

**OPEN WORLD
POST PROGRAM REPORT**

**MEDIA AND ELECTIONS—UKRAINE
AUGUST 6—AUGUST 14
WASHINGTON, D.C. 2005**



The Ukrainian delegation in front of the US Library of Congress, *Open World Leadership Center*.

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INTRODUCTION

Five delegates from Ukraine participated in a professional program which was focused on the theme of advancing independent media and free elections in Washington, D.C. from August 6–August 14, 2005. The participants included Maksym Mykhlyk, Chief Editor of “Slobidka”; Olesya Oleshk, Committee of Voters Ukraine; Mykhaylo Polodyuk, Head of the Shepetivka City Administration - Executive Council; Vladyslav Telen, Deputy Head of Vinnitsa City Administration, Department of Informational Policy and Public Relations; and Marta Mykhaylivna Pryymak, Program Facilitator.

Prior to the transfer of the delegation to their local host, CIP, on August 5, the delegates attended a one day session provided by American Councils, which included a detailed orientation about the logistics of the stay in the US as well as informational meetings on the selected theme of media and elections.



Nathasha Lim, CIP's Program Assistant, and Lyuda Horbatovska, CIP's Professional Interpreter getting ready for the Ukrainian program.

This Open World Program was hosted by the Center for International Programs (CIP) of Valbin Corporation, administered by Academy for Educational Development (AED) and sponsored by the Open World Leadership Center at the US Library of Congress. The program was intense featuring heavy exposure of the Ukrainian delegates to the U.S. political system, democratic governance, and role of media in the election process. The meetings revealed a substantial interest from both sides and created opportunities for further informational exchange.

The return on investment into such programs cannot be overestimated taking into account Ukraine's ever-increasing role in the global East-West policies. Ukraine's geographical proximity to the EU and Russia, strong democratic orientation, highly-educated human capital, well-developed infrastructure and abundance of natural resources make Ukraine a strategically important ally of the U.S. in the global century.

Valbona Sherifi, CIP's Program Director facilitated the learning experience of the Ukrainian delegation throughout their stay in the US. The Program was well planned and smoothly coordinated on a daily basis and corresponded with the participants' interests. The program provided knowledgeable experts representing U.S. organizations from all sectors – government, private, and non-profit. Both sides demonstrated a unique expertise and shared professional opinion on the most challenging aspects of election administration, election fraud and election-related media coverage. A big portion of discussions addressed the use of technology in election process and development of unified federal standards of administering elections in the U.S.

PROFESSIONAL PROGRAM

This professional program aimed to provide ideas and guidance for future expansion of media in Ukraine and fostering free and democratic elections. Journalists in Ukraine have been subjected to repression and difficult working conditions. During their stay in Washington, DC, the delegates participated in academic discussions, workshops, and professional meetings to learn directly from the experiences of their US counterparts.

Some of the meetings the delegation held while in Washington D.C. include the Arlington County Registrar of Voters, the US Election Assistance Commission (EAC), the National Association of the Secretaries of State, DC City Government – Office of Community Affairs, National Democratic Institute (NDI), International Center for Journalists (ICFJ), International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), International Research and Exchange Board (IREX), University of Maryland – School of Journalism, Election Online, Democratic National Committee (DNC), Democracy International and local media outlets such as voice of America.



Ukrainian Delegation meeting with the School of Journalism at the University of Maryland (UMD).

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Meeting at the International Foundation on Election Systems (IFES)



Olesya Oleshk, *Committee Voters of Ukraine* taking notes on election surveying.

During the meeting with IFES, the director of Ukrainian programs, Michael Svetlik and his colleague, Rakesh Sharma gave presentations concerning IFES programs and election surveys in Ukraine. Since 1994, IFES, a Washington, DC based NGO, has been a significant supporter in the development of democratic processes in Ukraine. Over the years, IFES has engaged in comprehensive technical assistance programming, civic education initiatives, and sociological research in order to strengthen democratic reform efforts.

Post election surveys were conducted in Ukraine by IFES in February, 2005 to discover the public's opinions and views regarding political and economic reform. These reports are part of a 10-year series of public opinion surveys, and the results have been significant in evaluating the success of democratic assistance efforts and improve their programming to match the needs of the Ukrainian public.

Some topics that the survey covered were different views and attitude on the voting system of Ukraine, different aspects of the elections, questions concerning the Orange Revolution, and what does it mean to live in a democracy?

Meeting with the DC City Government—Mayor’s Office for Community Affairs

The meeting with the DC City Government was headed by John Wallace, Director of the Mayor’s Office of Community Affairs. Along with him were representatives of the eight district wards. Ward coordinators work with the public and their issues. They are more involved on the public level, and work more closely with the community. This meeting covered different aspects concerning the DC Council and it’s involvement with the community.



From right to left, Vladyslav Telen, Maksym Mykhlyk, Mykhaylo Polodyuk.

One of the coordinators, Ron Friday said, “We interact with the community on many levels ... the main role of a community affairs coordinator is to be the eyes and ears of the Mayor”. Friday explains the process of conveying community issues to the higher level, and how the public’s concerns are met by the government. Ward coordinators attend community meetings where people have opportunities to express certain issues. In addition to listening to the public’s opinions and concerns, ward coordinators also inform them of current issues and legislation.



Another ward coordinator, Christopher Snyder discussed the IQ system, the Council’s database. The IQ system keeps track of everyone who calls the mayor’s office. In addition to the IQ system, Snyder talked about the community calendar, which is a fairly new idea, initiated about a year ago. The concept allows every agency in the database to add their event to the calendar. The calendar can be viewed by everyone.

Mr. John Wallace, *Director of Community Affairs, Mayor’s Office* exchanges gifts with Ukrainian counterparts.

Desi Deschaine, coordinator of ward two, spoke about the functions of the government, and the role of the Mayor concerning the people. Deschaine said, “Washington, DC is one of the most diverse areas of the country and of the world. The job of the Mayor is to represent all those people”.

Meeting with the International Research and Education Board (IREX)

The director of media development for IREX, Linda Trail, and Halina Izdebska discussed the role of the Ukraine Media Partnership Program and its involvement with independent media in Ukraine. IREX has been working with the media in Ukraine since 1996, and in 2002 the Ukraine Media Partnership Program was launched.

In this meeting the delegation had a chance to learn about programs of interest that IREX provides in Ukraine, where the participants can join to further enhance their journalistic skills. IREX provides the opportunity to develop professionally managed Ukrainian media outlets to produce objective news and reporting.

Meeting with the Democratic National Committee (DNC)



Delegates Olesya Oleshk and Vladyslav Telen improvise an election interview with a political candidate at the Media TV Studio of the DNC.

The Press Secretary of the DNC met with the Ukrainian delegation to debrief them on the efforts and work of the headquarters of a political party in the US during times of elections and how to best reach out to increase voter turnout and citizen participation in elections.

In addition, the delegation had a chance to learn about the interaction of the DNC with media as effective means of communication and public relations.

Meeting with the Registrar of Voters, Arlington County

In this meeting the delegates had a chance to observe first hand different types of technology used in US elections. Each state has its own electoral system and decides on its own what technology works best for its voters in order to secure free and fair elections and prevent any election fraud. In addition the delegation had the opportunity to learn during this meeting how to create voter registration lists.



Linda Lindberg, Registrar of Voters—Arlington County demonstrates samples of voter ballots, voter registration lists and voting cards to the delegates.

Meeting with the National Democratic Institute

Mr. Nelson Ledsky, NDI's *Director for Programs with Ukraine*, and Katie Fox encouraged the delegation who are all in different levels affiliated with the Committee of Voters in Ukraine (CVU) to continue their work. "It's the hard work that makes the difference. Your work in the coming six months should be harder than the last six months. You must help so that the election crisis of November 2004 doesn't happen again."

Mr. Ledsky and Ms. Fox encouraged CVU to increase its role in the coming elections. The delegation was provided with different effective ways that work in helping an ensuring successful elections: higher level of monitoring, every vote counts, train political parties to send their political monitors, train election commissioners and educate civic groups.

PROGRAM CONCLUSION

The program was a success. The interests of the participants were well matched with the activities scheduled. As one of the participants put it "there was no meeting that we felt our time was wasted. We had informative meetings on US election governance and election systems as well as practical meetings, which we can directly apply to our work upon return to Ukraine." The delegation took full advantage of the opportunities and contacts offered in the program. In meetings such as NDI, ICFJ, IREX, US-Ukraine Foundation, DNC and the Mayor's Office the delegates got practical ideas about things that they want to change in order to improve their political system and society. In addition, the delegation found out about possible future projects that could be funded by these organizations to help them implement their projects and lead change.

Follow On Activity

Inspired by this program and the professional experience gained in the US each delegate had created at least a project/action plan that they would like to implement upon return. Such projects included creation of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions by City Administration, creation of a database and listserv to reach out to different neighborhoods and citizens so to increase citizen outreach and education. In addition, CVU members participating in this program wanted, just like IFES, to create a library, museum that would capture important moments of elections in Ukraine.

Media Coverage

Voice of America followed closely the different activities of this Open World Program. Besides meeting with the whole delegation to explain the media structure and functions and their coverage of political events, the Ukrainian Service at VOA also invited in a live interview one of the delegates, Maksym Mykhlyk.



Cultural Activities



Besides the 8-day professional program which offered networking opportunities to the delegation, the CIP also included cultural events such as boat trip along the Potomac, visit to Mt. Vernon, House of First US President George Washington, Kennedy Center, Art Performance, visit to the American Museum of Natural Theater, Imax Movie etc.

Hosting Families

“Staying with host families allows the delegates to have a stronger understanding of the American culture” stated CIP’s Director Valbona Sherifi. During this interaction, the Ukrainian Professionals observe first hand and participate in several other aspects of an American lifestyle, such as music and arts, food, culture, politics and religion.



Cohen and Karcher Family share pictures and lifetime stories with the Ukrainian delegate Mr. Mykhaylo Polodyuk, Head of the Shepetivka City Administration whom they are hosting for 10 days.

This report is prepared by the Center for International Programs, Valbin Corporation.

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