination of language, technical understanding, and business culture lowered the 'soft' barriers that often stop Ukrainian SMEs from converting export leads into stable EU distribution.

The company also avoided a trap common for Ukrainian exporters: competing only as a cheap supplier. Dmytro Kobzarenko mentioned that the EU customers expect low prices from Ukrainian products, but the company does not play the 'cheap brand' game. This suggests a deliberate move towards quality and reliability positioning rather than pure price discounting.

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