

Dear Mr Freller,
dear Mr Sinner,
dear Mr Harms.

It is a pleasure to be here today. Even though we are meeting here in Munich at a time that could not be more challenging.

Accepting and solving challenges, however, is in the DNA of the German economy.

70 years ago, the Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations was founded > congratulations to you, Mr Harms, and to the Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations.

Both 70 years ago and ever since, it is the challenges that drive companies into the associations and us as associations.

The BME can also look back on a history of almost 70 years. Finding solutions together, building bridges, shaping networks - with its approximately 10,000 members, the BME, as the largest purchasing association in the European Union, stands at the side of purchasing, logistics and supply chain management.

In 2022, we are in the midst of a development that will challenge purchasing in German industry with numerous, parallel challenges.

Just when you think you have overcome one crisis, the next challenge comes rolling in.

Climate crisis - Covid crisis - war and now energy crisis - German companies, German SMEs, are currently being challenged and put to the test as rarely in recent decades.

At the same time, global markets are changing, in production, among suppliers and on the customer side. Everywhere, a transformation is underway that must be solved.

We have to find answers, have solutions ready for problems we didn't know about yesterday and thus ensure the future viability of the German economy.

In addition to the current overriding issue of energy prices, the important topics are: Digitalisation, sustainability and electromobility. These were also the dominant themes of the 57th BME Symposium in Berlin.

1,200 participants met, exchanged ideas and discussed under the theme PRO:CONNECT at the 57th BME Symposium in Berlin.

One finding of the event is that strategic suppliers are the key factor in securing the supply chain. This also includes suppliers from Eastern Europe.

The central topics from the perspective of purchasing are:

- Cost transparency
- long-term agreements
- planning reliability
- and early involvement of suppliers and the transparency of the supply chain.

In this context, instruments that will be central in the future are important:

- proactive risk management
- consistent digitalisation
- automation of as many links in the value chain as possible
- And sustainability

From the BME's point of view, it is important to consider all markets. Europe, and Eastern Europe in particular, have a lot to offer here:

- short delivery routes
- steadily increasing quality
- Efficiency
- and still cost advantages.

The challenges described are not only due to the current challenges in connection with the war in Ukraine, but also the events in world trade have massively influenced the development of purchasing.

We are moving from three-dimensionality in purchasing to multidimensionality. All parties involved have to do their homework: state actors, companies and suppliers.

Purchasing has a key position as a driver here: Digitisation makes us faster, more transparent and more resilient.

But we also know that many of our European partners are ahead of us, for example in the digitalisation of administration.

Companies need fast and transparent decisions. The last few months have shown that things can move fast in Germany, too. Now we have to keep up this speed, even away from the energy issue.

Because !!! > in the past, procurement was driven by the task of finding the best solution between price-quality and reliability: Managing efficiency - sustainability and resilience.

This raises simple but crucial questions for companies: e.g. "Just in Time" is efficient - but is "Just in Time" also resilient? Isn't a time buffer or a higher stock level safer if I want to have 100% of my goods and does the factor of delivery reliability outweigh cost efficiency?

Currently absolutely. Yet they do one without leaving the other.

Companies and their supply chains need to be competitive in price and performance. The supply chain must be sustainable AND resilient to challenges and disruptions from supplier to end customer.

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We have a success story here: the BME Purchasing Initiative Western Balkans on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Economics and Climate Protection.

Since 2015, this initiative has been a successful best-practice example that best represents the opportunity area of Eastern Europe.

Launched as part of the Berlin Process in 2014 through an initiative of the BME with the Ministry of Economics, the DIHK and the AHKs - the Purchasing Initiative has actively built bridges in its **seven editions in over 3,500 B2B talks** and made this area of opportunity visible.

But not only visibly. The purchasing initiative from German industry and the suppliers in the Western Balkans have also sustainably increased the quality of the local partners.

More than 50 German companies have already registered for the **8th edition**.

From my point of view, this initiative shows not only the opportunity space - but also **the value of long-term cooperation and orientation**.

I look forward to more such beacons in the future. I think we can all do with that.

Thank you very much!