



SUCCESS STORY

Made In Ukraine Becomes Fashionable

Fashion event boosts Ukraine's nascent fashion industry



A model shows a piece from the Fall-Winter collection at the Trade Mark Défilé Show in Kyiv, Ukraine.

According to Irina Danilevska, a fashion industry executive, Ukraine has long had a fashion culture, but now it has a shot at financial success.

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For many years, Ukraine's fashion industry lagged far behind its sophisticated counterparts elsewhere, defined by creative designers, skilled manufacturers who translate designs into well-made clothes, and a developed distribution network. Ukrainian fashion designers essentially created clothing for art's sake in an economy in which consumers often had no choice but to wear inexpensive, and often outdated, ready-to-wear imports from China or Turkey. Meanwhile, Ukrainian apparel manufacturers toiled under cut-and-make schemes in which they produced clothes for foreign buyers, but made only marginal profits themselves.

A USAID project identified the country's textiles and apparel industry as one of its most promising sectors. Working with companies, industry representatives, and national bodies, USAID is bridging the gap between Ukrainian designers and apparel manufacturers and boosting the sector's competitiveness in both domestic and foreign markets.

Irina Danilevska, organizer of Ukrainian Fashion Week, the country's premier fashion event, says that a fashion culture has long existed in Ukraine, but that USAID's help has finally given Ukrainian fashion a shot at financial success.

USAID helped sponsor a major event at the March 2006 Ukrainian Fashion Week: "Made in Ukraine: Trade Mark Défilé." Fifteen Ukrainian apparel brands presented their wares and made contacts with merchandisers. The event attracted 25,000 visitors, including designers, buyers, wholesalers, and manufacturers in search of new partners to satisfy the demand for stylish, trendy, and affordable clothes. Designers met with producers who can make their designs realities; manufacturers saw new designs and a chance to boost demand for their goods; and retailers took a step toward maximizing profits by selling clothes made in Ukraine. The event was received enthusiastically as a chance to see what domestic designers and manufacturers had to offer. Negotiations were held on the spot. Most Ukrainian producers sold all the goods they had showcased on the catwalk. They all increased their market visibility and received great publicity. Ukrainian consumers, meanwhile, will now be able to wear fashionable, affordable clothes that's "Made in Ukraine."

Photo: Tatiana Dudka