

IT NEARSHORING USING GERMAN LANGUAGE

2025

WHICH NEARSHORING
COUNTRIES CAN COPE
BEST



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Introduction

Nearshoring IT services is becoming increasingly popular in German-speaking markets, as it enables cooperation with nearby countries that provide cultural similarity, time zone alignment, and cost advantages.

A key success factor is the availability of German-speaking talent in the partner country. This whitepaper analyzes several popular Nearshoring destinations across Europe, comparing their German language proficiency, education systems, IT/BPO workforce, and cultural fit.

The goal is to identify which countries are best suited for IT services requiring strong German-language skills.

German Proficiency Across Nearshoring Countries

Czech Republic

leads in relative terms with about 12% of its population able to speak German.

Hungary

follows with about 5.9% proficiency.

Baltic States

Baltic states show moderate levels (Estonia ~4.4%, Lithuania ~4.1%, Latvia 3.8%).

Bulgaria

Bulgaria also has around 3.3% of its people speaking German.



Italy, Spain, Portugal

Italy has only about 2.7% proficient, Spain around 2.0%, and Portugal just 0.4%.

Poland

In Poland 2.6% of the population have German skills, making English the first foreign language.

Romania

Romania likewise reports only about 1.1% of its population conversant in German.

Serbia and Ukraine

Serbia and Ukraine are not part of EU surveys, but their German proficiency is relatively limited.

Education Pipeline and German Language Learning Infrastructure

**around
1.95 million**

Poland has the largest number of German learners worldwide outside the DACH-region, with around 1.95 million people studying the language, most of them in school programs. The country maintains a strong tradition of German studies, supported by teachers, universities, and institutions like the Goethe-Institut.

The Czech Republic has over 350,000 German learners, making the language a popular choice in schools after English and reflecting strong historical and geographic ties. Supported by bilingual programs, universities, and even minority German-speaking communities, this educational base translates into a relatively high share of German speakers and strengthens Czechia's Nearshoring potential.

**over
350,000**

**around
323,000**

Hungary had around 323,000 German learners in 2020, reflecting historical ties and a strong presence of German in schools and universities, though numbers have declined in recent years. Despite this downward trend, institutions and educational programs continue to produce a steady flow of German-speaking graduates, even if demand in the labor market exceeds supply.

Romania's strong German heritage, particularly in Transylvania and Banat, supports over 205,000 German learners in schools and universities, with some high schools and university programs taught entirely in German. This tradition, combined with institutions like the Goethe-Institut, ensures a steady pipeline of German-speaking graduates, even if overall population proficiency remains relatively low.

**over
205,000**

Education Pipeline and German Language Learning Infrastructure

**about
125,000**

Bulgaria had about 125,000 German learners in 2020, supported by German-language high schools, philology programs at universities, and institutions like the Goethe-Institut. While the overall pipeline is modest in size, it provides a steady supply of German-speaking talent for the labor market.

In the Baltic states, 13,000–28,000 students per country were learning German in 2020, supported by specialized schools, Goethe-Institut branches, and university philology programs. While the absolute numbers are small due to limited population size, many learners achieve strong proficiency, often alongside excellent English skills. This creates a niche but high-quality pool of German-speaking talent, suitable for specialized or smaller-scale Nearshoring projects.

**13,000 – 28,000
per country**

**around
170,000**

Serbia has around 170,000 German learners, supported by high schools, universities, and cultural institutions like the Goethe-Institut, reflecting both multilingual education efforts and historical migration links. This provides a moderate pipeline of German-speaking talent, suitable for IT and customer support roles where additional on-the-job language training is feasible.

In 2020, about 670,000 **Ukrainians** were learning German, supported by schools, universities, and initiatives like the Goethe-Institut and DAAD programs. While this represents a sizable absolute number, German remains relatively uncommon across the broader population, limiting the overall talent pool.

**about
670,000**

Education Pipeline and German Language Learning Infrastructure

**around
460,000**

Italy has around 460,000 German learners, with particular concentration in Northern Italy and tourist regions, and benefits from South Tyrol, where German is the primary language for people. This combination of native speakers in South Tyrol and foreign-language learners elsewhere provides a notable, though geographically concentrated, pool of German-capable talent.

German is less commonly taught in **Spain**, with about 180,000 students learning the language in 2020, mostly in regions with high German tourism or expat communities. The country has limited German education infrastructure, including a few bilingual schools, Goethe-Institut centers, and university departments. While Spain produces some German-speaking graduates due to its large population, its overall capacity for German-proficient talent is modest compared to Central European Nearshoring destinations.

**about
180,000**

**fewer than
20,000**

Portugal has a very small German-learning population, with fewer than 20,000 students as of 2020, and German is a niche language compared to English, Spanish, or French. As a result, the domestic pipeline of German-speaking graduates is limited, meaning Nearshoring for German-heavy tasks would likely rely on native expats or returnees.

Central and Eastern Europe, particularly Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Romania, lead in German learners and established programs due to population size and strong educational traditions. In contrast, Southern Europe, the Baltics, Serbia, and Ukraine have smaller or more specialized German-speaking talent pools, sufficient mainly for niche roles or to complement English-speaking IT teams.



Availability of German-Speaking Talent in IT and BPO Sectors

Primary Nearshoring Locations

Central and Eastern Europe's BPO Hubs: Central and Eastern European countries like Poland, Czech Republic, Romania, and Hungary are major BPO and IT/SSC hubs, with many teams already providing daily support to German clients. Despite the strong presence of German-speaking staff, demand is increasingly outpacing supply, creating longer hiring times and higher recruitment costs. As a result, while these countries remain attractive Nearshoring destinations for German-language services, their talent pools are approaching full utilization in some areas.

Scale of Talent: Poland likely has the largest number of German-speaking IT/BPO professionals, with many working for German clients in cities like Kraków and Wrocław, while Czechia, Romania, and Hungary serve specialized niches in technical support, R&D, and call centers. Employers consistently praise the quality and work ethic of staff in these countries, though finding enough German-proficient talent remains a challenge.



Availability of German-Speaking Talent in IT and BPO Sectors

Secondary Nearshoring locations

Bulgaria

Bulgaria has become an outsourcing hub with German-speaking call center teams in cities like Sofia and Plovdiv. While the talent pool is smaller, employers generally report good satisfaction, often recruiting graduates from German-language schools or those with experience in Germany, sometimes supplemented with additional training.

Baltics (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania)

The Baltic states have small but high-quality IT sectors, with German-speaking talent mostly concentrated in specific roles or firms, such as project managers or niche customer service centers. While professionals are versatile and culturally aligned, the limited number of German speakers means the talent pool could be quickly exhausted for larger nearshoring operations.

Spain & Italy

In Spain and Italy, IT outsourcing is primarily conducted in English, with German-speaking professionals being relatively rare and often seeking opportunities in Germany. While some firms provide German-language BPO or helpdesk services, the limited local German proficiency means companies frequently rely on language training or native German hires for German-heavy projects.



Availability of German-Speaking Talent in IT and BPO Sectors

Secondary Nearshoring Locations

Ukraine

Ukraine is a major IT outsourcing hub, but German language skills are limited, with only a minority of developers and engineers able to speak German. While a few companies employ German-speaking coordinators for DACH clients, most IT work is conducted in English, making the German-proficient talent pool smaller than in Central European countries.

Serbia

Serbia's IT outsourcing industry is growing, with a modest but notable number of German-speaking professionals, many having gained fluency through time spent in German-speaking countries. While the overall German-proficient talent pool is limited, companies value these individuals highly for near-native language skills, strong technical ability, and good English.

Poland, Czech Republic, Romania, and Hungary lead in German-speaking IT/BPO talent, with established teams experienced in serving German clients. Other countries like Bulgaria, the Baltics, Serbia, Ukraine, and Southern Europe can provide German speakers on a smaller or more specialized scale, but often require additional training or supplementation with expats for German-dependent services.



Cultural and Business Affinity with Germany



Poland shares a border and strong economic ties with Germany, supported by EU membership, regulatory alignment, and a large Polish diaspora with work experience in German-speaking countries. These factors, combined with cultural compatibility in business practices, make German clients feel comfortable collaborating with Polish nearshoring teams.



Czechia has one of the strongest cultural affinities with Germany, shaped by centuries of shared history, close geographic proximity, and significant German investment. German managers often note that Czech teams are highly familiar with German work culture, making collaboration smooth and requiring minimal cross-cultural adjustment.



Hungary has deep historical and economic ties with Germany, reinforced today by major German industrial investments and a tradition of precise, engineering-focused work culture. German clients often find Hungarian teams culturally familiar and easy to collaborate with, despite the linguistic difference.



Cultural and Business Affinity with Germany



Romania has notable German cultural influence through historic communities like the Transylvanian Saxons and strong modern investment from German companies in sectors such as automotive, IT, and manufacturing. While Romanian business culture is more relationship-oriented than Germany's, professionals in outsourcing adapt well to client expectations, making collaboration effective and appreciated by German partners.



Bulgaria's cultural affinity with Germany is moderate, shaped by EU integration, German investment, and many Bulgarians studying or working in Germany. While the work style is more relationship-driven than in Germany, outsourcing firms in Sofia follow international practices, making collaboration smooth for German clients.



Spain and Italy maintain strong economic ties with Germany, but workplace cultures are generally more informal and flexible compared to German norms of punctuality and strict processes. In the IT and BPO sectors, however, professionals are used to adapting to international clients, which helps smooth cooperation. EU membership ensures aligned business regulations, while cultural familiarity is reinforced by tourism and German expatriate communities. Overall, business affinity is moderate, and with clear processes or bilingual project managers, Spanish and Italian teams can work effectively with German clients despite some cultural differences.





Cultural and Business Affinity with Germany



Portugal has fewer direct cultural and linguistic ties with Germany, though the two countries cooperate closely within the EU and in sectors like automotive components and renewable energy. While German is not widely spoken, Portuguese outsourcing firms serving German clients bridge the gap by focusing on quality delivery, using English for communication, and relying on a small number of German-speaking liaisons.

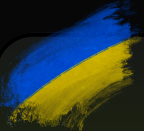


The Baltic states share some historical and cultural affinity with Germany, while their modern business culture is often described as “Nordic” – efficient, organized, and compatible with German expectations. Collaboration generally works smoothly, with language and small talent pool size being greater limitations than cultural fit.



Serbia has been deepening its business ties with Germany, supported by investment in IT and automotive sectors, as well as strong diaspora links that foster cultural familiarity. While not an EU member, Serbia’s young professionals show Western business values, and German clients often highlight their strong work ethic and technical skills, with cultural affinity rated as moderate to good.

Cultural and Business Affinity with Germany



Ukraine's cultural and business affinity with Germany has been growing, driven by stronger political ties, German investment in engineering and IT, and the Western-oriented mindset of young IT professionals. While some differences remain, Ukrainian firms actively align with German standards, making collaboration increasingly smooth and supported by mutual goodwill.

Central and Eastern European countries like **Poland**, **Czech Republic**, and **Hungary** show the strongest cultural and business affinity with Germany, thanks to shared history, German investment, and EU integration.

Romania and **Bulgaria** also align well, supported by EU norms and local German-speaking communities, though some adaptation is needed.

The Baltics, **Southern Europe**, **Serbia**, and **Ukraine** are generally compatible, with historical ties, EU membership, or proactive alignment helping bridge cultural differences.

Overall, while countries like **Czechia** or **Poland** feel closely aligned with German business culture, others such as **Portugal** or **Ukraine** may require additional cultural bridging strategies for Nearshoring initiatives.

Comparative Analysis: Top Nearshoring Countries for German Language Requirements

Czech Republic

Czechia stands out as a nearshoring destination thanks to its high share of German speakers, strong education pipeline, and widespread use of German in business and service centers. German firms report smooth collaboration with Czech teams, benefiting from both language proficiency and close cultural alignment.



Poland

Poland offers the largest pool of German-capable professionals in Central Europe, driven by its scale, active IT/BPO sectors, and strong business-cultural ties with Germany. While competition for German-speaking talent is high, Poland remains one of the best options for large-scale Nearshoring projects, with employers reporting solid technical expertise and sufficient language proficiency.

Romania

Romania combines cost-effectiveness with a proven track record of serving German markets, as most BPO/SSC operations already support DACH clients and can recruit German-proficient staff from clustered regions and communities. While language training may be needed for broader roles, the mix of cultural affinity, dedicated German-speaking enclaves, and lower wages makes Romania a strong nearshoring destination.



Hungary

Hungary offers a moderate but well-qualified German-speaking workforce, supported by strong cultural alignment and steady output of German-skilled graduates who often work in SSCs for German firms. While competition for talent can be high, its stability, education quality, and location make Hungary an excellent choice for medium-sized German-focused nearshoring projects.

Bulgaria

Bulgaria lacks the sheer volume of German-speaking talent seen in Poland or Romania, but its dedicated core of German speakers and strong cost advantage make it a proven location for small-to-mid-sized nearshoring projects. Companies leveraging graduates of elite language schools have successfully staffed German-language support centers, with performance generally rated highly by German clients.



Baltic States

The Baltic states have small German-speaking labor pools but can deliver excellent quality for niche, high-value projects, often combining strong technical skills with trilingual ability. While they cannot match the scale of larger CEE countries, they are well-suited for specialized nearshoring setups where a bilingual project lead or small dedicated team can meet German client needs effectively.



Comparative Analysis: Top Nearshoring Countries for German Language Requirements

Serbia	Serbia is emerging as a viable nearshoring option for German language work, with a growing pool of learners, near-native speakers (often with experience in German-speaking countries), and strong IT skills at competitive costs. While the talent base is smaller and non-EU status brings some legal considerations, Serbia is increasingly attractive for customer support, helpdesk, and smaller German-speaking development teams.
Ukraine	Ukraine is not a top choice for German-language capacity, but it excels in technical talent and cost efficiency, with German-speaking coordinators or project managers bridging client communication. This hybrid model allows Ukrainian teams to serve German clients effectively, even if full German-language workflows are less feasible compared to Central Europe.
Spain & Italy	Spain and Italy are strong nearshoring locations overall, but their small pool of German speakers limits them for German-heavy projects. They fit best when English is the main language and only a few roles require German.
Portugal	Portugal has very few German-speaking professionals and ranks low for German-language readiness. Nearshoring there usually relies on English or relocating native German staff.



Comparative Analysis: Top Nearshoring Countries for German Language Requirements

Central-Eastern Europe clearly leads in ability to meet German language needs in Nearshoring. The Czech Republic and Poland are standouts – Czechia for quality and proportion, Poland for volume/scaling and experience – with Hungary and Romania not far behind. These four have proven records of delivering IT and BPO services in German at scale.

The runner-up group includes Bulgaria, the Baltics, and Serbia, which can successfully handle German projects but on a smaller scale or with targeted recruiting; they are options when looking for specific advantages (cost, particular skills) and willing to work with a more limited talent pool.

Southern Europe (Spain, Italy, Portugal), while strong in IT skills, are generally not top choices for German language support due to the scarcity of German speakers – they rank lowest for this particular requirement, though they excel in other aspects of Nearshoring.

Ukraine is a special case – highly capable technically and used as a nearshore location, but primarily English-oriented with limited German capacity, thus not a leader for German needs but potentially part of a blended solution.

Conclusion

Demand for German-language skills in IT and business services is rising, making the choice of Nearshoring country crucial. Central and Eastern Europe currently offers the best combination of German-proficient talent, education infrastructure, and cultural alignment. The Czech Republic and Poland stand out with a critical mass of German speakers, proven industry experience, and smooth cultural fit, while Hungary and Romania also provide strong options with significant German-speaking workforces. Bulgaria and the Baltic states can meet German-language needs on a smaller scale, and Serbia and Ukraine are emerging players, particularly when EU hubs face talent shortages.

Southern Europe (Spain, Italy, Portugal), though strong IT centers, have fewer German-speaking professionals, making them less suitable for projects requiring fluency. Companies should prioritize Central/Eastern Europe for German-language customer support or collaboration, while supplementing with language training and cultural integration through educational networks and Goethe-Institut partnerships.

In conclusion, Czechia, Poland, Romania, and Hungary lead in Nearshoring German-language IT services, with other Eastern European countries feasible for smaller-scale operations. Leveraging bilingual workforces, ongoing German-educated graduates, and cultural proximity allows German companies to expand Nearshoring operations efficiently while maintaining seamless communication.

Sources

The analysis above is based on data from European Commission language surveys [languageknowledge.eu], as well as longlasting professional experiences from Bytamic IT Nearshoring services.

German Foreign Office reports on German learners worldwide [auswaertiges-amt.de], and industry studies on the availability of German-speaking talent in outsourcing hubs [emerging-europe.com].

These sources provide a quantitative and qualitative foundation for comparing the German language capabilities of Nearshoring countries, as summarized in this whitepaper.

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