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August 30, 2013



The Final EU Push

BY KATYA GORCHINSKAYA
GORCHINSKAYA@KYIVPOST.COM

As abruptly as the weather turned in Kyiv, Ukraine's capital was hit with the realization of how close the Nov. 27 deadline is for signing the Association Agreement, how much work Ukraine still has to do and how far Russia is prepared to go to prevent Ukraine from doing so.

Russia briefly stalled goods from Ukraine at Russia's border for six days in August, followed by a verbal spat. Russia remains Ukraine's second-biggest trade partner after the European Union.

But Ukraine prefers closer ties with the EU. "This is Ukraine's choice, and we all carry responsibility for its implementation," Ukraine's President Viktor Yanukovich said in a speech.

But Ukraine's political, economic and legal climate is still far from EU standards. Ukraine has committed to undertaking many reforms — including improvements in its electoral and criminal justice system — to be able to sign the agreement in Vilnius at a November summit, but lags in just about every point.

Geoffrey Pyatt, U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, said in an Aug. 25 interview with Ukraine TV channel that the chances of signing are more than half. "I am hopeful and optimistic," he said.

But the moods of experts that follow Ukraine's European progress checklist range from extreme optimism to extreme skepticism.

Oleksiy Plotnikov, a key speaker for the pro-presidential Party of Regions on economic issues, said in an interview with Channel 5 → 2

Loving Ukraine

About 5,000 Ukrainians wearing "vyshyvanka," a traditional embroidered shirt, parade through Kyiv during the Aug. 24 Independence Day celebrations to commemorate 22 years as an independent nation. (Kostyantyn Chernichkin)

Journalists who exposed censorship in UNIAN removed from website duties

BY OKSANA GRYTSENKO
GRYTSENKO@KYIVPOST.COM

Five editors of the UNIAN news agency website arrived at their office on Aug. 28 to find that access to their computers had been blocked and that they had been reassigned to a newly formed TV monitoring department.

UNIAN management explained the move by calling it "optimization," while the journalists say the move was a blatant "reprisal" for their exposing

instances of censorship within the agency.

In February opposition lawmakers accused the UNIAN website of publishing fake news stories, including one in which Serhiy Vlasenko, head of jailed ex-Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko's legal defense team, was allegedly spied on by officers of the country's security service disguised in cartoonish bear costumes.

Then several editors of UNIAN website issued a petition to the agency's

management, accusing it of accepting payment to publish news and asking them to quit their destruction of the reputable 20-year news agency. The dispute was settled behind closed doors after a number of meetings between management and staff.

Six months later, problematic issues have risen again at the agency, with five staffers — some long-time employees — being removed from the agency's Podil office and placed in a Darnytsia-based office in Kyiv's east bank. Images post-

ed by journalist Valentyna Romanenko, one of those reassigned to the TV monitoring department, show the office in a dark, decrepit state, with crumbling walls, stained toilets and stacks of used toilet paper and discarded cigarette butts scattered around.

"We asked why the people who were publicly exposing censorship were chosen (for the move) and heard in response (from the management): 'these are our personal motives,'" Romanenko told the Kyiv Post.

The management of UNIAN publicly denied the allegations of reprisal. "This situation is an ordinary administrative decision like the ones which are made in thousands of companies every day," said Vadym Osadchyy, CEO of UNIAN, in a written response to Telekritika media watchdog.

"The new department is one of the steps for optimization of business processes in the company," he added, asking "not to look for politics where it doesn't exist." → 5

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Editorial staff: +380 44 591-3344 news@kyivpost.com

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ТОВ АФ "ОЛГА Аудит"

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Mailing address:

Kyiv Post,
31A Pushkinska, Suite 600, 6th floor
Kyiv, Ukraine, 01004

Advertising

tel. +380 44 591-7788
fax +380 44 591-7789
advertising@kyivpost.com

Editorial staff

tel. +380 44 591-3344
fax +380 44 591-3345
news@kyivpost.com

Subscriptions

Svitlana Kolesnikova
tel. +380 44 591-3408
fax +380 44 591-7789
subscribe@kyivpost.com

Distribution

Andrey Beley
tel. +380 44 591-3409
fax +380 44 591-7789
distribution@kyivpost.com

Ukraine running out of time to win EU support in Vilnius

→ **1** on Aug. 27, that "now it's basically acknowledged that the signing will happen." He also added that Russia did not expect Ukraine to make so much progress.

At the same time, Oleksandr Sushko, a leading expert on European integration and research director at the Institute for Euro-Atlantic Cooperation, gives about a 30 percent chance for signing at the moment. "However, I gave a 15 percent chance in spring, so there is clear progress," he said on his Facebook page on Aug. 28.

His pessimism stems from Ukraine's lack of progress on key issues of selective prosecution, which includes the release of ex-Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko from prison, as well as the revamping of the prosecutor's role and election laws. The full list, containing 11 points, was outlined in December by Europe's Foreign Affairs Council.

Europe is scrambling for signs that Ukraine is advancing the agenda. European member of parliament Elmar Brok at an Aug. 28 briefing in Brussels said: "We will support a signature in Brussels, and we will ratify it afterwards quite fast if the Ukrainian government made it possible for us to sign (it)," Brok said.

Stefan Fuele, the EU's enlargement commissioner, after an Aug. 27 meeting with Andriy Klyuev, National Security Council chief in charge of European integration issues, struggled to identify progress, apart from the submission of a draft law on reforming the general prosecutor's office to the European Council's advisory body.

That body's positive verdict – the Venice Commission – will allow Ukraine to approve the law swiftly when parliament reconvenes on Sept. 3.

Fuele also noted that Ukraine's Justice Ministry has held a number of roundtables on improving electoral legislation. Fuele, however, said it was not enough and that "the EU expects to see unequivocal and concrete elements of progress in the coming weeks."

The biggest stumbling block to signing is the fate of Tymoshenko. Her seven-year-sentence is viewed widely as political persecution, and her release for medical treatment in Germany mostly depends on the president's will,

→ Russian pressure on Ukraine helping nation with EU, but numerous stumbling blocks remain

and is therefore unpredictable.

But some recent statements by presidential lawmakers indicate that there might be trouble brewing in other areas, too.

On Aug. 28, Heorhiy Smitiukh, a Party of Regions lawmaker, said his party will unlikely support an anti-discrimination bill that contains a clause banning discrimination based on sexual orientation.

The law, however, will be a crucial factor for some countries when deciding whether to support signing the agreement with Ukraine.

But should the Party of Regions support all the pro-EU integration legislation, there will be a shortage of votes in the legislature. The Party of Regions holds 207 seats in parliament, short of a majority on its own.

This is where the opposition's support might come in handy. At least two major forces in the opposition, Batkivshchyna and UDAR, have been increasingly vocal about their support for European integration and their unity with the government on this issue – a fact that has not gone unnoticed in European capitals.

"The Ukrainian opposition stands ready to cooperate in order to pass the needed legislation. We believe that this treaty is urgent, important and this is the only way how Ukraine can be really independent," Arseniy Yatseniuk, leader of Batkivshchyna party said at a briefing in Brussels on Aug. 28.

Vitali Klitschko, leader of UDAR, reiterated his party's willingness to cooperate. "Our first priority is to sign an Association Agreement in Vilnius," he said. Together, their factions hold 134 seats in parliament.

European integration also is favored by most Ukrainians. An April poll of 2,010 people by the authoritative

Razumkov Center found that 46 percent of Ukrainians support integration with Europe, while the number of those who would like to go to the Russia-led Customs Union hovers around 40 percent.

The Razumkov poll showed that people favor Europe and the Association Agreement for the perceived benefits to Ukraine's economy, the development of democracy, improvements in education, science and technology and higher standards of living that it is expected to bring.

Studies conducted by Ukrainian and foreign economists over the years have consistently showed benefits from the Association Agreement, and particularly from the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement, of which it is a part, are much greater for Ukraine than from integration with the Customs Union.

One study, conducted by Oxford Economics in 2012, found, however, that the positive effects from the trade agreement can be neutralized in the first three to four years by Russia if it expels Ukraine from the free-trade area agreement of the Commonwealth of Independent States, and introduces new duties to protect its markets.

Russia gave Ukraine a taste of things to come if it signs the Association Agreement through a brief trade war this month that halted Ukrainian exports for six days, hurting producers and disrupting supply contacts. Fifty Ukrainian companies, from steelmakers to beer brewers, faced additional checks at the border.

First Deputy Prime Minister of Russia Igor Shuvalov reiterated on Aug. 26 that if members of the Customs Union feel that their markets are threatened by goods from Europe coming via Ukraine's territory, they will apply

"special measures," including cancellation of the free trade agreement with Ukraine. He also said higher customs tariffs will apply to all goods coming from Ukraine.

President Vladimir Putin's adviser Sergei Glaziev was even less politically subtle when he said on Aug. 27 that "Ukraine will cease to be our strategic partner, it will disappear as a subject of international law because all of its actions it will have to coordinate with the European Union."

But Russia's bullying had the opposite effect in Ukraine and in many European capitals. One European diplomat told the Kyiv Post the many EU officials were "very impressed" to what length Russia is prepared to go to blackmail Ukraine.

Cathrine Ashton, the European commissioner for foreign affairs, may have been one of them. "We cannot lose Ukraine," she was quoted by Interfax-Ukraine as saying during her visit to Estonia on Aug. 26.

Fuele, the commissioner for enlargement, also attempted to explain at length on Aug. 28 why Russia should not feel threatened by the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine. He said that EU goods exported to Ukraine through the future DCFTA will not qualify for preferential treatment when exported from Ukraine to Russia.

"Therefore, the signature of a free trade agreement with a third party, meaning us, may not be used as a justification for the tightening of customs procedures," he said after his meeting with Klyuev on the same day.

Russia also got an unexpected response from Ukraine as it flexed its muscles. Prime Minister Mykola Azarov said at a Cabinet meeting on Aug. 28 that Russia will have to accept Ukraine's integration with Europe as reality.

"The whole world is changing, the global system of economic relations. But to build a fence to protect yourself from changes using artificial barriers is simply pointless," he said, according to the Cabinet of Ministers' website.

Kyiv Post deputy chief editor Katya Gorchinskaya can be reached at gorchinskaya@kyivpost.com.

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Expectations vs. Reality

Results of the EBA Customs Index for the I/II quarters of 2013

On August 21, 2013 the European Business Association issued the results of its Customs Index, which are based on the data of an expert survey, conducted among 67 representatives of EBA companies-members and participants of the Customs Committee.

The EBA Customs Index is a barometer of the quality and convenience of customs procedures, which helps to monitor, analyze and achieve a better understanding of the situation at customs. The final goal of such a process is to facilitate the establishment of transparent and speedy customs clearance of goods, to help the regulator in identifying weaknesses in customs clearance and to hear the opinion of everyone who is involved directly in this process.

In the first half of 2013 respondents rated the quality of customs clearance at 2.81 points on a 5-point scale, compared with 3.06 points in the second half of 2012. The Customs Index is a weighted average of 5 factors related to the characteristics of customs procedures faced by companies:

1. Evaluation of procedures of customs clearance (25%)
 - Duration of customs clearance
 - Share of goods chosen for physical inspections
 - Share of goods which underwent classification code changes
2. Customs value (25%)
3. Amount of paperwork (25%)
4. Number and duration of inspections (10%)
5. Professionalism of customs authorities (15%)

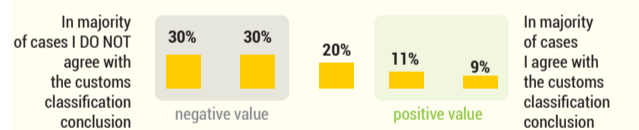
Duration of customs clearance

In comparison with the previous year the Average Index of duration of customs clearance remained almost stable, changing from 3.02 to 3.03. The gap between positive and opinions thoughts is small — 42% of respondents give a positive evaluation and find that customs clearance time and delivery is quite reasonable, while 39% consider it unacceptable.

The average number of days spent on customs clearance is 2.8 (versus 8.7 in 2012). The number of hours spent on customs clearance of one customs declaration (upon presentation to the customs authorities by the end of clearance) was 7.5 hours (versus 8.7 in the previous period).

Share of goods chosen for physical inspections

The Average Index of share of goods chosen for physical inspection fell from 3.74 to 3.22. 48% of respondents believe that this criterion is quite justified and reasonable, while 39% think vice versa.

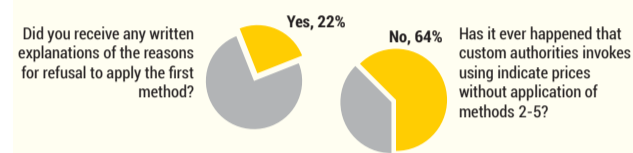
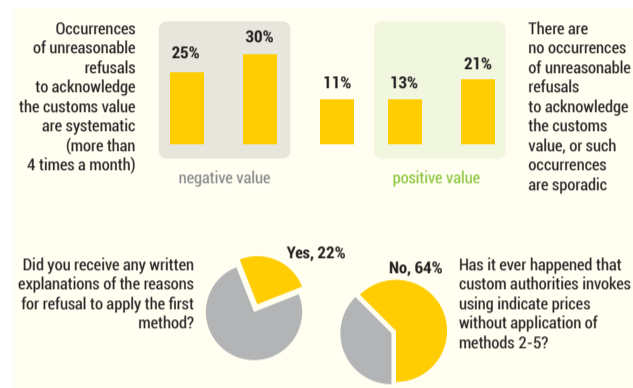


Share of goods which underwent classification code changes

The Average Index of customs classification changes declined from 2.70 to 2.37.

Customs value

Average Index of refusals to acknowledge customs value changed from 3.44 to 2.75. Average number of customs authority refusals to apply the first method for identification of customs value remained almost the same, raising only 1%.



Amount of paperwork

No major changes were noticed in the amount of paperwork, as the Average Index of paperwork onerousness for company business-processes changed only from 2.27 points to 2.28. However, the Average number of documents and other inspections for customs clearance sharply fell from 10.2 to 7.3, showing a positive trend in the transition to a less time- and effort-consuming customs clearance procedure.

Inspections

This year no dramatic changes have occurred in the percentage of inspections, which decreased only from 3.46 to 3.3. Moreover, respondents claimed that the average number of days for customs inspections decreased from 25 to 18, while the average share of companies, which have experienced inspections after customs clearance is completed increased from 4% to 11%.

Professionalism of customs authorities

Putting in place a transparent and sustainable customs system is impossible without highly competent and professional customs personnel. Unfortunately, this metric decreased from 3.12 to 3.07, proving that there is still a lot of room for improvement.

The table below reflects the overall results, which are highlighted according to different criteria, based on companies' experience and compared to the previous year.

Overall results: experience of companies

The survey also examined the usage of electronic declarations, as well as evaluation of change in the level of customs corruption.

88% of respondents answered that they use electronic systems declarations/electronic pre-alert declarations in their business activity. As for the changes in corruption, most respondents (63%) claimed that it remained the same.

All in all, the results of the survey demonstrate that Ukraine still has a lot to do in order to gain a solid platform for a stable customs

environment. The positive changes concern only some components of the Customs Index. However, the new Customs Code was established only one year ago, that is why huge positive changes couldn't happen so quickly. The European Business Association is looking forward to continuing its fruitful cooperation with the Government and business authorities with the purpose of improving customs policies and regulations.

Alexander LAZAREV

EBA Customs Committee Co-chair



"After a year of working with the new Customs Code internationally active companies felt a slight decrease in pressure related to customs clearance. Despite a positive initial experience with the new Code, the customs price subsequently influenced negatively on the Index in general. The Ministry of Income calculates the customs cost not on the price of the contract but on the price according to internal databases. Also the procedural issues with authorized economic operators and application forms declaration IM40EA have not been solved yet, which would reduce the processing time in Ukraine to zero (and it's really possible), as well as significantly reduce the expenses on services of customs terminals."

Denis SHENDRYK

EBA Customs Committee Co-chair,
PwC Ukraine



"There were some negative trends in customs in the first half of 2013. Most of these trends were a result of the customs valuation situation worsening. The customs authorities informally restored the practice of 'indicative prices' on imported goods. Logically, after 1 September when the new transfer pricing rules will be implemented and the Ministry of Revenues and Collection will start analyse import prices from transfer pricing perspective, the customs valuation issues should gradually subside (we can see this from the worldwide practice). However, this process will not be rapid and may take several years. The other reason for the EBA Customs Index drop may be that business communities are getting tired of waiting for the practical implementation of the simplifications provided by the revised Customs Code (e.g. Authorised Economical Operators, etc.). Moreover, during the last several months, there were a number of industry related issues (extra duties on cars, introduction of the car recycling fee, oil product recycling, etc) which negatively impacted the import activity of many EBA members. Significant improvement of the foreign trade environment may be expected if the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement is signed, which, unfortunately, is still under question".

EBA EDUCATION CENTRE

The main activities of the EBA Education Centre:

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EBA Business Schools are long-term educational programmes for employees of member-companies. The main aim of the Schools is to develop employees' professional competencies and to give new and fresh knowledge in relevant fields. The Schools' speakers are professional trainers from EBA member-companies and partners with rich experience and practice.

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Each month the EBA Education Centre in partnership with member and partner-companies holds training programmes and workshops. The topics of such events have a wide range: development of professional skills, personal development, psychology and communication, business simulations and games. The EBA Education Centre conducts programmes in Ukrainian, Russian and English.

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Editorials

Shackling speech

By reassigning a group of five veteran journalists to a suspect "TV monitoring bureau" in the boondocks of Kyiv's Darnytsia neighborhood – and without internet and cable access, to boot – the once-regarded UNIAN news agency continued its slide into irrelevance.

Management's reason for the reassignments was the impersonal sounding, consultant lingo of "optimization of business processes." There is a more persuasive explanation, one that is historically consistent with managerial interference into the editorial decisions made by journalists at the agency owned by billionaire Igor Kolomoisky.

According to Valentina Romanenko, one of the journalists who was denied access to office computers when she showed up to work on Aug. 28, her reassignment and that of Alexander Volyn, Lyubov Zhalovaha, Tetyana Maydanovich and Roman Romaniuk was political and in retaliation for the group sounding the alarm earlier this year about UNIAN management's attempt to censor stories posted to its website and to even taking money for some "news" articles.

UNIAN's fall from grace could have been predicted before that, though, when a mass exodus of journalists dedicated to editorial independence made way for a new crew of crony phonies.

But the 20-year-old news agency is far from the only media outlet in trouble. In the latest disturbing trend of consolidation in the media sector by those in power, one of the largest media holdings in the country, UMH group, was sold to 27-year-old businessman Serhiy Kurchenko, whose rapid rise in wealth and influence in Ukraine is suspicious.

The holding includes such reputable news magazines as Forbes Ukraine and Korrespondent. While it is unclear exactly what they will look like once the final buck is paid for next year, it is likely that the critical coverage they're known for may cease to exist. In the case of Forbes, the anticipated fear of censorship already has resulted in the resignation of a number of its valuable journalists, including the chief editor.

Ukraine ranked 126 out of 179 in the Reporters Without Borders world press freedom index for 2013. It is shameful. This is all bad news for journalists, but it is worse news for Ukraine's citizens, who, without independent and critical news coverage, will be stuck with fewer people fighting for – and articulating – their best interests.

No wisdom

As Ukraine's students convene for their new academic year on Sept. 1, they hope that they are on the path to improve their chances for a prosperous life in the future. But is that really so?

Here are some facts about Ukraine's educational system: About 33 percent of Ukrainians admitted to giving bribes for education in the past year, according to recent Transparency International findings. Petro Melnyk, the former rector of the Tax Academy is living testimony to corruption in universities. He was caught red-handed receiving bribes for enrolling two students, and then escaped from house arrest as his case was being heard in court. So much for an educator's moral standards.

But corruption is just one of many problems in this sector. Despite spending more money as a percentage of gross domestic product on education than many developed countries, the standards of education in Ukraine are slipping every year, and seem to be at a critical point.

As we researched stories for this week's focus on education, we found that many of Ukraine's businesses have given up hope that they can hire adequate employees trained within the existing education system. Many of them offer on-the-job training as a result and even open corporate universities to ensure there is a steady supply of skilled workers.

One sphere where the problem is evident is Ukraine's promising IT sector, which is set to grow sixfold in the next five years, but is already short of skilled specialists. Paradoxically, there is a huge demand for IT training, with 12 school graduates competing for each place in top universities that offer such trainings. But only 30 percent of graduates end up being employable – testimony to the huge gap between industry needs and curriculum.

Moreover, there is a shortage of qualified teachers as state universities offer low salaries that cannot compete with the private sector. As a result, pupils are taught by those whom the industry rejects.

The nation's Education Ministry part of the problem for its interference with independent universities and promotion of backward standards. This is why a recent presidential award to Education Minister Dmytro Tabachnyk is absurd. He received a Yaroslav the Wise Order of IV degree on Independence Day. Its motto is "Wisdom, Honor, Glory" – the exact opposite of the state of Ukraine's education system.



NEWS ITEM: The big plans of new Metalist Kharkiv president and owner Serhiy Kurchenko were dealt a huge blow on Aug. 28 when a sports arbitration court in Switzerland dismissed the soccer club's last appeal to get reinstated in this season's Champions League, Europe's pre-eminent club tournament. The decision upheld the Aug. 13 disqualification of Metalist by Europe's top soccer governing body on match-fixing grounds that dates to a game played against Lviv Karpaty on April 19, 2008.

Ukraine falters in Tatar relationship



ANDREW WILSON

Ukraine is chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in 2013, which, ironically or not, makes it custodian of a whole range of human rights issues. One of these is the remit of the OSCE's High Commissioner for National Minorities (HCNM), which has just published a 'Needs Assessment' for the Crimean Tatars and the other Formerly Deported Peoples (FDPs) of Crimea. In plainer English, the Report provides a roadmap to resolve the political, economic, social and legal problems related to the restoration of rights and full integration of the Crimean Tatars and other FDPs. I was the academic coordinator for the report, which interested readers can find at www.osce.org/hcnm/104309, or through the following link.

The report lists the practical steps to improve the situation than can be taken by the national Ukrainian and local Crimean authorities, by other former Soviet states (particularly in Central Asia, where at least 50,000 Crimean Tatars still live), by the international community, and by the FDPs themselves. The report makes uncomfortable reading for the Ukrainian authorities. Ukraine was of course not responsible for the 1944 Deportation (Lavrentiy Beria's NKVD, the Soviet secret police, organized the operation); but its record as host state since 1991 has been mixed.

Even the number of FDPs is disputed. We still await the successor to the 2001 all-Ukrainian census, but our Report accepts a number of 266,000 Crimean Tatars and 4,900 other FDPs (Armenians, Bulgarians, Germans and Greeks). Numbers have increased, albeit not at the rate expected during the early 1990s because of legal and economic difficulties. The FDPs' share of the population, however, has risen more rapidly, to 13.8 percent, because the overall population of Crimea has shrunk to under two million. Higher birth-rates mean that the Crimean Tatar population is still expanding at +0.9 percent per annum, while the overall population of Crimea is declining by 0.4 percent.

Crimean Tatars already make up 20 percent of the school population. However, only 3 percent of children are taught in the Crimean Tatar language (though twice as many take it as an elective). After half a century in Central Asia, most

Crimean Tatars are highly Russified; UNESCO categorizes Crimean Tatar as an 'endangered language'; Crimean Tatar media is under-developed, and the infrastructure of cultural heritage is badly neglected. Place names were changed overnight in 1944 and have not been changed back. Attacks on Crimean Tatar mosques and cemeteries are frequent. The Kebir Cami Mosque in Simferopol has been returned to active use; the building of the future Central Mosque on Yaltinskaya Street has been endlessly delayed.

The Crimean Tatars are not integrated economically. Unlike before 1944, settlement in the southern coastal tourist zone is minimal. Three-quarters of the Crimean Tatar population is still rural. An estimated 75,000 FDPs are still living in temporary, uncompleted homes without any basic infrastructure. Between 8,000 and 15,000 still live in 'unauthorized settlements.' Conflicts over 'squatting' (samozakhvaty) are still frequent and often violent. Unemployment is not as high as might be expected, but the Crimean Tatars are highly dependent on self-employment. They are entrepreneurial, but their small trading economy is highly vulnerable in Crimea's highly criminalized economy.

Various sources estimate that between \$160 million and \$300 million has been spent in the national Ukrainian and Crimean budgets on the reintegration of FDPs since 1991, which is a substantial sum but still inadequate to the social situation in Crimea. A donors' conference has been mooted; but the Ukrainian authorities have yet to approve it.

There is no real legal mechanism to define the status of FDPs (the last attempt was vetoed by President Leonid Kuchma in 2004). A law on the 'Restoration of the rights of deported people on ethnic grounds' was passed by the Verkhovna Rada at first reading in June 2012, but is now stalled. Bureaucratic hurdles and high transfer costs hinder the return of remaining FDPs, particularly from Uzbekistan. The 1993 Bishkek Agreement regulating conditions for the return of FDPs ran out in May 2013.

The Ukrainian authorities refuse to recognize the Qurultay, which considers itself a quasi-parliament, and passed the radical 'Declaration of National Sovereignty of the Crimean Tatar People' back in 1991, which claims that 'Crimea is the national territory of the Crimean Tatar people, on which they alone have the right to self-determination.' In practice, however, they are an under-represented minority. Currently, they have only one national parliament member, and five in the Crimean Assembly. Seats are more winnable at a regional level – but Crimean Tatars still only hold around 10 percent of seats on Crimean local councils. Less than 5 per → 14

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Editors: Katya Gorchinskaya, Christopher J. Miller,
Mark Rachkevych, Olga Rudenko

Staff Writers: Anastasia Forina, Olena Goncharova, Oksana Grytsenko,
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Regions MP: Parliament will not pass 'scandalous' anti-discrimination bill

BY CHRISTOPHER J. MILLER
MILLER@KYIVPOST.COM

Ukraine's parliament will unanimously pass all laws needed to meet the criteria for signing a landmark Association Agreement with the European Union when the legislature reconvenes this fall, except for what has turned out to be a contentious law banning discrimination, which includes that of sexual minorities, a member of the ruling Party of Regions told Channel 5 news.

"The Verkhovna Rada convenes on Tuesday (Sept. 3). The European integration bills will be adopted first. I think most of the laws will be passed with the support of the majority, except one – the most scandalous one," lawmaker Heorhiy Smitiukh said in an interview with Channel 5 on Aug. 28, referring to the anti-discrimination bill.

Supporters of the bill say that the ruling Regions Party has painted the anti-discrimination bill as a purely gay



Activists walk with banners and flags in support of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights during the first-ever Equality March held in Kyiv on May 25. (Anastasia Vlasova)

rights bill. But discrimination against anyone, regardless of age, disability, marital status, nationality, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation would be outlawed under the proposed law.

Under the law, those employers who

discriminate based on sexual orientation would face fines of Hr 3,400-8,500 and up to five years in prison.

"Our faction had a discussion regarding this law, and we posed the question bluntly, because we are an

Orthodox (Christian) country, we do not agree with our European counterparts regarding this bill. Personally, I will not vote for this bill under any conditions," Smitiukh said, adding that there had been a consensus among his party colleagues to decide individually whether to vote for the bill.

Amid protests by anti-gay activists from the Orthodox Church and nationalist Svoboda party on May 14, parliament suspended indefinitely a vote on the anti-discrimination bill.

President Viktor Yanukovich had days before the bill's scheduled vote urged parliament to vote for it, hoping to appease the EU, which would like to see Kyiv pass such legislation ahead of the November EU-Ukraine summit in Vilnius, where the two hope to sign a landmark Association Agreement.

Following parliament's move to postpone the bill, Amnesty International called on Ukraine to revisit it and pass it as soon as possible and to vote

down proposed legislation to criminalize "homosexual propaganda," which is being debated in parliament.

European gay rights groups have encouraged the EU to postpone discussions with Ukraine until it fulfills its commitments on equal rights. Rights groups here have voiced their own concerns.

"The anti-discrimination bill is important not only for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community, but this legislation protects all other groups, as well," said Taras Karasiichuk, president of Gay Alliance Ukraine. "We are not only trying to promote LGBT rights in Ukraine, but the rights of everybody."

Anti-gay groups plan to again protest the anti-discrimination bill near parliament on Sept. 3 at 9 a.m., when a new session of parliament will begin.

Kyiv Post editor Christopher J. Miller can be reached at miller@kyivpost.com, or on Twitter at @ChristopherJM.

UNIAN moves further harm news agency's reputation for independence

→1 Romanenko claims it was a very strange way to optimize the work of the agency, since the people who moved to the new department have a longstanding history of working for the website, but no knowledge of TV news monitoring. They are also yet to receive the directives about their new responsibilities.

She added that in the new office

they lack even access to the internet. "We used to work online in the past, but now we will have to do it offline in some inexplicable way," Romanenko said.

The journalists say the management violated the collective agreement with the UNIAN staff and now they are seeking ways in which they might protect their labor rights in a court appeal.

They already received support from several media organizations. Oksana Romaniuk, managing director of Institute of Mass Information, a Kyiv-based media watchdog, called the UNIAN management decision strange as "there is no real need for such a department as 'monitoring' – they already have this department at UNIAN, (and have had it) for a long time."

Independent Media Trade Union called the incident "an outright reprisal over those who had the courage to defend their labor rights."

But inside the UNIAN staff the critical journalists say they did not receive proper support, since many journalists have already left the agency over the recent turbulences.

"There are not many colleagues who

remain, who know us well and have worked (at UNIAN) for a long time," Romanenko said. "With all of these scandals many people have already left," she added.

Kyiv Post staff writer Oksana Grytsenko can be reached at grytsenko@kyivpost.com. Kyiv Post editor Christopher J. Miller contributed to this story.

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Corporate education a must for nation's best enterprises

BY KATERYNA KAPLIUK
KAPLIUK@KYIVPOST.COM

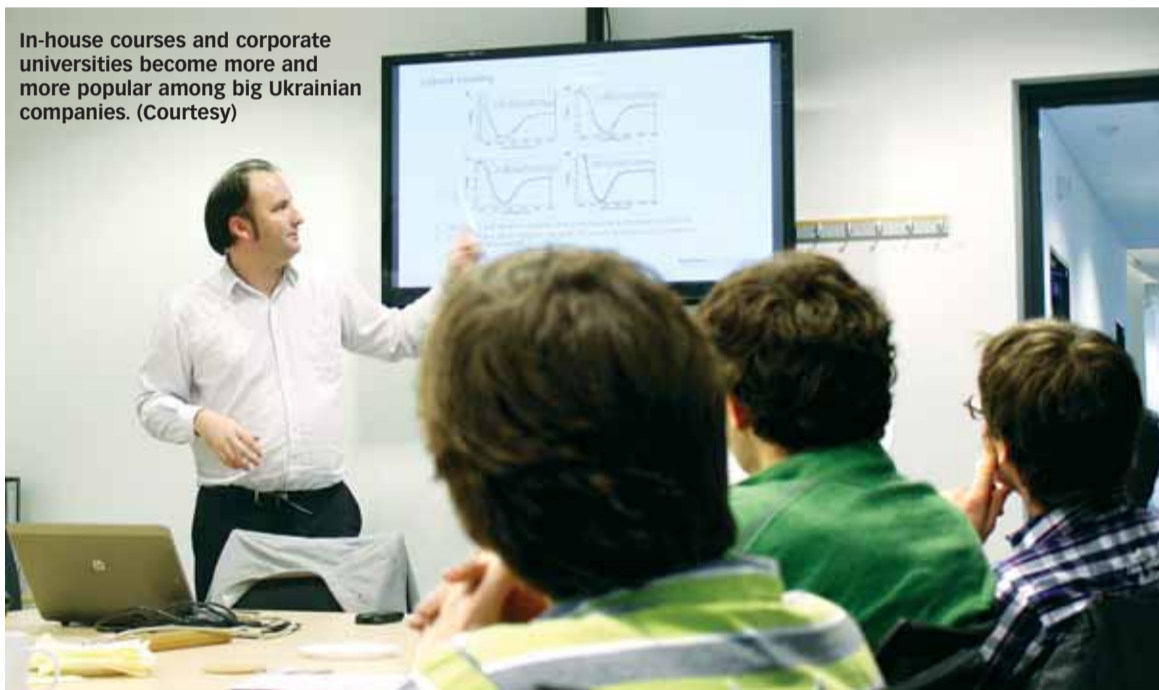
The nation's biggest corporations no longer rely on universities to make sure their hires have an education that fits the job. These days, companies are drifting towards educating their workers by themselves, through a number of programs that range from in-house, short-term courses, and long-term programs, to opening corporate departments at universities.

This in-house education helps to kill several birds with one stone, experts believe. On the one hand, they arm workers with an appropriate skill set, and on the other – help strengthen the corporate culture and inter-departmental connections, education experts say.

Moreover, corporate trainings offer educators a unique peak at workers from every department, helping the company to analyze its strengths and weaknesses, says Nataliya Kopylenko, head of EY (Ernst & Young) Business Academy.

Ukraine's biggest energy holding DTEK is the informal national leader in corporate education. The holding is a part of System Capital Management that belongs to Ukraine's richest man,

In-house courses and corporate universities become more and more popular among big Ukrainian companies. (Courtesy)



Rinat Akhmetov.

Established in 2010, its DTEK Academy offers a number of educational courses for specialists in fields that range from engineers who service energy generating plants to top manag-

ers. For example, workers can develop their skills in special computer classes at Vostokenergo energy generator, during which they can simulate the start or halt of generating facilities, as well as emergency situations.

For its managers, DTEK developed two big courses: Energy of Knowledge and Leader's Energy for middle and top managers, respectively. The company describes its Energy of Knowledge course as a "corporate MBA program,"

developed in conjunction with the Kyiv-Mohyla Business School (KMBS).

Taught by KMBS professors, DTEK executives and foreign experts, the program is made up of six modules, such as business strategies and financial analysis. According to the KMBS press service, the program has 300 graduates and about 200 new participants, who began their studies this summer.

Leader's Energy program for top managers takes 12 months to complete and has 25-30 participants per year. It just enrolled the second group on Aug. 29 who will study in Ukraine and a business school in France.

Corporate MBA is free for employees since DTEK spent Hr 20 million on program development and support, according to Forbes Ukraine.

Mriya Agro Holding, one of Ukraine's largest growers, in contrast, decided not to re-train experienced employees, but to teach university graduates and students. To prepare employees for different departments, Mriya opened courses for agrarians, mechanics and accountants that last four to nine months, depending on the job.

The company's training center in Ternopil in western Ukraine has everything that students may need: well-equipped classrooms, →8

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IT graduates in short supply due to shortcomings of educational system

BY ANASTASIA FORINA
FORINA@KYIVPOST.COM

While Ukraine's information technology outsourcing market is expected to grow fivefold and reach \$5 billion in two years, global IT outsourcing companies operating in Ukraine complain about the shortage of qualified specialists.

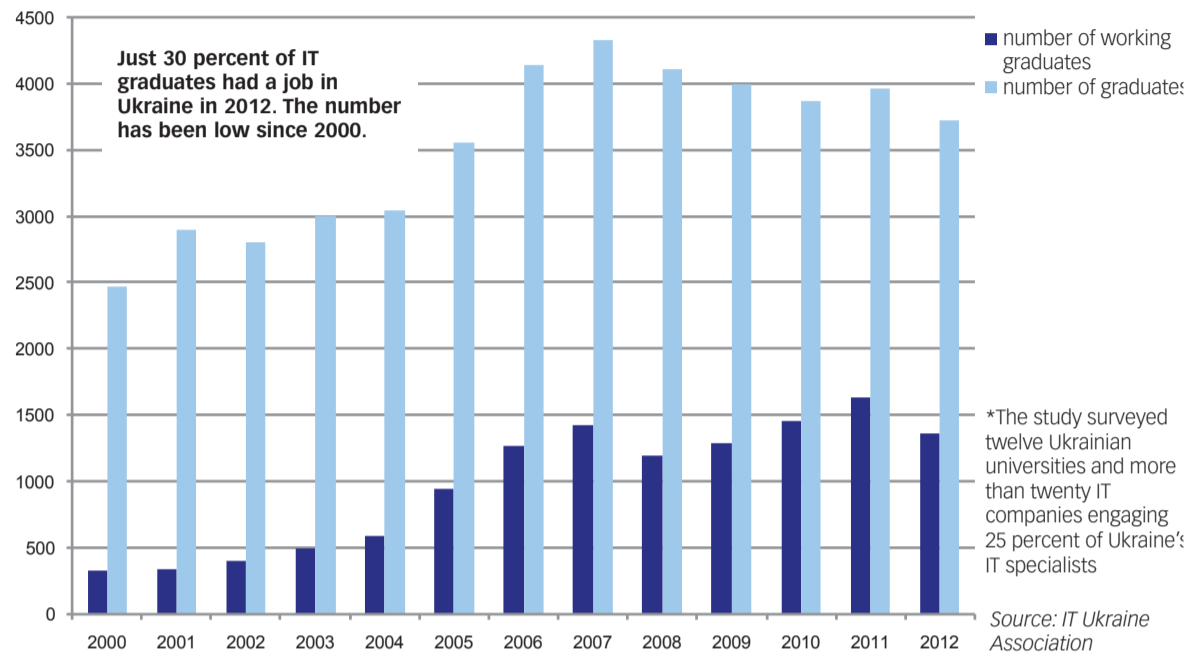
Ukraine is set to become the world's sixth technology outsourcing destination by 2015, according to projections by CIO Insight network. But the forecasted growth may be stunted by a shortage of skilled workers, whose demand will reach 91,000 by that year.

The number of specialists universities churn out per year is about 15,500, which is less than half the estimated demand of 33,700 new work places, according to the State Agency for Science, Innovation and Information of Ukraine.

"Of course, there is a shortage," says Marina Panasyuk, vice president for human resources and central services at Miratech, an international IT outsourcing giant operating in Ukraine. "Right now at Miratech we have about 40 vacancies, which is 6 percent of the company's staff."

What aggravates the situation is that new specialists often lack up-to-date skills, including knowledge of software

Employment of IT graduates in Ukraine (2000-2012)



platforms like Java, .Net and Share Point used for web programming, while their basic skills often fail to match the needs of companies, says Panasyuk.

She blames the quality of Ukraine's educational system for the shortcomings, and her opinion echoes through-

out the industry.

"Ukraine's education system is passive by definition," says Andriy Nikolov, executive director at HR Forum, an association of professionals in human resources management. "It lags behind the demands of businesses, especially in the (IT) sector."

Nikolov continued: "And the system itself is to blame...as it remains tailored to the (demands) of the industrial age (meaning) that the curriculum hasn't changed for years."

Students of Ukraine's technical universities say they often turn to self-education to compensate for the knowledge gap.

"It's unlikely that education gained either here or abroad can provide you with enough (knowledge)," says Nazar Gryshchuk, a fourth-year student of Lviv Polytechnic University. "IT is such a forward-looking sphere, which makes it impossible for education to keep up with it."

Programming skills are not the only type university students lack, however. They are painfully short of communication skills. As a result, they fail in job

interviews.

"Finding common ground with a human resources manager was a problem for me," says Anna Fedai, a fifth-year student of Kyiv Polytechnic University.

Fedai spent more than half a year applying for jobs before she was finally accepted for a six-month internship program with the possibility of future employment. She is close to the end of her internship at the moment.

Nikolov of HR Forum says such cases are common in Ukraine due to loopholes in the curriculum.

"Ukrainian students get substantial hard skills but no soft skills like public speaking and communication," he says. "Soft skills are crucial since any IT project requires teamwork and – moreover – they are important during the job application process."

To compensate, companies try to identify the best students in advance through scholarship programs and contests, and via trainings and conferences for IT students.

"We have been collaborating with Ukrainian universities for more

than 10 years already," says Sergiy Pechenizhskiy, who is in charge of technical education and resourcing at GlobalLogic, another large international IT outsourcing company operating in Ukraine.

"We actively take part in student life, support various events in order to improve the IT education system," he says.

His company runs GlobalLogic Base Camp, three-month worth of supplementary courses for senior university students. The courses are hosted by Kyiv and Lviv Polytechnic Universities, Mykolaiv National University and Kyiv National Economic University.

It's not just the IT school graduates who are in high demand. The actual IT education is also extremely popular, with 12 secondary school graduates competing for each seat at Ukraine's leading technical universities like Kyiv Politechnic and Taras Shevchenko University, says Viktor Valeyev, director of IT Ukraine Association.

But paradoxically, only 30 percent of IT school graduates actually find a job in their field of study, according to the association's surveys. The skills that are taught simply do not match employer requirements. Moreover, the quality of IT education is in decline.

"Our programmers are valued higher than Indian or Chinese (programmers) by international customers mostly due to the high quality of fundamental education," Valeyev says. "However, the condition of the IT education system has reached a critical point as competent IT specialists prefer working in the IT sector rather than teaching students because of higher salaries."

Entry-level IT specialists in Ukraine get an average monthly wage of Hr 2,500 – 5,000, while more experienced specialists get Hr 6,500 – 8,000. By comparison, a university professor receives Hr 2,000-3,000 a month.

"That's why the state has to increase the salaries of professors of high-tech departments which will help to preserve the IT educational system in Ukraine and increase the popularity of this profession," Valeyev adds.

Kyiv Post staff writer Anastasia Forina can be reached at forina@kyivpost.com.



While the shortage of IT specialists is growing in Ukraine and could reach 91,000 in 2015, just 30 percent of IT graduates can find a job in their field, according to a recent survey by IT Ukraine Association. (Courtesy)

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VOX populi

WITH OLGA RUDENKO



Editor's Note: With the arrival of a new academic year on Sept. 1, the Kyiv Post is doing a special extended Vox Populi that asks the question:

In changing Ukraine's education system, what should be the first priority?



Alexey Parnovskiy, head of laboratory in Space Research Institute

"The first priority is to change education in schools. Students there must be taught how to learn. Unfortunately, schools now produce graduates of very questionable quality. I lecture in the university, and all the first year we have to just repeat the whole school program, and even then the result is not so good. That is the seat of the trouble. Second problem is newly implemented limits for the quantity of the classes (in college). When I was studying, we had five or six classes every day, and four classes on Saturday. Now there are three classes per day. It is nearly impossible to profess humanities with such time limits."



Alisa Kolpachikova, university student

"For me, the whole Bologna Process (agreements between European countries designed to ensure comparability in the standards and quality of higher education qualifications) is not a nice thing. The amount of material that one has to study by himself is so much more than what they teach during the classes. And the number of classes you visited during the term impacts your grade more than how you studied. Maybe it's a problem of the Bologna system itself, or maybe it was poorly adapted for our country. The result is that grades don't match the actual achievement."



Tamara Kalinina, pensioner

"Teachers should change. They don't progress at all. They don't read much, don't pay interest to what's new around. And in general, the system is crusty. It is true for schools and for everything else. And kindergartens, too. A smart person won't take such a low-paid job. But smartness is not enough. The main point is that teachers must love children. And they just don't. In the kindergarten that my daughter visited, you know what happened to the kids who didn't want to eat their meals? The teacher made them eat in the toilet! How's that for you? What is it, a concentration camp?"



Ihor Aksyutenko, university student

"Universities are not prepared for the new school year. I'm now entering a master's program, and I keep coming to the university day after day to register, because it's all very messy. Every day somebody turns out to be out of the office, and I end up wasting time getting one document a day. The organizational level is poor. Also, the combination of the Bologna system and our old system works badly. Some professors end up evaluating students according to the Bologna system, while their demands for students are based on the old system. Otherwise, the system is more or less fine."



Tatiana Zhdanova, school teacher

"We crucially need better funding for education. Any other changes must be preceded by that one. If we want our education to be of higher level, on one level with education in Europe, we need new equipment and good funding. I teach computer science in school, and our computers are seven years old, or even older."

Companies find they need to fill gaps in training workforce

→ 6 machinery and free accommodation. Participants also receive scholarships comparable to average salaries in the region, Mriya's spokeswoman Iryna Solyar says. The average monthly salary in Ternopil is about Hr 2,500, according to the State Statistics Service.

During studies, students have the official status of company employees. Upon graduation, the best students can get a full-time job at Mriya. In 2012, all the graduates landed jobs in various departments, Solyar says. The university, which only started operating in 2011, has had 108 graduates and students to date.

This spring, Mriya also launched an Agro Leadership MBA program for its top management in partnership with the Kyiv School of Economics and Lviv Business School.

"The efficiency of business management primarily depends on the team that makes decisions. That's why we invest in personal and professional development of our managers, as well as accumulation of their leadership competencies," Andriy Guta, member of Mriya's supervisory board, was quoted by his company's website as saying.

Big consultants like EY and Deloitte also run their own academies. But a great number of their students actually come from other companies that commission various courses for their employees.

"On average, experts of EY Business Academy hold more than 150 workshops and seminars annually," Kopylenko said.

One of the most popular programs EY is asked to teach is Mini MBA, but leadership and personal development trainings are also in demand. Each course costs upwards of \$3,000 and is taught in groups of 10 or more, Kopylenko said.

Apart from its own MBA programs and short- and middle-term trainings, KMBS also holds a number of corporate sessions. Annually about 50-60 companies ask for trainings, but only

15-20 of them are taught in the corporate format, deputy head of the KMBS Executive Development Programs Tymur Demchuk says. Most of them in the end decide to send their employees for open trainings or even for an MBA at KMBS.

"Another reason why we do not teach all applicants in corporate programs is that KMBS only works with top management, in some cases with middle management and a talent pool. This is because we believe that only by working with such people in companies we can get quick and effective changes," Demchuk says.

Prices for KMBS programs depend on the type and duration of the

program – from Hr 25,000 for one day to Hr 1 million for a one-year corporate MBA. KMBS dean Oleksandr Savruk believes that such MBA programs not only provide knowledge to a top manager, but also form their personality.

"In our experience (with organizing a corporate MBA for DTEK, Parallel gas stations and PrivatBank), such programs, according to reviews by top managers, is a very effective tool for training a leadership team on a new management level in the company," Savruk says.

Kyiv Post staff writer Kateryna Kapliuk can be reached at kapliuk@kyivpost.com.

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Expats to Watch

Daughter of Ukraine returns

BY BRIAN BONNER
BONNER@KYIVPOST.COM

Marta Kolomayets is one of Ukraine's original expatriates, arriving in her parents' homeland as a tourist six years before the collapse of the Soviet Union.

After her first visit in 1985, the Ukrainian-American returned two years later and, despite Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's glasnost era, promptly got kicked out of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic after authorities suspected her of being a CIA agent. Her transgression: shooting videos of the late Vyacheslav Chornovil and other nationalist leaders talking about their desire for Ukrainian independence and their visions for such a nation.

She was blacklisted and not allowed to return until May 1990, when, as a staff writer for the U.S.-based Ukrainian Weekly – a community newspaper that started in 1933 – she returned to cover an airlift of humanitarian aid organized by the now-defunct Children of Chernobyl Relief and Development Fund.

She returned to Ukraine in January 1991 – the same year that Ukraine regained statehood – to open the Kyiv bureau of the Ukrainian Weekly. After leaving the newspaper in 1997, Kolomayets went on to have a distinguished and varied career in Ukraine, including as press secretary for the U.S. Agency for International Development and as resident director of National Democratic Institute, among other notable positions.

After living outside of America for many years, Kolomayets decided three years ago to return and reconnect with her country, family and friends in Chicago. Her parents, who like millions of Ukrainians fled their homeland during World War II, are still alive and in their mid-80s.

But then Kolomayets got offered a job in Kyiv that proved too good to pass up – director of the Fulbright Program in Ukraine. This year, she

About Marta Kolomayets

Birth: 1959.

Citizenship: American.

Family: Husband Danylo Yanevsky

Job: Director of Fulbright Program in Ukraine

How to succeed in Ukraine: "Interpersonal communication and tolerance are very important as well as teaching by example."



came back and is having a great time. Like many Americans who have spent significant amounts of time in Ukraine, she considers U.S. life to be easier but life in Ukraine to be more exciting.

"This is a great job, I must say," Kolomayets said from her 9th floor office near Palats Sportu metro station. "This is what I love to do – network Ukrainians with Americans and it's something that I have had some success with."

The Fulbright Program is an academic and scholar exchange between America and Ukraine. Ukrainians go to the U.S. in three ways: a graduate student program, a faculty development program and a scholar program. Conversely, Americans come to Ukraine for graduate studies or to teach and do research through the scholars program. It is funded by the U.S. State Department and administered by the Institute of International Education. Ukraine's current annual budget is roughly \$2.8 million.

In its 21 years of existence, the program has sent some 800 Ukrainians to America to study while about 500 Americans have come to Ukraine to study and teach.

The program is named after J. William Fulbright (1905-1995), a U.S. senator and staunch internationalist who promoted fellowships and exchanges.

The exchanges that she oversees go to the heart of two of her strongest desires: To see Ukraine make progress as a nation and to see Americans gain a better understanding of Ukraine.

During the Cold War, many Americans did not distinguish Ukraine from the rest of the Soviet Union, a source of unending frustration for the diaspora who fled their homeland during World War II, such as Kolomayets' parents, and who brought with them searing memories of famine and persecution.

Human rights, Ukrainian youth organizations, the Ukrainian language and religion – in Kolomayets' family, an ecumenical blend of Orthodox and Greek-Catholic – were important features in the upbringing of many children of new Ukrainian immigrants in the United States.

The Fulbright Program in Ukraine has many illustrious alumni, including Kyiv Mohyla Academy's honorary president Vyacheslav Briukhovetskyi and Kyiv Mohyla Academy's journalism director Yevhen Fedchenko. Internationally, Fulbright alumni have gone on to be presidents, prime ministers and CEOs.

Kolomayets is hoping for the same in Ukraine.

"Once you do a Fulbright, you're not the same person, you're not a tourist in the United States, you're part of the everyday life of the nation," Kolomayets said. "I'm hoping one day the president of Ukraine will be a Fulbrighter."

As it is, Ukrainians who return after their studies in America are committed to trying to improve the nation, Kolomayets said. Unfortunately, while she sees progress in Ukraine, it's coming slowly.

In many social and political areas – such as HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, breast cancer awareness, tobacco use and gender equity – "Ukraine is a whole generation behind what is going on in the United States, which is my point of reference," Kolomayets said.

She speaks with passion about two issues in particular: women's rights and the corruption of Ukraine's mostly male political elite. The issues are connected, she said.

"I think Ukraine is moving in the right direction. I just think Ukrainian men in power are not open to women becoming decision-makers. That's wrong," she said. "A lot of Ukraine men are into having power to collect riches. Women are less corrupt, more tolerant and more open to trying to reach a peaceful agreement."

Unfortunately, Ukraine "has never had leaders who cared about the good of the people," she said. In this area,

she said, Ukraine's politicians can learn a few things from the moral authority that such Greek-Catholic leaders as Andrey Sheptytsky and Lyubomyr Huzar brought to their roles.

In addition to her professional duties, Kolomayets is very involved in an organization called the Ukrainian Women's Fund, a Kyiv-based group that seeks to develop female leaders. It relies on grants and volunteers. One of the more rewarding aspects of its work is a girls mentoring program that brings less-fortunate teenagers from Ukraine's provinces to Kyiv. She is on the organizations' board of directors and also serves on the boards of Sister Cities International (Kyiv and Chicago are sister cities) and UCARE, a charity that stands for Ukrainian Children's Aid and Relief Effort.

As for the Fulbright program, the application process and peer review can be rigorous and time-consuming, but that shouldn't deter Ukrainians from going to www.fulbright.org.ua and applying, Kolomayets said.

She has been an eyewitness to many of Ukraine's positive changes in the last three decades and expects to see more.

"One of the things that I love about Ukrainians is that they do not stand for injustice," she said. "It may take awhile, but Ukrainians are freedom-loving and will stand up against injustice."

Brian Bonner can be reached at bonner@kyivpost.com.



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Sept. 1

'In Time' at Freud House

The coziness of Freud House, Kyiv's self-styled café art club, makes it a great place to relax, spend time with friends and enjoy a good movie. This week the venue will treat cinema lovers to a screening of "In Time," a 2011 film written and directed by Andrew Niccol, starring Justin Timberlake and Amanda Seyfried. Taking place in the year 2169, where in order to stay young and alive, one has to pay, this science-fiction action keeps audiences on the edge of their seats. It will be shown in English, followed by a post-screening discussion.

'In Time' screening. Sept. 1. 5:30 p.m. Freud House (21 Kostyantynivska St.) Hr 10 and Freud House's hourly Hr 2 fee

First music cycling festival

The pastime of bike riding is slowly making inroads in Ukraine with Kyiv at the helm. This year's "Velo Rock" aims to introduce cycling to the city's youth and show people the attraction of bicycling. Leading Ukrainian as well as foreign bands such as, Tartak, YouCrane, Jack D Bullet and many others will provide music for the day. The audience will get to see modeled performances in skateboarding and witness a downhill competition, a children's race, and take part in cycling trivia and bike quizzes.

First "Velo Rock" music cycling festival. Aug. 31 - Sept. 1. 10 a.m. Holoseyivskiy Park. Free



Aug. 31 - Sept. 1



Aug. 31

Techlabs Cup UA 2013

The biggest cyber festival in Ukraine is going to take place this weekend. Techlabs attracts professional computer game players, enthusiasts and supporters. Leading up to the cup, some 80 teams have been competing for the \$9,000 grand prize and the chance to take part in the grand finale in Moscow. The cyber warfare includes the games of World of Tanks, Shadow Company, Dota 2, Counter-Strike: Global Offensive and StarCraft II. A big screen will show the games for ease of watching and allow audiences to cheer on their favorites.

Techlabs Cup UA 2013. Aug. 31. 10 a.m. Dream Town (1B Obolonskiy Ave.) Free

Time to read at Lviv Book Forum

Time to read is the slogan of Ukraine's 20th Book Forum in Lviv, one of the world's biggest book and reading festivals, to be held on Sept. 10-15. This year's book festival will include 362 modern authors from over two dozen countries doing 250 autograph sessions, as well as 80 publishing houses bringing 100,000 books, 10,000 of which are new editions. Almost all of Lviv's central book stores, art houses, exhibition halls and cafes will host multiple forum events including music and poetry nights, meetings with authors, book presentations and public discussions. Most of the book market, however, will be held at the city's Pototsky Palace.



Sept. 10 - Sept. 15

Top five events of the forum

Jazz concert starring singer Aga Zaryan. Lviv Philharmony (7 Chaikovskogo St.) Sept. 11. 7 p.m.

Women's Discussion and Discussion about Women. Sept. 12. 4 p.m.

Pototskiy Palace, Mirror Hall (15 Kopernyka St.)

Night of Erotic Poetry. Sept. 13. 9 p.m. Les Kurbas Theater (3 Lesya Kurbas St.)

Janusz L. Wisniewski's book presentation. Sept. 14. 6 p.m. Voskresinnya Theater, White Hall (5 Generala Grygorenko St.)

Meeting with Krzysztof Zanussi, film director (Poland). Sept. 14. 6:15 p.m.

Palace of Art, Conference Hall (17 Kopernyka St.)

Visit www.bookforum.ua for detailed schedule.

Festival of presents by Shtuki

Shtuki connects handmade-gift enthusiasts from all over Ukraine, giving them the opportunity to share their talents with others. This festival is an occasion to discover new

outstanding handmade treasures: jewelry, home decor, accessories, toys and clothing. Designers will come from every corner of Ukraine and will bring their individuality and uniqueness with them. The Shtuki festival is a place to shop for exclusive presents and enjoy a creative atmosphere. A trivia contest will also accompany



Aug. 31



the fest with chances to win enjoyable prizes. **Shtuki Present Festival. Aug. 31. 12 p.m. - 8 p.m. NSC Olimpiyskiy (55 Vasilkivska St.) Hr 10**

Aug. 30 - Sept. 1



Kyiv Family Fest

Spend the last days of summer being active: join Kyiv Family Festival and find out more about the endless possibilities of extracurricular activities for your children, friends, even for yourself. Play an exciting game of American football, learn how to make pottery, stuffed animals and more! Enjoy master class performances by aikido schools, dance communities and street workout activists. Discover the possibilities of a healthy and exciting lifestyle.

Kyiv Family Festival. Aug. 30 - Sept. 1. 12 p.m. - 8 p.m. Obolonska Naberezhna St. Free

Dima Borisov talks cooking, Kyiv dining



Ukrainian restaurateur Dima Borisov serves up a salad at newly opened Kanapa restaurant, which he opened in partnership with Ukrainian folk-rock star Oleh Skrypka. (Anastasia Vlasova)

BY DARYNA SHEVCHENKO
SHEVCHENKO@KYIVPOST.COM

A well-dressed, smiling and attractive man walks between the tables of his newly opened Kanapa restaurant in Kyiv, peering attentively at diners. Dmytro Borisov, more often referred to as Dima, tries to guess whether they are happy with their meals.

The 33-year old restaurateur owns seven "homes," as he calls his venues in Kyiv. "You are my guests here and my restaurants are my homes. I feed and entertain you and then you pay if you want," he says, smiling.

People do pay him. Borisov says that his establishments are "one of the most successful restaurant businesses in Ukraine," with all but his latest venture being profitable. The average bill at Borisov's eateries is €25.

All of his food and drink venues offer different kinds of cuisine. Kanapa serves traditional Ukrainian fare, while Ohta Na Ovets has pan-Asian food dishes, for example. His eatery group also includes Pivbar Beer&Beef, GastroRock, Barsuk, Foodtourist and even a children's restaurant called Baby Rock. Lately, Borisov made InvestGazeta's list of best restaurateurs of Ukraine, and won the most innovative restaurant business owner category.

It all started in 2009 when Barsuk opened its doors, a high-end beer and food joint modeled after a classic New York gastro bar. It has a wide selection of tasty food, beer and wine, and is the most stable earner in terms of profitability, the owner says.

"With €50,000 invested, broke even in three months without any direct advertising. This is quick for Ukraine,"

Borisov says.

Not all of his restaurants were so quick to turn a buck, though. Kanapa, known for "high-end Ukrainian national cuisine" that Borisov opened in partnership with Ukrainian folk-rock star Oleh Skrypka in June, cost over €600,000. After three months it hasn't broke even, but the owner is sure that there's nothing to worry about.

"When I open a place I don't expect something or dream about something. I know exactly how many visitors a day and in a year I'll have," he says.

Borisov also has his own farm, which he started in the early 2000s as a small business venture, but now uses mostly for supplying his restaurants with fresh ingredients. It provides his business with 90-97 percent of their supplies, depending on the season. According to Borisov, the farm in Kyiv Oblast "has

500 hectares of organic farming, 40 marble beef cattle...my own pork."

Before his foray into the restaurant business four years ago, Borisov owned a branding and marketing agency called Brainstorm. After selling it in 2006 he spent several years working in real estate. But Borisov says that his passion for cooking was with him all along, originating from the summers he spent with his grandmother as a child.

"It was normal to wake up to the scent of food cooking in the morning and run into the yard to check on our garden. We used to plant everything from roots to berries," he recalls.

At the age of 10, Borisov says he was already able to cook many dishes, including dumplings in broth, his favorite then. "Only during my student years I found out that people eat dry dumplings for some reason," → 13

World Traveler



WITH VLAD LAVROV
LAVROV@KYIVPOST.COM

Lithuanian Curonian Spit: The seaside, dunes and witches

The Curonian Spit is a nearly 100-kilometer stretch of white sand, dunes and pine tree forests on the Baltic Sea coast on one side and the Curonian Lagoon on the other. Though this area is shared almost equally between Russia and Lithuania, there is a striking difference between the two parts.

In Russia, the Curonian Spit is more or less a conventional resort destination for residents of Kaliningrad, boasting all the customary (and not necessarily welcome) attributes of such a place: crowded beaches, loud discos and heavy road traffic.

In Lithuania, the mystic and desolate part couldn't be more different.

Despite the sunny weather and comfortably warm water of the Baltic Sea, the human presence on these white sandy beaches is insignificant. It's all the more surprising since some of the local beaches boast the Blue Flag, a prestigious international award given to beaches with quality and safe water.

My presumption that most of the tourists were hanging out at numerous local seafood restaurants also proved erroneous. In Juodkrante, where I stayed with friends, getting a table by the seaside at the nicest local restaurant was easy and didn't require any reservations. In fact, the place was often half full.

A local hotel manager also proved to be pleasantly nonchalant about money issues. He kept saying he was too busy with other things, so I ended up almost pressuring him to charge my card for the room. This, I have to admit, was a refreshing change compared to a recent holiday in Crimea, where the local hotel demanded that the full amount be paid in cash literally at the doorstep as I walked in.

It was probably at that point that I had given up searching for the answer of why this area, on par with any world class resort destination, was so strikingly empty. I simply decided to enjoy the place as it was. Perhaps, one of the reasons why my curiosity vanished was the language barrier. Personnel at restaurants and hotels, not to mention the local residents, had trouble communicating in Russian or English. My own Lithuanian, in turn, is non-existent.

The Curonian Spit is first and foremost known by its gorgeous sand dunes that earned Lithuania and Russia places on the UNESCO World Heritage List. In fact, some of the dunes that currently are part of the local Naglai Nature Reserve were so powerful and treach- → 13

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A bewitching part of Lithuanian coast retains its primeval charm



Closed to visitors except for a narrow observation trail, the Naglai Nature Reserve is home to some of the grandest sand dunes on the Curonian Spit. (Oleksii Shevchenko)

→ **12** erous that villagers in the 17th century living in their vicinity were forced relocate, leaving their houses to be buried in sand.

Yet, it is the mystic aspect of the area that astounds the most, as it turned out that our hotel was just meters away from the place called Raganu Kalnas, or the Witches Hill, an outdoor park, or rather a land plot on the forest display-

ing around 80 wooden sculptures.

The sculptures are based on Lithuanian folklore and pagan beliefs that mainly depict their scariest characters. In general, the talent that Lithuanians display for artistically depicting all sorts of witches and demons – a conclusion derived from an earlier visit to the Devils' Museum in Vilnius – makes the famous Dia de

los Muertos festival in Mexico look like Disneyland. When Lithuanians depict any kind of witch or demon, they play for keeps. Some of the images I saw at Raganu Kalnas gave me, a long-time fan of horror movies, real shivers.

The most amazing thing about the park is that it was founded back in the late 1970s, when Lithuania was still under Soviet rule, and, in theory, all

forms of artistic (and not only) expression had to be approved by Communist ideologists. It still puzzles me how some of the more naturalistic depictions of demons and possessed people passed their scrutiny.

Now, nearly 40 years later, the Witches Hill seems to live a life of its own. Even though it is one of the few places on the Curonian Spit (the other one is the Naglai Reserve) where I actually saw tourist groups coming in by buses, the place still feels dark and mysterious. Perhaps, this is due to the fact that even though it's officially classified as an outdoor park, Raganu Kalnas actually occupies a spot in a wild pine tree forest on a giant sand dune.

Yet, when one early morning I passed through the Hill of Witches on my way to the seaside, and stumbled upon an elderly woman with a broom, I thought there might be a good reason why this place has such a unique aura – and such a fitting name.

Kyiv Post staff writer Vlad Lavrov can be reached at lavrov@kyivpost.com.



Lucifer, one of the centerpiece sculptures at Raganu Kalnas. (Oleksii Shevchenko)

How to get to the Curonian Spit:

A roundtrip flight from Kyiv to Palanga, the nearest airport to the Curonian Spit, is available from airBaltic starting at \$314 (change of plane in Riga is required). Afterwards, take a bus to Klaipeda. A 30 minute ride would cost around \$2 one way.

To reach the Curonian Spit from Klaipeda, you need to take a ferry. A roundtrip for one person costs around \$1, while those travelling by car are to pay \$15. Additionally, once reaching the Spit car travelers are required to pay entrance fee of \$8.

Where to stay:

Juodkrante, a village of 720 residents, is the best choice for those seeking a vacation in near solitude. A double room at Egliu Slenis, a comfortable hotel adjacent to the Witch Hill costs approximately \$75 a night. Visit <http://egliuslenis.lt/> for more information.

Alternately, those seeking to mingle with fellow tourists are advised to stay in Nida, the biggest settlement on the Curonian Spit (approximately, 1,550 residents). Check visitneringa.com for accommodation information.

Where to eat:

Fishermen's Inn Zuvele in Juodkrante (jovila.lt) overlooking the picturesque Curonian Lagoon is probably the best place in the area to eat local seafood, such as zander, or pike. A two-course meal with drinks for two would cost around \$40.

Once visiting the Spit, trying smoked eel, a top local delicacy is a must. It is widely available at local fisheries at \$46 apiece. Though rumor has it that those are actually artificially grown eels imported from Poland, ignoring this gossip would probably be the wisest choice.

Ukrainian restaurateur hopes for global expansion

→ **12** he says, recalling his grandma's recipe of the broth.

However, recipes are not enough. Borisov insists that at some point one has to just keep in mind the main principles of cooking and then get as creative as possible.

"Gastronomy is 100 percent art," he says. "All these recipes that say you should take 134 grams of something and fry it at 165 degrees for 22 minutes is garbage."

"When I create something new now it is mostly for a new menu of one of my restaurants to get that 'wow' effect," Borisov says.

He says he divides his time equally at each of his restaurants.

"I have 'mega-service days' during which I make all my top managers work in the dining room including myself. We serve food, pour beer and bring it to the guests. I also cook," he says.

That is what separates Borisov's group of restaurants from others. It might just be his secret ingredient to success.

Banush recipe from Dima Borisov

"Each national cuisine has a different name for this dish. For our Italian readers it would be polenta, for Moldovan readers it would be mamalyga and finally in Ukraine we call it banush."

You will need:

- One glass of finely ground corn grits
- One glass of the richest 30 percent cream
- A slice of butter
- One glass of milk

Take a glass of milk and warm it up, but do not boil. Pour a glass of corn grits into the warm milk and stir slowly until the milk is absorbed and then add a glass of cream. Stir it until the cream is absorbed and the grits start turning into a mass of single consistency.

Stirring it slowly to a boil and keep it at boiling temperature until it becomes puree-like. Before serving, add some butter and of course Carpathian goat cheese or Chevre French goat cheese. If you can't afford Chevre, there is an easy way to avoid it – make some pork crackling from classic Ukrainian salo or Spanish jamon, if you are more sophisticated, and enjoy the meal."



"Isn't it funny that the owner talking to guests in my restaurants and bars is kind of our special thing?" he laughs. In every small town in Europe you go to café because you know the

cook and the owner Akhmed, whose wife is a cashier, whose lover is a waitress and whose son is a bartender there. That's just normal."

Borisov believes that running a profitable restaurant business in Ukraine is not challenging because the market is nearly hollow. His main complaint is the lack of gastronomic culture among Ukrainians.

"This refers both for business owners and the customers," he says. "On the one hand we almost don't have restaurants, rather restaurant projects that invested all the money into decoration and barely remembered about food. On the other hand we have clients whose expectations for restaurants are much higher than normal, so that even good places can get subjectively negative feedbacks like 'this restaurant sucks because this borshch doesn't taste like my grandma's borshch'," Borisov explains.

"My dream is to represent Ukraine as a new country on the big gastronomic map of the world. Now our country is a blank spot in the gastronomic sense," he says.

After Ukraine, he hopes to open a string of restaurants in China and Europe.

Kyiv Post staff writer Daryna Shevchenko can be reached at shevchenko@kyivpost.com.

How it works for Dima Borisov

1. Start a restaurant-home, not a restaurant project.

"How are restaurants usually started in Ukraine? A young lady asks her lover or husband to give her money to start a restaurant. He does and she starts one.

Of course she puts in all her creative ideas: golden chandeliers, silk curtains and silver cutlery and then two weeks before the opening (she realizes) that this is a restaurant and there should be some food. Such projects are expensive and it is hard to get your money back, because what you end up selling is food."

2. Make the best of social networks, no direct advertising.

"I am a friendly and open-minded person and my first clients were my friends. Now I have 13,000 friends on Facebook including followers and it works. Moreover, I believe that Ukrainian restaurants simply can't afford direct advertising."

3. Use fresh, high quality products.

"This is a standard. Use local and seasonal products located around 250 kilometers from you. The menu in my restaurants change five or six times a year."

4. Be out there, talk to your guests and make your restaurant your home.

"The personality of a cook and the owner who actively communicates with their customers is considered to be a marketing thing in our country, while it is just normal everywhere in Europe."

5. Bring up professionals in-house; take care of your staff.

"I have to raise both cooks and waiters myself. These professions are not prestigious in Ukraine. Waiters just come during their university breaks, while cooks go to culinary school just because they didn't enter the university in any other major."

6. Love what you do and do not search for a success secret.

"I just do my job. I am an expert in food, drinks, guests and I love what I do. That's about it."

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Ukrainian start-up firm aims to boost images taken by smartphone cameras

BY OLENA GONCHAROVA
GONCHAROVA@KYIVPOST.COM

Capturing precious moments with smartphone cameras can be frustrating – especially in poor light. But a bunch of clever Ukrainians have devised a solution for those worried about the quality of their Instagram images.

A Ukrainian startup has literally shed light on shooting pictures with iPhones or iPads. Called *iblazr*, the first fully synchronized camera flash for iOS and Android devices makes sure that almost no kind of shot is wasted, regardless of conditions.

The project has raised more than \$133,687 in less than a month on Kickstarter, a U.S.-based crowdfunding platform. The amount is enormous by Ukrainian standards as the team initially sought to raise \$58,000 for a market launch and future software updates. The funding period will close on Sept. 3.

About 2,305 donors supported the Ukrainian invention. Oleh Malenkov,

chief operating officer of the project said he was almost certain the project would succeed.

"We had long-term preparations before launching the project on Kickstarter. So we expected customers

image of made-in-Ukraine products is not so good among foreign customers and investors.

"At first we were uncertain whether to set Kyiv and Ukraine as the location of the project on our Kickstarter page. In the end, we decided not to

hide (as we were free to set any city we want) and (instead) succeed. But I presume we would have more backers if we mentioned another city. But we are happy with the result," Malenkov said.

The revolutionary camera flash is almost ready to hit the global market. Pre-orders are already available

on Kickstarter and shipments will begin in December 2013. Starting in September orders will be taken at www.iblazr.com.

Success at Kickstarter first requires pre-production units, according to the platform's rules, something all startups must adhere to, explains Malenkov.

"Also, startups should communicate with their audience in social networks and try to reach top media. But the most important (thing) is to understand whether there's a need for your project on the market," Malenkov said.

And the team seems to have hit the bullseye.

The flash is easy to use. The *iblazr* connects to the audio jack of the device which allows it to be used on the front and back of a camera. Its developers say their flash will work perfectly with every device since it includes 4 light-emitting diode lamps that provide an uncompromising amount of light for such a small size (32 x 30.5 x 9.4 millimeters).

It can produce more than 1,000 flashes and can be recharged with a flexible USB charger. The device can also be used as a backlight for the keyboard or as a reading light. The team promised to offer free iOS and Android



The first fully synchronized *iblazr* camera flash will be available for orders in September. (Courtesy)

to like our idea. Photo shooting with smartphones has become much more popular in recent years. So we also tried to find our niche here," Malenkov told the Kyiv Post.

Nevertheless, the team worried about the future of the project as the



A young woman poses for a self-portrait using the *iblazr* flash. (Courtesy)

applications suitable for the iPhone 4, 4S and iPhone 5, iPod touch, iPads and Android devices for photo processing. Malenkov hopes to the device will become popular in both foreign and local markets.

"We already have some offers from Foxtrot, Eldorado and other electronics stores who sell portable devices. It's a question of time of when we'll have all the agreements," he said.

The device cannot substitute professional lighting, but it may be a great option for all shutterbugs. But then again, nobody expects Instagram pictures to be professional.

iblazr is available in black and white colors for \$40 and a premium aluminum version has a price tag of \$60.

Kyiv Post staff writer Olena Goncharova can be reached at goncharova@kyivpost.com.

Most successful Ukrainian projects on Kickstarter

iblazr

The first synchronized camera flash for iPhone, iPad and Android.
Financing: \$133,687
www.iblazr.com

Financing: \$8,981
www.sammy-icon.com

The International Conductors' Festival – 2013

The project aimed to raise funds for a two- or four-week music festival in Kyiv, showcasing a select number of emerging orchestra conductors.
Financing: \$3,790
www.conductorsfestival.org

EternalCase – metal case for flash drive & other small items

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Financing: \$24,931
www.eternalcase.com

MUMA - a claymation cartoon for children

The project sought funding to purchase a license for stop-motion software to produce a claymation cartoon designed by Ukrainian artists.
Financing: \$1,073
www.samklepav.com

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Wilson: Ukraine needs to address Tatar grievances

→ 4 cent of local administration officials are Crimean Tatars, excluding the 'Nationalities Ministry' (Reskomnats).

The Crimean Tatar leadership has supported political compromises in the past. A one-off quota system in 1994-8 gave them 14 seats in the Crimean Assembly. A 'Council of Representatives of the Crimean Tatar People Attached to the President of Ukraine' was set up by Kuchma in 1999 and met four times, but only once when Viktor Yushchenko was President, in 2005-2009.

Overall, after almost 25 years back in Crimea, progress in integrating the Crimean Tatars and other FDPs has been frankly slow. Politically, this lack of progress might have been expected to produce more of a backlash and the growth of a more radical fringe. In fact, it is the relative unity of the Crimean Tatar movement that stands out. This should be borne in mind, as the administration of President Viktor Yanukovich has been trying to cre-

ate the opposite impression, that the Crimean Tatar community is increasingly divided and the Qurultay is only one voice among many. Yanukovich's people have their own motives – a dislike of all independent political activity, the scramble for votes before 2015, the need to secure the power of outsiders from Donetsk in Crimea (where the group from Yanukovich's hometown of Yenakiyev in Donetsk Oblast are called the 'Makedontsy'; the Macedonians ruling the Greeks).

The composition of the 'Council of Representatives of the Crimean Tatar People' was changed unilaterally in 2010 (its membership was cut from 33 to 19, only eight of whom were now members of the Mejlis); leading to a boycott by the Mejlis and the parachuting in of a Yanukovich loyalist, Lentun Bezazyev, to take it over this spring. The authorities have promoted rival and often more radical groups: Milli Firka, Sebat, and the Crimean

Tatar Popular Front. Supporters of the Qurultay/Mejlis have been removed from key positions in local government, including the Crimean assembly's commission for ethnic relations and the Republican Committee on Inter-Ethnic Relations, which oversees the FDP budget.

This risks being a self-fulfilling strategy in the long-run, creating an even more divided and discordant politics on the peninsula. Ukraine's year of chairing the OSCE is running out. Little progress has been made and there has been regression in areas. May 2014 will be the 70th anniversary of the Deportation in 1944, providing another chance to address the issue if Kyiv is serious about showing some results from its leadership of one form of 'Europe' (the OSCE), as it hopes to build closer relations with another (the EU) after November.

Andrew Wilson is a senior policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations.

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Pact is seeking for qualified candidates to fill in the position of **Capacity Development Officer** under USAID RESPOND Project. The Project goal is to assist Government of Ukraine and civil society to reduce the level of HIV transmission among key populations through sustainable country-led programs. Expected start date is **October 01, 2013**.

Position Summary: The successful candidate will be responsible for coordination of related activities targeted at strengthening the capacity of Ukrainian institutions & organizations to deliver quality HIV/ AIDS services; will contribute to program monitoring, evaluating, and reporting related to capacity building.

Qualifications:

- University degree in health or social sciences, or a related degree.
- At least 3 years of experience in building the capacity of community level organizations through measurable competency based approaches.
- Knowledge and understanding of Ukrainian HIV sector.
- Strong planning, community mobilization and inter-cultural communication skills.
- Demonstrated flexibility, adaptability and the ability to perform and collaborate under challenging conditions.
- Experience with USAID or other donor funded project in the area of capacity development.
- Fluent oral and written English, Ukrainian and Russian.

To apply: Please send your CV and Cover Letter to jobs_respond@pact.org.ua not later than September 15, 2013. Only short-listed candidates will be contacted.

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