



## APPLYING THE PRACTICES OF THE GERMAN CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY TO THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY OF UZBEKISTAN - PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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### Abstract

This article examines the role of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in ensuring the country's foreign economic activity. The main functions of the Chamber, such as representing the interests of entrepreneurs and providing them with various services, are considered. An important part of the study is the analysis of interaction of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry with the authorities and other organizations, which have influence on the foreign economic activity of the country. The paper presents the results of the study, which show that the Chamber of Commerce and Industry plays an important role in ensuring the success of the country's foreign economic activities by providing entrepreneurs with information and advisory support, creating international connections and lobbying the interests of domestic business abroad.

**Key words:** The Chamber of Commerce, industry, SMEs, municipal budgets, tax issues, construction, urban development plans, infrastructure projects, external economic activities, business forums.

### Introduction

The process of creating diverse institutions of interaction between the private and public sectors is objectively conditioned by the development trends of modern economic systems. As the world experience shows, these institutions make it possible to improve the efficiency of functioning and life support of society, solve many economic and social problems and facilitate appropriate distribution of risks between business and public authorities.

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry is a unique public structure. Vertically, it represents the interests of all sectors of business - small, medium and large. Horizontally, it covers all areas of business - industry, trade - domestic and foreign, agriculture, the financial system and services. Consequently, it is designed to reflect the interests of all businesses.

Many countries are now focusing on export support, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises, as an important part of modern foreign trade. Many chambers of commerce are developing export promotion programmes, providing advice and assistance to businesses in finding new markets.

Thus, in today's world, chambers of commerce are an important tool for improving a country's foreign economic activity. They help businesses to find new markets, introduce new technologies and innovations, and promote sustainable economic development.

### Research methodology

In the process of research, were used scientific abstraction, economic analysis, data grouping, methods of formal logic were used: economic analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction,

logical inference from changes in the economic process. Also, comparison of statistical data, monographic research, comparison analysis and survey method have been applied.

### **International experience of chambers of commerce in support of small and medium enterprises (SMEs)**

The quality of SME development is a critical factor in the efficiency of the modern economy. However, in order to carry out an analysis of the performance of SMEs, it is necessary to find out what range of organizations are included in this population. It should be understood that different countries define the composition of SMEs differently, based on different quantitative and qualitative indicators. The standard criteria on the basis of which organizations are classified as SMEs are: the number of staff in the organization, the size of its share capital and assets, and the volume of turnover (profit, income).

### **Regional structure of German chambers of commerce and industry**

Membership in German chambers of commerce and industry is obligatory for all self-employed persons and legal entities conducting business, including entrepreneurs and enterprises from industry, trade and commerce. There are separate mandatory chambers for agriculture, small businesses, and professionals like lawyers, physicians and architects.

Germany's small and medium-sized companies (SMEs), also known as the 'Mittelstand' sector includes family-owned companies that were established generations ago, trendy start-ups, traditional crafts firms, self-employed people and service providers, retailers and freelancers, pioneering high-tech companies, regional suppliers and global players. The size of German SMEs ranges from one person to several hundred employed across the globe<sup>1</sup>.

There are 83 chambers of commerce and industry in Germany, each covering a specific region as defined by the government. A German chamber of commerce and industry has on average 30,000 members.

The smallest chamber has 4,200 members while the largest (Munich Chamber of Commerce and Industry) has 220,000 members. The apex body of the chambers is the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHT) representing the 83 German chambers and about 2.6 million companies<sup>2</sup>. Unlike the regional chambers, the apex body is a voluntary organization and has no public law status.

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<sup>1</sup> BMWK - Federal Ministry for Economics Affairs and Climate Action (no date) The German Mittelstand as a model for Success, BMWK. Available at: <https://www.bmwk.de/Redaktion/EN/Dossier/sme-policy.html> (Accessed: 01 June 2023).

<sup>2</sup> Maennig, W., Ölschläger, M. and Schmidt-Trenz, H.-J. (2015) 'Organisations and regional innovative capability: The case of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Germany', *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 33(4), pp. 811–827. doi:10.1068/c12201b.



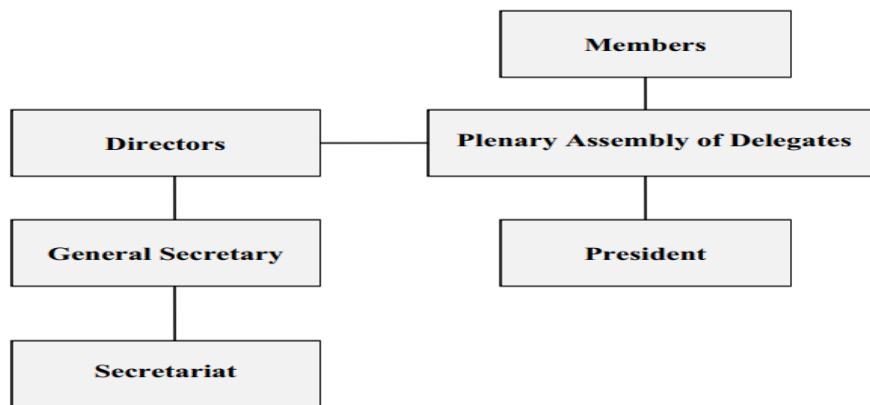


Chart 1: Organizational structure of German Chambers of commerce

**Decision-making** in German chambers is organized according to an indirect system. Every four years, chamber members elect delegates to form a plenary assembly which generally meets once a year (shown in chart 1). This plenary assembly has 65 delegates on average. Seats are distributed according to the district’s economic structure. Every two years, the assembly elects a president from among the delegates. The assembly also elects the secretary general. While the delegates and the president work on an honorary basis, the secretary general is a full-time professional heading the staff of the chamber which averages 80 employees. The president and the secretary general jointly represent the chamber; however, the secretary general manages the chamber. The 83 German chambers nationwide employ about 6,500 professionals.

**Sources of income**

The most important source of income for German chambers of commerce comes from compulsory membership dues<sup>3</sup>. Between 70 and 80% of the annual chamber budget is financed by membership fees.

Between 20 and 30% of a chamber’s budget is financed through selling services, with the most important sources of income being training activities, issuance of certificates of origin, sale of business information, and grants. When compared to revenues from membership fees, income generation through services is of minor importance. Many services are provided free of charge or below cost since compulsory membership fees already provide a sound financial base for the chambers.

Membership dues are collected by the chambers and all member enterprises, regardless of legal status, are required to pay two fees<sup>4</sup>. One is based on the size of the company and the other variable contribution is set according to their level of trade taxes. Under the new regulations, a small enterprise with 10 employees pays a yearly membership fee of US \$350, while large enterprises with 1,000 employees pay US \$60,000 per year.

<sup>3</sup> Tiwasing, P. and Sawang, S. (2021) ‘Does membership of local chambers of Commerce Networks Enhance Rural SME performance?: An empirical analysis’, International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research, 28(2), pp. 368–385. doi:10.1108/ijeb-07-2021-0614.

<sup>4</sup> World Economic Forum, The Global Competitiveness Report, 2009–2010, 2009, P. 321



### **Interest representation**

Like all chambers, German chambers of commerce and industry have a twofold task with regard to interest representation. The chambers maintain a constant dialogue with government on the likely impact of policies affecting the business sector. Further they bring forward the views and grievances of the members in order to solve problems affecting the business community. With regard to the first task, local, state and federal governments are legally obliged to consult the chambers about all draft laws and ordinances affecting trade and industry. At the local level, chambers express their views on municipal budgets, tax issues, construction and urban development plans, infrastructure projects and environmental protection measures. At the state and federal levels, the chambers have a say in state development, economic promotion, and traffic planning. The chambers are not only consulted by the Ministry, but also by the relevant parliamentary committees. In the context of these consultations, the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry presents about 170 position papers annually to the federal ministries.

**Services** provided by German chambers include four major areas: foreign trade, training, consultancy and research.

### **The role of chambers of commerce and industry in the development of external economic activities of foreign countries**

In Germany, chambers of commerce and industry, along with trade unions and labor unions, form the three pillars of organized entrepreneurship. The task of these unions, established on the basis of common interests, is not to make profits, but to provide assistance to union members, in all areas of their activities. This also applies to the support of enterprises in foreign economic activities, and in seeking to participate in the formation and implementation of foreign economic policy, including through the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHKT) as a central organization<sup>5</sup>.

Entrepreneurial unions emerged in the early nineteenth century in many European countries. But only in Germany did they acquire the greatest authority and influence, which is explained by the long-standing corporate traditions of German society.

A special role in the economic and political development of Germany and in the development of its foreign economic relations since the first third of the 19th century belongs to the pioneers of organized entrepreneurship - the chambers of commerce, later reorganized into chambers of commerce and industry, which became mass organizations of German entrepreneurs at the grassroots level - regional and local and in this sense the most democratic business associations. The mass participation of entrepreneurs was and is still being achieved on the basis of compulsory membership, which is characteristic of public-law corporations and allowed the chambers of commerce to play the role of "shooter" in the formation of the all-German market and in the unification of Germany itself in 1871<sup>6</sup>.

### **Networking to ensure the success of the German business abroad**

Together, the German CCIs and the Chambers of Commerce Abroad (AHK) take a stand for the German economy in both the boom years and in times of crisis. The CCIs and AHKs present

<sup>5</sup> Mischler, G. (2021) 'The German Chambers of Commerce Abroad—an international win-win situation', The German Chambers of Commerce and Industry, pp. 105–130. doi:10.1007/978-3-030-70799-6\_4.

<sup>6</sup> Rybkovskaya, O.N. (2015) 'The role of Chambers of commerce in the development of Russian-German economic relations', RSUH/RGGU Bulletin. Series Economics. Management. Law, (2), pp. 105–114. doi:10.28995/2073-6304-2015-2-105-114.



themselves internationally like a close-knit family, as stated by the British Ministry of Economics in its study “No stone unturned—Chamber of Commerce International Comparisons” dating from 2012<sup>7</sup> on the chamber systems in different countries.

The close relations between the AHKs and the delegations and representative offices abroad (which are also part of the network) and the 79 Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Germany, as well as the coordination of the network by the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry, fundamentally distinguish the German Chamber network from those of other countries. It makes it much easier for companies to access business support and utilize overseas trade opportunities.

### **Close coordination between CCIs and AHKs causing foreign trade promotion**

The Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Germany—their foreign trade departments—always support their members in foreign trade issues in close cooperation with the Chambers abroad. Many CCIs maintain particularly close partnerships with the AHKs of a particular country or region. Together, the CCIs in Germany organize export days and information events on foreign markets and regions. It is not uncommon for employees of the AHKs to have previously worked in a CCI in Germany. This enables the CCIs to forward enquiries from their members to the experts in foreign markets<sup>8</sup>—as if the AHK were an extension of their own foreign trade department. This saves member companies time and many nerve-racking telephone calls.

### **Analysis of the activity of chamber of commerce and industry of Uzbekistan and its development prospects**

In order to create favourable conditions for the further development of private entrepreneurship, to improve the business environment, to facilitate the establishment of business relations between the Republic's entrepreneurs and foreign partners, to actively promote domestic goods and services in foreign markets, to attract foreign investment in the Republic for the creation of new, technical upgrade and modernization of the existing businesses, under the Presidential Decree No. UP-3453 from 07.07.2004<sup>9</sup>, the Chamber of commerce and industry of Uzbekistan (CCI) was established. The organization operates in accordance with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Act (as amended on 12 June 2018)<sup>10</sup>. The CCI is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation whose aim is to promote a favourable business environment. Membership in the CCI is formalised by the conclusion of an agreement between the member and the CCI. CCI members enjoy a number of benefits and preferences aimed at supporting and protecting the business sector in Uzbekistan. For example, CCI members are entitled to free legal advice on taxation, customs, commercial law, banking law, construction<sup>11</sup>, etc.

<sup>7</sup> (2012) British Library. Available at: <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/no-stone-untuned-chamber-of-commerce-international-comparisons> (Accessed: 01 June 2023).

<sup>8</sup> (2008) Deutscher industrie- und Handelskammertag - die Europäische Kommission. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/cip/files/docs/consultation-association-of-german-chambers-of-industry-and-commerce\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/cip/files/docs/consultation-association-of-german-chambers-of-industry-and-commerce_en.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> (2004) LEX.UZ. Available at: <https://lex.uz/acts/223248> (Accessed: 21 January 2023).

<sup>10</sup> LAW OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN ON AMENDMENTS AND ADDITIONS TO THE LAW OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN ON THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN (2018) LEX uz. Available at: <https://lex.uz/ru/docs/3815466#3817333> (Accessed: 2023).

<sup>11</sup> On Additional Measures to Ensure Accelerated Development of Entrepreneurial Activity, Comprehensive Protection of Private Property and Qualitative Improvement of the Business Climate. Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan of 5 October 2016, No. UP-4848 // Collection of Laws of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2016. 2016, No. 40, Art. 467, 2017





**Main areas of improvement of the activity of chamber of commerce and industry of Uzbekistan to stimulate foreign economic activity****Change in the corporate structure of the CCI of Uzbekistan**

In Uzbekistan the role of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the development of foreign economic activities and the tasks it performs in this direction has not developed at all. And the main reason for this is that the corporate structure of the chamber gives more priority to other tasks, namely the protection of entrepreneurial rights, crafts training, and entrepreneurial skills training for the population.

On this basis, it can be said that although the number of entrepreneurs who become the member of the Chamber has increased in recent years, they only use the functions of the Chamber listed above, such as the protection of entrepreneurs' rights and assistance in appealing to Courts.

*As a solution to this problem and with a view to developing the country's foreign economic activities on a large scale, a proposal is made to change the corporate structure of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and, accordingly, the priority areas in its tasks.*

The above mentioned experience of developed foreign countries, citing as an example the structure of their chambers of commerce and their priority objectives, it is worth noting that mainly in Germany the main objectives of the chambers are:

- promoting economic and trade exchanges and cooperation;
- facilitating the participation of enterprises in international competition and cooperation.

*Therefore, a proposal will be put forward to make changes in the organizational structure of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Uzbekistan, that is, to raise the international department, the department dealing with foreign trade, export promotion and assistance to the business community in establishing trade relations with foreign countries, up from 4-5 places in the organizational structure, that is, to the first place.*

**Organize regular b2b meetings and business forums**

Another important action to be taken in order to stimulate external economic activity of a country should be carried through increasing the number of business forums and meetings between economic actors of Uzbekistan and other foreign countries. Thus, here the role of CCI of Uzbekistan is crucial in organizing such events and establishing direct relations.

*It is advisable CCI of Uzbekistan to draw up an annual plan of business meetings and work through them in order to:*

- Support for the establishment of direct connections with the participants of foreign economic activities.
- Selection of potential business partners and building a correspondence in foreign language
- Presentation and expansion of Uzbek products and services in the global market
- Organization of business meetings as well as meetings with the representatives of foreign organizations
- Upon request provide information about a specific foreign product from the internet if necessary.
- Support for preparation for the participation in international fairs and exhibitions.

**Establish Uzbek Chamber of commerce and industry abroad**

To take the developed countries as an example, the German chambers of commerce have representative offices in 90 countries.



Depending on the legal conditions in each particular country, Chambers of commerce abroad can be organized in the form of bilateral Chambers of Commerce (for example the Russian-German Chamber of Commerce<sup>12</sup>) or in the form of representations and delegations of the Uzbek economy.

***Thus, it is recommended that Uzbekistan also open representative offices of its chambers of commerce and industry abroad. This step will help take Uzbekistan to the next level, as well as to strengthen economic relations, help CCI of Uzbekistan in informing about business environment of that country, to organize meeting with the representatives of that country and finally to promote export potential of local entrepreneurs<sup>13</sup>.***

The trade houses and trade representation offices of Uzbekistan play an important role in promoting trade and investment between Uzbekistan and other countries. They provide a platform for businesses to connect with each other and to learn about market opportunities. They also help to promote Uzbekistan as a business destination.

In addition, once trade relations between the two countries have been established, it will be expedient to further stimulate entrepreneurial activities, to bring them to foreign markets, to increase export potential, through representative offices of foreign chambers of commerce and industry of Uzbekistan, ***B2B meetings between entrepreneurs from that countries where the representative offices are located, to hold exhibitions and fairs through the Chamber*** will be increased from year to year. This will facilitate the process of shaping and improving the external economic strategy, as well as developing and implementing specific support measures.

It is also ***recommended to open an information and advisory department for national exporters in all representations of chambers of commerce abroad, formed from experts in such fields of foreign trade as international law, tax and customs legislation.*** The information provided by the information and advisory department includes, in particular, materials on the general economic situation in a given country or region, the prospects for the development of individual economic sectors, the specifics of legal and customs regulations and foreign market conditions, as well as data on investment projects being developed and implemented, tenders under way, and potential foreign importers.

***A priority area of support to national exporters, along with financial measures, is information and advisory support to enterprises when they enter and work in foreign markets. As part of this work, exporters are provided with the necessary minimum of knowledge and skills in foreign economic activity, which helps to remove the psychological barrier when deciding to start export activities, and also helps to save money and time when entering new foreign markets.*** The services provided to enterprises are free of charge. In addition to information support, enterprises can obtain appropriate information and advisory assistance from business associations, especially through the Chambers of Industry and Commerce.

This type of support to exports in Uzbekistan and to local small and medium-sized businesses could increase the country's foreign economic activity and allow Uzbek producers to promote domestic industrial products more actively on foreign markets.

<sup>12</sup> (2018) Deutsch-Russische Auslandshandelskammer. Available at: <http://www.russland.ahk.de/ru> (Accessed: June 2023).

<sup>13</sup> Uzbekistan embassies and consulates (2022) Embassies and Consulates. Available at: <https://embassies.net/uzbekistan-embassy> (Accessed: 19 June 2023).

### SMEs are driving force for growth and competition

The success of many developed countries such as Germany, China, Japan and US is driven by their small and medium sized companies. Almost 90% of businesses in these countries make up SMEs.

Small and medium-sized businesses also contribute to balanced regional development as they can be established in different regions, thus reducing dependence on major tipping points. This helps to achieve more sustainable economic development.

In addition, SMEs can serve as an important source of innovation, new ideas and technology that can contribute to the development of new industries and increase the productivity of the economy as a whole.

After reviewing the cases of many economically developed countries and their conditions created to SMEs, ***it is highly suggested to CCI of Uzbekistan to establish a preferential tax regime for small and medium-sized enterprises after they become its member. Following preferential tax regime could be set for 5 years period and which can enable small entrepreneurs to reduce their costs and increase their profits, which in turn contributes to the development of the country's economy.*** Thus, it is vitally important to attract SMEs of Uzbekistan to become members of CCI.

### Conclusion

The following conclusions, proposals and recommendations were developed during the research of the topic "The role of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the development of foreign economic activities":

1. Highlighting that in the formation and development of the activity of International Department of the Uzbekistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry which would help to increase exports from Uzbekistan, to support small and medium-sized businesses in entering new markets through this department. These changes will undoubtedly play a huge role in improving the country's foreign economic activity. It is therefore recommended first of all to change the corporate structure of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Uzbekistan and level up the department dealing with strengthening its functions that can facilitate the penetration of entrepreneurs into foreign markets, to promote Uzbekistan to the world through small and medium-sized businesses. It is also highly suggested to publicize the activities of this department in the media to make everyone aware of the opportunities the Chamber of Commerce and Industry can provide to its members in the field of international activities.

2. Taking into account that B2B meetings, fairs and business forums are an effective tool for business development and creating new opportunities for entrepreneurs.

-Firstly, holding such events allows for networking between different entrepreneurs and finding new partners to work together. This is especially important for small businesses which may have limited networking and insufficient resources to expand their business.

-Secondly, such events allow learning new knowledge and experiences from other entrepreneurs. At fairs and forums, you can learn about new trends in the industry and which tools and techniques are the most effective to use to grow your business.

-Thirdly, events allow you to meet potential customers and promote your business. They help to increase brand awareness and gain exposure in the market.

Taking all these opportunities mentioned above it is highly advised to CCI of Uzbekistan to increase the quantity and quality of such B2B meetings, forums and exhibitions between CCI



of Uzbekistan and Chambers of other countries or business entities. Also, things that yearly plan of such events should be stretched out and through this plan diligent work carried out should be taken into consideration.

3. The use of positive experience of foreign countries in the formation and development of representative offices of Chambers of commerce abroad in Uzbekistan is of great importance in the effective organization of foreign activity of entrepreneurs and CCI of Uzbekistan. In particular, in our country it is possible to use the experience Germany in establishing Chambers of commerce abroad implement their experience in supporting exporters on foreign markets through a network such Chambers, special programmes and targeted measures to support small and medium-sized exporting companies, to represent the interests of business and to provide specific organizational and advisory services to Uzbek companies when entering and operating in foreign markets.

4. Based on the world experience and the features of the policy toward SMEs it is advisable to create the state support for SMEs in the form of preferential tax regimes and incentives for the duration of 5 years. In order to attract more local SMEs to the CCI of Uzbekistan it is also advisable to set this regime only be in place when the business becomes a member of the Chamber..

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