

# How Europe's Largest Companies Supported Humanitarian Relief for Ukraine in 2022

Hotho, Jasper J.; Girschik, Verena; Lutz, Jakob

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**HUMAC**

Private-sector engagement in  
humanitarian action

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# How Europe's largest companies supported humanitarian relief for Ukraine in 2022



# Acknowledgments

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We extend special thanks to VELUX FONDEN (The Velux Foundations), whose financial support allowed collecting the data used in this briefing (Grant no. 34975, project *Private-sector Engagement in Humanitarian Action*).

*Disclaimer: This report aims to draw attention to the amount and type of contributions pledged by Europe's largest firms in response to the war in Ukraine in 2022. The amounts and contributions listed in this report are conservative estimates. In addition, while we have verified the pledges made, we have not been able to assess the extent to which companies have contributed what they pledged.*

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# Key insights

- **Europe's largest companies responded very fast to the humanitarian needs in Ukraine.** Within three weeks of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, about 52% of the 331 largest European companies had pledged a contribution towards humanitarian relief.
- **Europe's business sector quickly became divided between companies that supported humanitarian relief efforts and those that did not.** After six weeks, very few new companies pledged contributions towards humanitarian relief for Ukraine.
- **66% of Europe's largest companies pledged a humanitarian contribution for Ukraine in 2022, whereas 34% did not.** Around a quarter of Europe's largest companies (22%) pledged a financial donation exclusively. Around a third (33%) pledged both financial and in-kind donations. 11% pledged in-kind donations only.
- **In total, Europe's largest companies pledged at least €1bn in financial support for Ukraine.** This is a conservative estimate, since a significant share of companies was unwilling to disclose the size of their financial donations.
- **According to our rating system, around 14% of the companies receive an A+ for the size of their financial pledges. Another 14% receive an A.** We awarded an A+ to any company that pledged more than €3.000.000 in financial donations for Ukraine. We awarded A's to companies that pledged between €1.000.000 and €3.000.000. The full list of top contributors (A+) can be found in **Table 2**.
- **In contrast, about 34% of Europe's largest companies did not publicly pledge a contribution towards humanitarian relief for Ukraine at all.**
- **Some sectors show a greater proportion of corporate giving than others.** While European companies in manufacturing and the ICT sector pledged to give generously, the proportion of contributing companies in the energy sector is much lower.
- **Given the increasing role and importance of private sector donations for humanitarian relief, we encourage all companies to be transparent about how much they pledge and and to whom.** More than one-sixth of the large European companies in our sample did not disclose the size of their financial contribution.
- **We also encourage companies to be transparent about the extent to which they deliver what they pledge.**
- **Finally, we encourage companies to make conscious and informed decisions about how to support humanitarian relief efforts best.** In general, recognized humanitarian organizations and agencies are best positioned to evaluate where and how companies can contribute to humanitarian relief efforts. Respecting the needs-based approach of humanitarian actors is vital to an efficient and effective humanitarian response.

# Introduction

As a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the year 2022 saw almost unprecedented levels of suffering and hardship for the Ukrainian people. In response, many predominantly Western companies actively rejected the acts of aggression and decided to rethink their business engagement with Russia. While many companies continued business-as-usual (often amid considerable criticism and public outrage), many others decided to scale back their operations in Russia or withdraw from the Russian market altogether.<sup>1</sup>

While the business response toward Russia has attracted much media attention, companies also responded in other, less public ways to the suffering in Ukraine. One crucial business response that has received relatively little exposure and therefore is the focus of this briefing is that **many companies decided to contribute actively towards humanitarian relief**. In fact, as we show in this report, private-sector contributions towards humanitarian relief by Europe's largest companies have been both extensive and varied.

## Aims and objectives

This briefing aims to provide an overview of the private sector's humanitarian pledges for Ukraine. To this end, the briefing reports on the findings of an extensive effort to map the pledges of Europe's largest and most prominent companies that started in early March 2022 and that continued into early 2023.

By mapping the humanitarian pledges of Europe's largest firms, **we aim to contribute towards greater transparency and accountability over what companies pledge and what they deliver in response to humanitarian needs**. We also hope that, by monitoring and publicizing companies' humanitarian contributions for Ukraine, other companies will consider the scope of their humanitarian engagement.

The working question that drove the research behind this briefing was:

***What humanitarian contributions did Europe's largest companies pledge towards humanitarian relief for Ukraine in 2022?***

To answer this question, we identified the 500 largest companies by operating revenue registered in Europe, excluding Russia. To ensure comparability, we excluded foundations and holding companies. To avoid counting the same pledge multiple times, we also excluded companies that were part of a group or parent company covered in our sample. This resulted in a sample of 331 companies.

We manually monitored the public communications of the companies in our sample to identify public pledges of support for humanitarian relief for Ukraine. We captured communications through corporate websites and through social and professional media, such as Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. This allowed us to collect information on whether companies had pledged humanitarian support for Ukraine and, if so, the type and size of their intended contribution, the timing of their pledge, and the intended recipient organization.

Toward the end of 2022, we cross-referenced our data with the public database of the UN Connecting Business initiative.<sup>2</sup> All companies covered in our database were subsequently approached by email and asked to verify the information contained in our database.

The resulting database supplements existing databases on humanitarian contributions for Ukraine in three ways.

- In the humanitarian sector, the term 'private sector' is often applied broadly and can refer to foundations, companies, or private individuals.

<sup>1</sup> See the Yale CELI List of Companies Leaving and Staying in Russia: <https://www.yalerussianbusinessretreat.com/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://data.humdata.org/viz-ukraine-ps-tracker/>

In contrast, our database foregrounds the pledges of support by companies. As such, the data presented in this briefing provide in-depth information on one particular, and particularly prominent, type of private-sector donor.

- By collecting donor rather than recipient data, our database contains the full spectrum of initiatives, organizations, and actions companies pledged support for. As such, **our dataset contributes to a more complete understanding of the varied channels through which Europe's largest companies sought to provide support for Ukraine in 2022.**
- Since we examined the pledges of all the 331 largest companies in Europe, **our dataset covers not only those companies that pledged support for Ukraine but also those that didn't: the non-donors.** Because of this information, our dataset provides insight into the *proportion* of large European firms providing support for Ukraine.

## About CBS HUMAC

*CBS HUMAC: Private-sector Engagement in Humanitarian Action* is a cross-disciplinary research group at Copenhagen Business School, Denmark.

CBS HUMAC seeks to develop in-depth and contextualized insights into the role of the private sector in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. To this end, the HUMAC team conducts independent research on business-humanitarian initiatives in a variety of humanitarian settings, ranging from the Central Mediterranean to the South Pacific.

CBS HUMAC is made possible by funding from VELUX FONDEN (the Velux Foundation) as part of its core group program. The core group program funds independent and original basic research of an excellent standard with a view to boosting emerging research areas and up-and-coming research teams.

VELUX FONDEN has focused on supporting basic humanities research at the highest level since 2008. HUMAC is one of seven projects that received core-group grants in 2020, the seven projects totaling DKK 40 million.

CBS HUMAC is led by Jasper Hotho and Verena Girschik, Associate Professors at Copenhagen Business School's Department of Management, Society and Communication.

For more information on CBS HUMAC please visit **[cbshumac.org](https://cbshumac.org)**.

## How fast did Europe's largest companies respond?

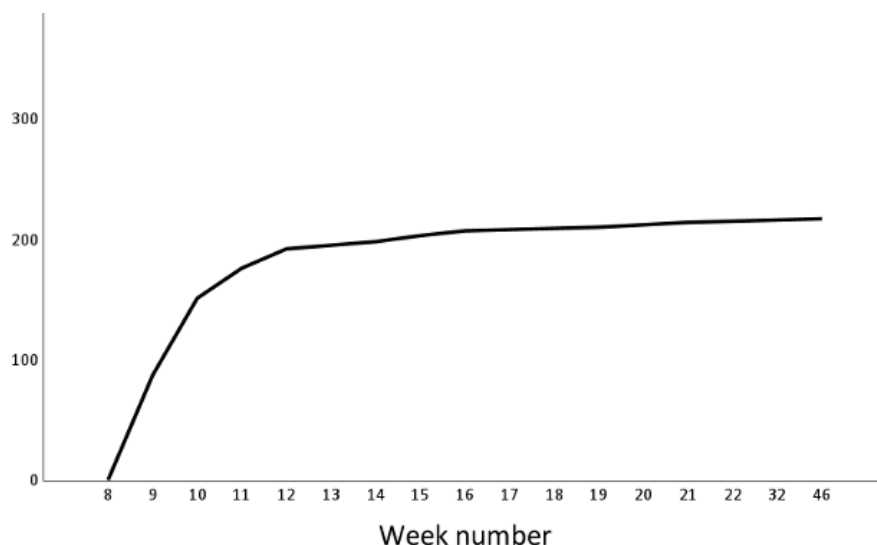
Humanitarian needs can arise and escalate quickly. For an effective humanitarian response, speed is therefore often of the essence. How fast were Europe's largest companies to respond to the emerging humanitarian needs in Ukraine following Russia's invasion in February 2022?

Our data show that Europe's largest companies were very quick to respond to the escalating humanitarian needs of the Ukrainian population. Indeed, **80 percent of the companies in our sample that pledged a contribution towards humanitarian relief for Ukraine in 2022 did so *within three weeks* after the start of the war.**

Our data also show that, by late March, only a few *new* companies made public pledges for Ukraine. In other words, **within a period of around five to six weeks, Europe's largest companies were divided between those that had decided to support humanitarian relief for Ukraine and those that would not.**

Figure 1 below, which maps the cumulative number of first humanitarian pledges made by the firms in our sample, illustrates the speed of the response by Europe's largest firms.

**Figure 1. Cumulative number of large European companies in our sample pledging humanitarian support for Ukraine, by week number.**



# How many of Europe's largest companies pledged contributions towards humanitarian relief for Ukraine?

Our data indicate that, of the more than 300 large European firms in our sample, **around two-thirds of the companies pledged a contribution to humanitarian relief for Ukraine in 2022**. These companies pledged financial contributions, in-kind contributions, or both.

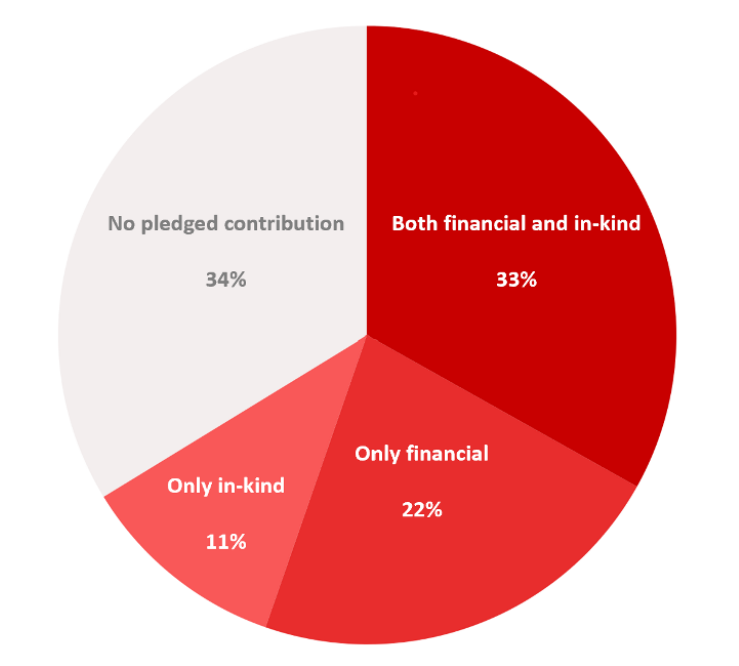
**More than half of the companies in our sample (52%) publicly pledged a financial contribution** towards humanitarian relief, either as a stand-alone financial contribution or in combination with in-kind donations.

**Around 11% of Europe's largest companies pledged an in-kind contribution** towards humanitarian relief for Ukraine in 2022 without matching such donations with a financial donation.

**Around 33% of companies pledged both financial and in-kind support** for humanitarian relief for Ukraine.

In contrast, 34% of Europe's 331 largest firms did not publicly pledge support for humanitarian relief for Ukraine.

Figure 2. Overview of the type of pledged contributions for Ukraine in 2022 by Europe's largest companies





## How much did Europe's largest companies pledge towards humanitarian relief for Ukraine in 2022?

The 331 large European companies in our sample pledged at least € 488.706.700 in financial contributions in 2022, or **close to €0.5 billion**.

For comparison, the UN's Humanitarian Flash Appeal for Ukraine estimated the total funding required for Ukraine in 2022 at around €4 billion.<sup>3</sup> Of the companies in our sample, 53 did not disclose their pledged amount. As a result, the total amount we report is a conservative estimate of the amount that Europe's largest companies pledged towards humanitarian relief for Ukraine.

To qualify companies' financial pledges, we rated each pledged contribution according to the rating system listed in **Table 1**.

Around 13% (46 firms) of the companies in our sample pledged a financial contribution equal to or above €3.000.000 (**A+**). These companies are listed by name in **Table 2** on the next page.

Around 13% of the large companies in our sample pledged between €1.000.000 and €2.999.999 (**A**). About 10% of the companies in our sample pledged between €100.000 and €999.999 (**B** and **C**).

Four companies pledged a more symbolic amount of up to €100.000. About 45% of the companies in our sample decided not to pledge financial support (**F**), whereas 16% chose not to disclose the amount pledged publicly (**U**).

**Table 1. Overview of the rating system used to classify companies' pledged financial contributions**

Rating of companies' financial contribution	Pledged contributions in EUR*	Number of companies in each rating category
<b>A+</b>	≥ €3.000.000	46
<b>A</b>	€1.000.000 ≥ €2.999.999	46
<b>B</b>	€500.000 ≥ €999.999	16
<b>C</b>	€100.000 ≥ €499.999	17
<b>D</b>	€0 > €100.000	4
<b>F</b>	No financial contribution pledged	149
<b>U</b>	Undisclosed amount	53

\* Calculated at the exchange rate at the date of the announcement.

<sup>3</sup> <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/ukraine>

**Table 2. Top corporate financial donors towards humanitarian relief for Ukraine**  
(Europe-registered companies rated **A+**, ranked by size of pledged financial contribution)

<b>Company name</b>	<b>Country of registration</b>	<b>Industry (NACE section code)</b>	<b>In-kind contributions</b>
<b>VOLKSWAGEN AG</b>	DE	Manufacturing	relief items; equipment
<b>SHELL PLC</b>	GB	Mining and quarrying	relief items
<b>MERCEDES-BENZ GROUP AG</b>	DE	Manufacturing	equipment
<b>GLENCORE PLC</b>	GB	Mining and quarrying	none
<b>BP PLC</b>	GB	Manufacturing	personnel
<b>AXA SA</b>	FR	Financial and insurance activities	none
<b>ALLIANZ SE</b>	DE	Financial and insurance activities	services
<b>NESTLE</b>	CH	Manufacturing	relief items; services
<b>ASSICURAZIONI GENERALI SPA</b>	IT	Financial and insurance activities	none
<b>TESCO PLC</b>	GB	Wholesale and retail trade	relief items; services; personnel
<b>LIDL STIFTUNG &amp; CO. KG</b>	DE	Wholesale and retail trade	relief items
<b>LVMH</b>	FR	Manufacturing	none
<b>SIEMENS AG</b>	DE	Manufacturing	housing; relief items; services; equipment
<b>RIO TINTO PLC</b>	GB	Mining and quarrying	none
<b>GOOGLE</b>	IE	Information and communication	services; expertise
<b>AMAZON</b>	LU	Professional, scientific and technical activities	services; equipment; expertise
<b>MICROSOFT</b>	IE	Manufacturing	services; expertise
<b>CAISSE DES DEPOTS ET CONSIGNATIONS</b>	FR	Financial and insurance activities	none
<b>BAYER AG</b>	DE	Manufacturing	housing; relief items; services; medicine; personnel
<b>ACCENTURE PLC</b>	IE	Professional, scientific and technical activities	none
<b>BNP PARIBAS</b>	FR	Financial and insurance activities	none
<b>META PLATFORMS</b>	IE	Information and communication	services

<b>BP INTERNATIONAL LIMITED</b>	GB	Wholesale and retail trade	relief items; personnel
<b>GLAXOSMITHKLINE</b>	GB	Manufacturing	relief items; medicine
<b>SANOFI</b>	FR	Manufacturing	medicine
<b>ANGLO AMERICAN PLC</b>	GB	Mining and quarrying	none
<b>CREDIT AGRICOLE</b>	FR	Financial and insurance activities	none
<b>ASTRAZENECA PLC</b>	GB	Manufacturing	medicine
<b>L'OREAL</b>	FR	Manufacturing	services
<b>UBS AG</b>	CH	Financial and insurance activities	services
<b>SAP SE</b>	DE	Information and communication	services; equipment; expertise
<b>BPCE GROUP</b>	FR	Financial and insurance activities	none
<b>C.H. BOEHRINGER SOHN AG &amp; CO. KG</b>	DE	Professional, scientific and technical activities	none
<b>JANSSEN PHARMACEUTICA</b>	BE	Manufacturing	none
<b>INTESA SANPAOLO</b>	IT	Financial and insurance activities	housing; relief items; services; personnel
<b>JERONIMO MARTINS SGPS S.A.</b>	PT	Wholesale and retail trade	relief items
<b>HENKEL AG &amp; CO.</b>	DE	Manufacturing	housing; relief items
<b>MERCK</b>	DE	Manufacturing	relief items; medicine
<b>ING BANK NV</b>	NL	Financial and insurance activities	none
<b>LLOYDS BANK PLC</b>	GB	Financial and insurance activities	services
<b>ALDI STORES LIMITED</b>	GB	Wholesale and retail trade	none
<b>EXXONMOBIL PETROLEUM &amp; CHEMICAL</b>	BE	Manufacturing	none
<b>COCA-COLA</b>	GB	Manufacturing	none
<b>DELL</b>	IE	Professional, scientific and technical activities	none
<b>CISCO INTERNATIONAL</b>	GB	Information and communication	services; expertise
<b>NATWEST GROUP PLC</b>	GB	Financial and insurance activities	housing; services

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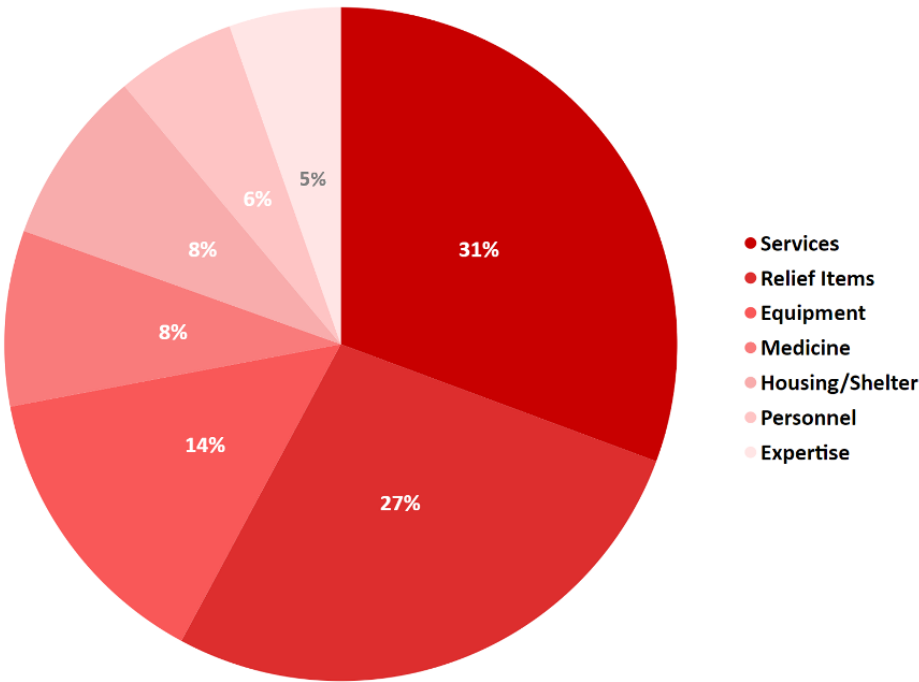
# What in-kind contributions did Europe's largest companies pledge towards humanitarian relief for Ukraine in 2022?

Of all the companies in our sample, **44% pledged a contribution in-kind**. As shown in Figure 3, the pledged contributions were varied in nature and ranged from humanitarian relief items such as food, to equipment such as vehicles, or particular services.

Many companies pledged in-kind contributions in multiple categories. A particularly common combination was for companies to pledge both equipment and associated services. Other companies pledged to contribute to maintaining or establishing crucial infrastructure, such as electricity, telecommunications, logistics, and shelter.

Our data also reveal that there is often a figurative 'internal division of labor' when companies are affiliated with or owned by foundations or are part of a larger business group. An illustration of this is provided in the 'Featured Case' box on the next page.

**Figure 3. Type of in-kind contributions pledged towards humanitarian relief for Ukraine by Europe's largest firms in 2022**



## What is the value of in-kind contributions pledged by Europe's largest companies in 2022?

Companies often did not explicitly report the value of their pledged in-kind contributions. However, some companies did disclose an estimated value. The value of these amounts approximately matched the total value of the financial contributions we identified.

As a result, a conservative estimate is that **the total value of the public pledges towards humanitarian relief by Europe's 331 largest firms in 2022 exceeded €1bn.**

Since many companies did not report the value of their in-kind contributions, and some did not disclose the value of the financial donations they pledged, the total value of the pledged contributions towards humanitarian relief by Europe's largest companies is likely considerably higher.

Our data only focus on pledged contributions by companies that directly engage in business activities. As a result, the estimates provided above can differ from the values reported other databases, which may include the financial donations of foundations in overviews of private-sector contributions. Since the status and objectives of foundations differ significantly across European countries, we excluded all foundations to facilitate comparison.

### Featured case

#### **Novo Nordisk and the Novo Nordisk Foundation: A concerted response**

Novo Nordisk is a pharmaceutical company headquartered in Denmark and specializes in medication for chronic diseases like diabetes. The Novo Nordisk Foundation is the long-term owner of the company and directs the income generated through the company's business activities to scientific and social purposes. In response to the Russian invasion, the company and the foundation responded in concert, ensuring the complementarity of their contributions.

Apart from supporting their employees' safe evacuation from Ukraine, within four days after the start of the war, Novo Nordisk pledged "to support the Ukrainian health authorities and humanitarian acts with our products and supply capacity." A few days later, the company specified its pledged contribution by announcing that it would donate up to two months' supply of diabetes and hemophilia medicines to the Ministry of Health. These in-kind contributions leveraged the company's business activities to ensure that people in Ukraine would continue to receive the life-saving medication they needed.

The day after the invasion, the Novo Nordisk Foundation pledged to donate DKK 5 million (€672.000) for the emergency relief efforts of UNHCR. A few days later, the foundation pledged another DKK 50 million (€6.7m) to international relief organizations. In response to the WHO appeal in April 2022, the foundation pledged another DKK 25 million (€3.36m) to provide healthcare for people in Ukraine and Ukrainian people who had fled to neighboring countries.

## Which companies pledged support for humanitarian relief for Ukraine?

By and large, the corporate response to humanitarian needs in Ukraine has been a show of European solidarity: As shown in Figure 4, **large companies from all over Europe pledged contributions towards humanitarian relief for Ukraine in 2022.**

The distribution of companies across European countries in our sample is unbalanced because the companies were selected by size. It is also important to note that Figure 4 displays companies by their country of registration rather than by the country of their Global Ultimate Owner. The large number of Irish-registered companies in our sample is explained by the fact that several large USA-headquartered companies have registered their European business in Ireland.

The differences across countries in the propensity of companies to pledge support for Ukraine are minor. However, **there are quite considerable differences in the propensity for corporate giving across industries** (Figure 5). Perhaps most notable is that European companies in the electricity, gas and steam sector demonstrate a lower propensity to pledge contributions towards humanitarian relief for Ukraine.

When looking at financial contributions only, **several industries are highly represented in the A+ category.** These are: manufacturing (17 companies), financial and insurance activities (12), wholesale and retail trade (5), professional, scientific and technical activities (4), mining and quarrying (4), and the information and communications industries (4 companies).

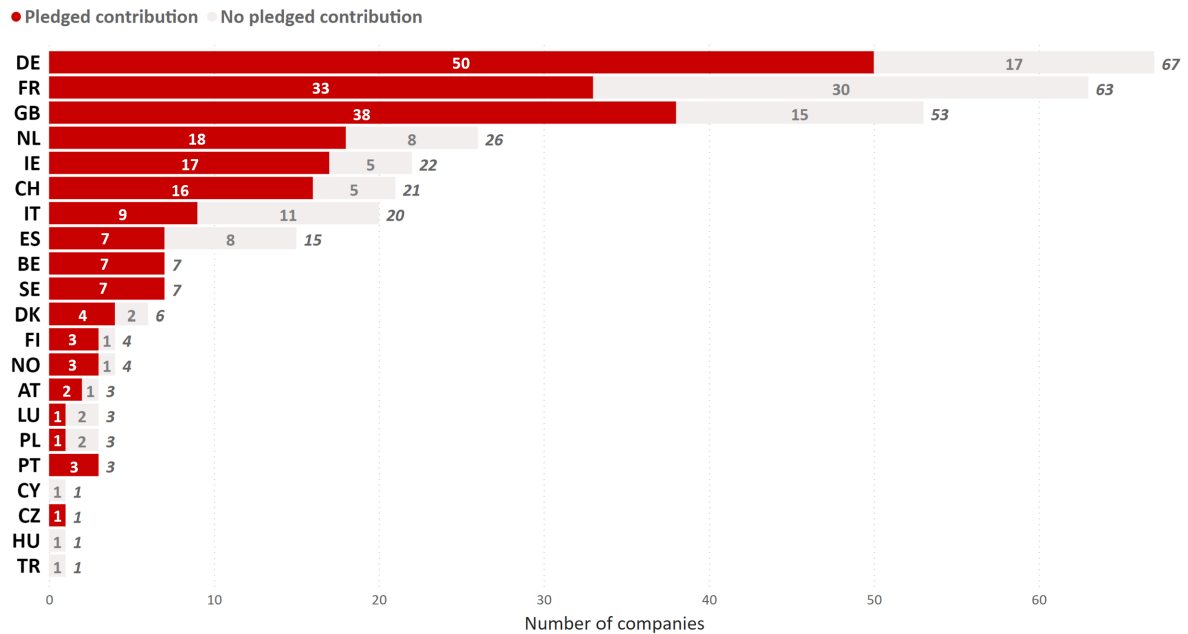
### Featured case

#### Boehringer Ingelheim: Putting solidarity with Ukraine into practice

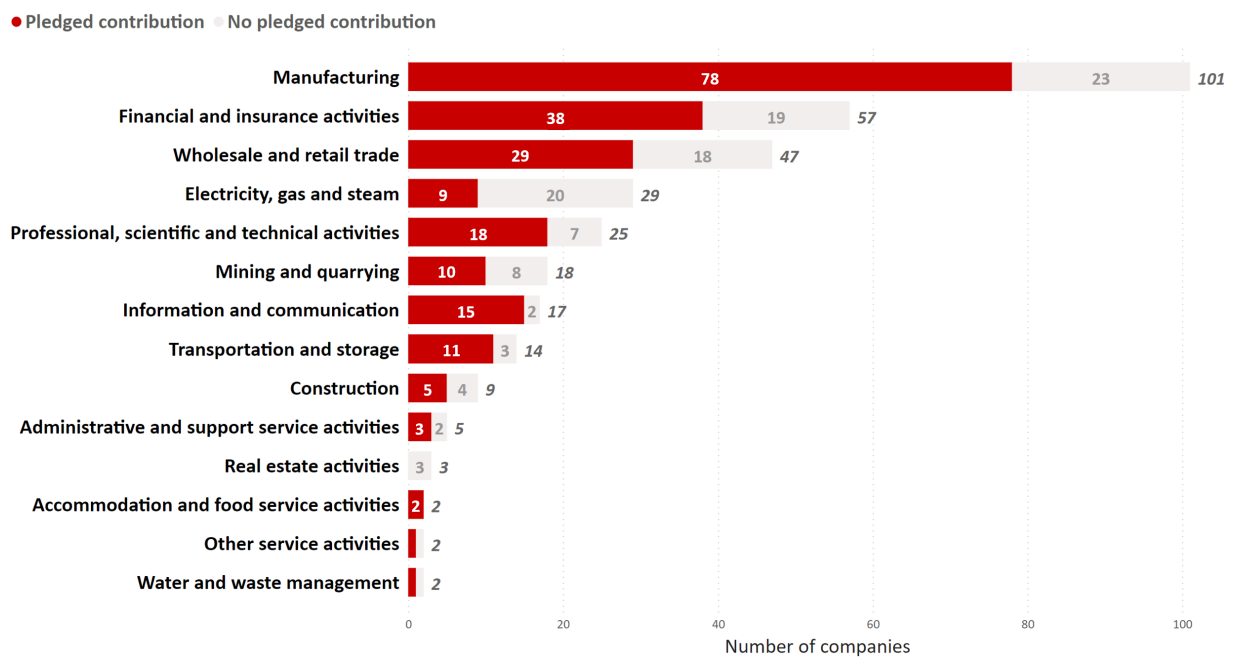
Boehringer Ingelheim is a family-owned pharmaceutical company headquartered in Germany focused on animal and human health. The company responded to the Russian invasion of Ukraine within four days by pledging €2.5m in financial donations to the ICRC, UN agencies, and German NGOs. The company also emphasized its efforts to secure a stable medicine supply in both Ukraine and Russia. While explicitly “condemning the military aggression against Ukraine”, the company emphasized its responsibility toward people who urgently need their medication. While the company took an unambiguously political stance, it therefore carefully weighted the societal impacts of its response to the war when putting its solidarity into practice.

Within three weeks, the company also pledged to donate €1m monthly for the next 12 months to Polish and German Red Cross Societies and in-kind donations of essential medicines. They also pledged support for employee initiatives and granted ten days off for employees who wanted to support relief efforts, such as volunteering or accommodating refugees.

**Figure 4. Number of large European companies that pledged contributions for Ukraine, by country of registration**



**Figure 5. Number of large European companies that pledged contributions for Ukraine in 2022, by industry**



# Where do the pledged contributions for humanitarian relief by Europe’s largest firms end up?

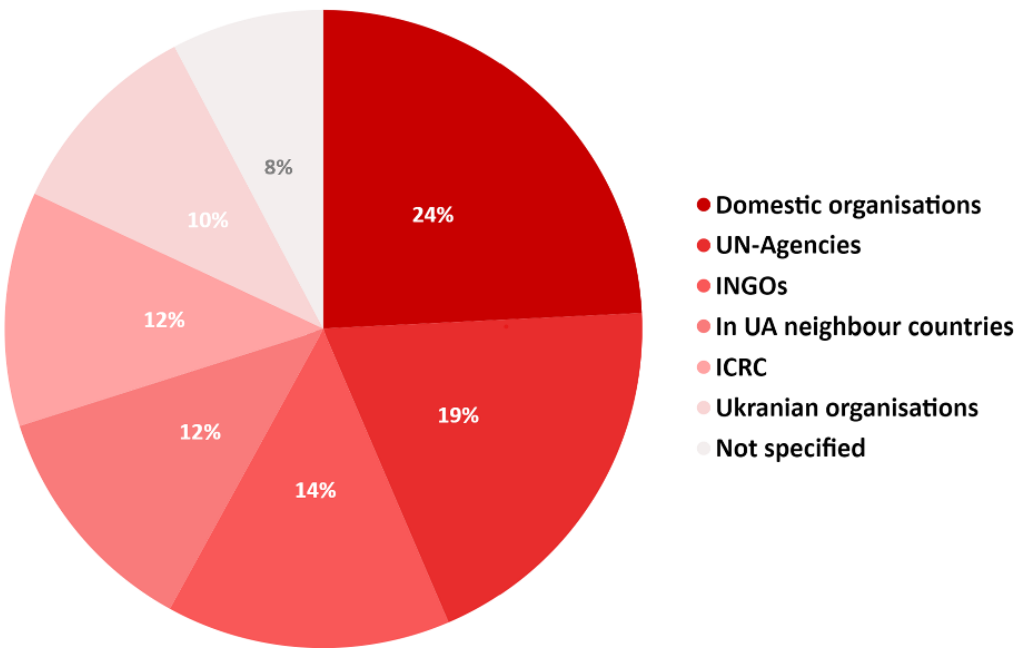
The donor data illustrate that the large European companies that pledged support towards humanitarian relief for Ukraine in 2022 channeled their contributions through a variety of channels.

**Close to half of the total number of corporate pledges in our database were targeted at international humanitarian organizations (45%).** This included pledged contributions to UN agencies (19%), international NGOs (14%), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC; 12%), which are usually seen as apolitical.

**Around a quarter of the pledged contributions (24%) were aimed at supporting organizations and initiatives in companies’ home countries.** Many of these donations aimed to support Ukrainian refugees who had fled to the companies’ home countries. In many other cases, such donations targeted the local Red Cross society of the company’s home country, such as the Danish Red Cross.

About 12% of the pledged contributions were targeted at supporting organizations and initiatives for Ukraine in countries that border Ukraine, such as Poland and Moldova.

Figure 6. Distribution of pledged contributions for Ukraine by Europe’s largest companies in 2022, by recipient organization





Finally, **10% of the pledged contributions targeted Ukrainian humanitarian and government organizations directly.** While this percentage may seem low, it reflects that many companies in our sample recognised and sought to support the work of internationally recognised humanitarian actors and therefore pledged to channel their support for the Ukrainian people through such actors as UN agencies and the International Red Cross.

#### Featured case

##### **Maersk: Contributing to relief efforts through long-term partnerships**

Maersk is a Danish-headquartered logistics company best known for its strong market position in global shipping. Maersk pledged to support humanitarian relief via large-scale in-kind logistics assistance through its membership of the UN Logistics Emergency Team (LET). As a member of LET, Maersk works with and through UN partners and other global humanitarian organizations to establish a stable flow of relief supplies into Ukraine, having a team of 40 specialists devoted to the humanitarian effort. In so doing, Maersk contributed much needed resources, such as transport, containers, and storage facilities.

While the company only pledged a relatively minor financial donation of around € 140.000 to the Red Cross, Maersk thus offered integral support to humanitarian actors through its long-term partnership.



