

[Mens krigen raser arbejder ukrainerne hårdt på at skabe »et lille Danmark ved Sortehavet« - Ambassadøren har ordet - Sjællandske Nyheder \(sn.dk\)](#)

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WHILE THE WAR RAGES, THE UKRAINIANS ARE WORKING HARD TO CREATE "A LITTLE DENMARK BY THE BLACK SEA"

The Ukrainians have duly appreciated the quick and tangible Danish efforts in a city that is located close to the front line and lives under war conditions.



Ambassador Ole Egberg Mikkelsen has visited Mykolaiv, and in his column below, among other things he speaks about Ukrainian gratitude for the Danish help.

By Ole Egberg Mikkelsen, Denmark's ambassador to Ukraine

Before the Russian attack on Ukraine on 24 February 2022, not many Danes had ever heard of the southern Ukrainian port city of Mykolaiv. But that has changed, as Denmark was assigned a special role in the city's reconstruction.

But what kind of city and region is Denmark helping? I have been there quite a few times in the past three years, and here are my impressions: Mykolaiv is an industrial city, beautifully located, where two rivers meet close to the Black Sea. The city's silhouette is shaped by shipyard cranes and

industrial chimneys. The city is traditionally known as the centre of the shipyard industry and is known as “the city of shipbuilders”.

It Reminds Me of Aalborg

The town is surrounded by fertile farmland – at this time of year, rolling fields of wheat and rapeseed. For a Dane, the city reminds me of the Northern Danish city of Aalborg. Just like in North Jutland, it is also quite windy. In May, I attended the inauguration of a large wind farm in the Mykolaiv province. The Vestas turbines spun merrily in the harsh wind from the Black Sea – as a visible expression of the Ukrainians' desire to continue the green transition despite the war.

But what is the reason why President Zelensky, in his speech to the Folketing on 29 March 2022, suggested that Denmark in particular should help Mykolaiv? That same morning, the regional administration building in Mykolaiv had been hit by a fierce missile attack. The attack was probably aimed at the governor of the province, Vitaliy Kim, who was at the head of the armed struggle against the invading army. The missiles hit precisely the part of the building that housed the governor's office. Kim was delayed that morning and therefore survived, while 38 of his staff perished.

Denmark as a Role Model

Another reason could be the already existing contacts between Mykolaiv and Danish maritime companies. Before the war, there were advanced plans to build flexible support vessels in Mykolaiv for the Ukrainian navy based on Danish technology and at the same time to modernize the shipyards.

The general picture is also brightened by the fact that the city's energetic mayor, Oleksandr Senkevych, who has a background as an IT entrepreneur, sees Denmark as a role model for the city's development. When I met the mayor for the first time, I asked him why Denmark in particular was interesting for him. He replied: "I want our city to become a small Denmark by the Black Sea, just as well-functioning, just as prosperous, just as sustainable and people-friendly and above all - just as uncorrupt as Denmark". Denmark also has something special to offer in the fight against corruption. Denmark is at the forefront of the EU's Anti-Corruption Initiative in Ukraine, and Mykolaiv in particular is included as one of the partner cities in this work.

Effective Collaboration

When the Prime Minister visited President Zelensky in Kyiv in April 2022, the partnership was sealed and all efforts were streamlined to help the city. Most of the windows in the city had been broken, many buildings were badly damaged, and the Russians had cut off the drinking water supply to the city.



The destruction in Mykolaiv due to the war is severe, but Denmark is helping with the reconstruction.

As the very first thing, large quantities of plywood were purchased to cover the broken windows. At the same time, approximately 60 emergency water stations, equipped with Grundfos pumps, where residents could fetch drinking water were established. Spare parts for the district heating system and construction equipment were purchased to purify the water. All the efforts were implemented in effective cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Copenhagen, the embassy in Kyiv, Danish and international aid organizations and the local and regional authorities. Time pressure was rather high so that the city could be ready for winter. In the meanwhile, the city was facing daily bombardment until November 2022, when the Russians were pushed back to the east.

The Ukrainians Rejoice

The quick and tangible Danish effort in a city close to the front line under war conditions has been duly appreciated by the Ukrainians. They are pleased that the Danes commenced the task immediately. Some Ukrainians are getting tired of conferences and discussion about reconstruction, and would much rather see concrete results. This is probably the primary reason why the Danish efforts in Mykolaiv have been so positively received.

This was very clearly expressed when the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defence met with President Zelensky in Mykolaiv in January. There was also a clear request for help to get business back on track. Mykolaiv is an enterprising city that is used to fending for itself, but the biggest obstacle for many local companies is that no one will lend them money to repair production equipment. The city is simply too close to the front line. With the new Danish Ukraine Fund, it is possible that both the Danish Export and Investment Fund and the Industrialization Fund for Developing Countries can provide support despite the risk of war. One of the first to beneficiaries from this is a local company that processes tomatoes into tomato paste. The company facilities, which has, among other things, Danish production equipment, are heavily

damaged. But the repair work is in full swing, and with Danish help the company can hopefully get back in production during the summer. Then many hundreds can get to work.

Birthday Video

Therefore, despite the war raging nearby, Mykolaiv citizens are working hard to realize the vision of a "little Denmark by the Black Sea". It will take time and require a lot of effort. But I am convinced that the citizens of Mykolaiv will approach the task of reconstruction with the same fervour and will to fight that they have shown in the defence of their city - an effort that has made the city known across Ukraine as the "City of Heroes".

And if Danes should be in any doubt about the gratitude of the citizens of Mykolaiv, I can highly recommend a small video in which Mykolaiv's children's choir sings a well-known Danish birthday song in a Ukrainian retelling on the occasion of H.M. The Queen's birthday and together with the city's mayor say a hearty thank you to the Danes. The video is available at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUNR1snuMCE>

It is this kind of reaction that makes it really meaningful and positive to be part of the team at the Danish embassy in Kyiv and in that way help support Ukraine's fight for freedom.