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March 29, 2019

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**2 days until
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Polls are open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on March 31. Here's what we will know within 24 hours:

- Results of exit polls
- Results of watchdog Opora's parallel vote count
- Preliminary Central Election Commission results

Kyiv Post Investigates

Alexander Babakov, one of Vladimir Putin's closest allies, appears to own a chain of luxury hotels across Ukraine, not to mention a big portion of the country's electricity supply networks.

See story on page 6

Who's benefiting from a 2016 decision to allow residential construction on Kyiv's industrial Rybalsky Island? The president, political and business insiders, and a former Kyiv city official.

See story on page 8



A man holds his ballot paper as he leaves a booth at a polling station in the Ukrainian local elections in Kyiv on Oct. 25, 2015. The nation's 35 million registered voters will go to the polls on March 31 to elect a president. If none of the 39 candidates wins a majority, an April 21 runoff election will take place between the top two candidates. (Pavlo Podufalov)

Inside:

Business 14-18 | National 2, 3, 5-11, 24
Lifestyle 12, 13, 19-21 | Opinion 4
Employment/Real Estate/Classifieds 23

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CURRENCY WATCH

Hr 27.25 to \$1
March 28 market rate



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Correction: In an earlier published article by the Kyiv Post "What can you buy for \$50,000, for \$500,000 in Kyiv?" the newspaper incorrectly wrote about Lora Kim's position. Kim is from All Star Kiev Realty real estate agency, and not from Jones East 8. The article was published in Kyiv Post's Real Estate supplement.

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Election watchdog Opora's opinion will be influential

BY OKSANA GRYTSENKO

GRYTSENKO@KYIVPOST.COM

The March 31 presidential election will be exceptional in many ways.

Not only is there a record number of candidates and registered observers, but there are tensions among law enforcement bodies, polarization of the media, and threats of violence at polling stations.

According to Olga Aivazovska, the founder and head of the Opora civil network, the country's most reputable election watchdog, this election is also one of the most dishonest ones.

Aivazovska says that a lot of money is being spent on bribing voters and buying fake candidates. Moreover, state budget money is also being spent to buy the support of the poor through a program of cash subsidies launched just a month before the first round of the election on March 31.

On the bright side, there will be thousands of observers, including 3,000 from Opora, and 130,000 police officers deployed to detect violations at polling stations. And the current disagreements among the police, SBU state security service and Prosecutor General's Office can be, in fact, helpful in preventing fraud.

"Their mutual distrust prevents a massive deployment of networks for vote-buying," Aivazovska told the Kyiv Post in an interview on March 13. "We used to have times when neither police nor prosecutors reacted to any reports of violations."

Vote-buying

Aivazovska, who has observed elections in Ukraine since 2006 when Opora started its work, was sitting next to a big board headlined "Vote-buying," which described the ways of bribing voters used in this campaign — and the criminal penalties for it.

Although two of the top presidential candidates — former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko and President Petro Poroshenko — started accusing each other of attempts to buy voters back in February, Aivazovska said the payment of cash for votes always takes place in the last weeks or even days before Election Day.

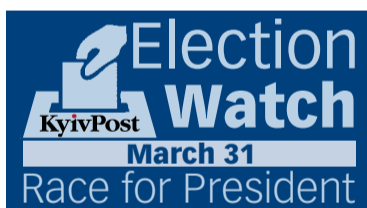
"We are now approaching to the time when there is a high risk that money will be used to stimulate voters to come and vote for particular candidates," she said.

The SBU state security service and the Prosecutor General's Office



Olga Aivazovska, head of Opora election watchdog, shows a whiteboard describing schemes of vote buying used during this election campaign, in her office in Kyiv on March 13, 2019. (Oleg Petrusiuk)

have already said they have evidence Tymoshenko has attempted to buy votes, with allegedly 680,000 people involved in the scheme. However, Interior Minister Arsen Avakov shot back with claims the same is being done by Poroshenko's team, whom he claimed planned to bribe from 700,000 to 6 million voters.



Opora observers have also reported numerous cases of the collection personal data of people targeted for vote buying. But they have no proven cases of vote buying, and nobody has been charged for this yet, she added. "But I cannot claim that no one has paid any money."

The problem is that even if a police officer spots people paying cash to voters, court permission must be given to start an investigation. "All the participants of the scheme are free to leave until that happens," she said.

While vote-buying has been used for years at local elections, the current presidential election campaign is the first at which candidates have tried to use it at the national level, she said.

Aivazovska said that when the candidates' teams collect personal data about voters, they are also doing it in preparation for the parliamentary elections in October. Moreover, with the current situation when there are three frontrunners with about the same support, there is no need to pay millions of people for votes.

"They don't have to buy 50 percent of the votes. The candidates who have resources for that need to buy only about 2 percent of them," she said.

Dead criminal norms

A popular scheme to make sure a person votes the way they were paid to is called "the carousel." It has been used in Ukraine for more than a decade. A person takes an already filled-in ballot to the polling station, gets a fresh, unused ballot there, puts the filled-in ballot in the ballot box, and brings the unused ballot paper back to the organizers. The voter is paid, the unused ballot paper is filled in, and given to the next voter.

The popularity of smartphones has made the process even easier — now paid voters just take a photo of their filled-in ballot and send it by messenger to prove they voted the way they were paid to, Aivazovska said.

While the law bans photographing of the ballots or showing them to anybody, there are no ways to punish people for doing that. "If a person takes a photo of a ballot at a polling station and everybody sees a flash, police officers still have no right to stop this person, they may only reprimand them for it," Aivazovska said. "So the ban on taking photos is a useless rule."

The current legislation has so many loopholes that organizers of vote-buying schemes have little to fear. "We have a criminal responsibility of 2–5 years in prison for vote-buying, but it's impossible to get to the end clients and to punish the organizers of the schemes. So only the lowest participants of the scheme could go in prison," Aivazovska said.

A new draft law submitted by the government written with the help of Opora was supposed to solve this problem, but it has been blocked in parliament by the Bloc of Petro Poroshenko faction.

"The lawmakers say they fear the police may use this law against politicians, that it will allow them to raid party offices," Aivazovska said.

Budget spending

In March, the national government started distributing state subsidies worth about Hr 1,500 per person to some 4 million households as compensation for increased utility prices. In late February, the government also announced additional bonuses for 10 million pensioners as compensation for smaller pension payments in 2015–2016. Some 1.8 million people will receive Hr 2,410 each in two equal portions in March and April, which the government says is an initiative of Poroshenko.

Aivazovska called this "unacceptable" according to international norms. "This is no less fraud than vote buying in terms of violation of the principle of competitiveness of the elections," she said. She added that the government subsidies should be banned for the six months ahead of the elections in all cases except for natural disasters. And the president shouldn't be in charge of government subsidies if it's not a part of his legal responsibilities.

"The president has no relation to pensions, subsidies or utility payments," she said.

Violence

Meanwhile, Poroshenko's rallies have been attacked by activists of the National Corp and National Squads far-right groups in several cities.

The nationalists started protests after Nashi Groshi journalist investigation program revealed massive embezzlement in the defense sector connected to Poroshenko's close ally Oleh Hladkovskiy and his son Ihor Hladkovskiy. During a Poroshenko rally in Chernihiv, a city with a population of 285,000, some 130 kilometers north of Kyiv, Poroshenko had to walk beside a crowd of nationalists who were shouting "Shame!" at him, and calling for him to be

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2 days before first-round election, intrigue starts over April 21 runoff

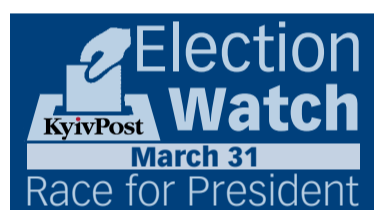
Editor's Note: Election Watch is a regular update on the state of the presidential race in Ukraine. The country will elect its next president on March 31, 2019, with a possible runoff on April 21. The Election Watch project is supported by the National Endowment for Democracy. The donor doesn't influence the content. Go to kyivpost.com for more election coverage.

BY OLGA RUDENKO
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It's showtime. On March 31, Ukrainians will vote for the next president. President Petro Poroshenko will try to stay in his chair for five more years while 38 other candidates will try to stop him – but only two of them, Yulia Tymoshenko and Volodymyr Zelenskiy, have realistic chances. Polls show that none of the candidates win a majority of the votes – and so a runoff election between the top-two candidates awaits the nation on April 21.



Billboards carrying campaign ads of President Petro Poroshenko and ex-Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko are seen on March 26 in Kramatorsk in Donetsk Oblast. (Oleg Petراسиuk)



Final polls

The last polls came out on March 28. In accordance with the Ukrainian law, election surveys can't be published in the last two days before the vote.

Two days before the election, political satirist and actor Volodymyr Zelenskiy, who is running his first campaign for a public office, is leading in all polls. Zelenskiy's lead has remained uncontested since late January.

While Zelenskiy's support also hasn't grown in the past several weeks, remaining within 22–28 percent in most polls, he still keeps a 10-point lead over his closest recipients.

Two polls, by Rating Group and Democratic Initiatives Foundation, showed 26.6 and 27.6 percent of the decided voters wanted to support Zelenskiy.

In the Rating Group's poll, Poroshenko and Tymoshenko shared the second spot, both having 17 percent of support. The poll by the Democratic Initiatives showed Poroshenko (18.2 percent) ahead of Tymoshenko (12.8 percent).

At the same time, 15 percent of all voters remain undecided days before the election, according to Rating Group.

Runoff

Earlier polls predicted that among the three leaders, Zelenskiy had the highest chance of winning in the runoff. Tymoshenko would win against Poroshenko but lose to Zelenskiy, while Poroshenko would lose to either of them.

Numbers from one of the latest polls provide a fuller picture.

Rating Group asked voters who their second choice would be – or, in other words, who are they likely to

support in the runoff, if their candidate doesn't make it there.

The results were beneficial for Zelenskiy: He would get 19 percent of Tymoshenko's voters, and from 14 to 18 percent of those who want to vote for Anatoliy Grytsenko, Yuriy Boyko, Oleksandr Vilkul, Oleh Lyashko, and Ihor Smeshko.

Tymoshenko, in her turn, is the second choice for 12 percent of Zelenskiy's voters, and 17 percent of Lyashko's. All three have led populist campaigns.

Poroshenko is less popular as the second choice: he is favored by the voters of the nationalist Ruslan Koshulynskiy, who polls at 2 percent, and the democratic candidate Grytsenko, who polls at 9 percent.

How many will vote?

The turnout will decide a lot in this election: Zelenskiy's success depends on whether the less active young voters will show up to the election. According to the polls, up to half of 18–29-year-olds back him.

In the last polls by the Rating Group and the Democratic Initiatives, 87 percent and 85 percent of respondents said they were likely to vote in the election.

Back in 2014, polls predicted a turnout of 82 percent at the May presidential election. The real turnout was 60 percent.

Before that, the turnout for the first round of presidential elections has varied between 67 and 75 percent, with one exception of the first election in 1991, where 84 percent voted.

What changed since 2014 is that there is now 1.5 million of internally displaced people who fled the parts of eastern Ukraine that have been occupied by Russia-backed militants. To participate in the election, they needed to register to vote at their new addresses.

But according to the Central Election Commission, only 315,000 Ukrainians applied to change their

voting address. Less than 100,000 of them were from the eastern Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts.

One more factor might have some influence on the turnout: The

Election Day is when Ukraine goes on summer time. Those who won't pay attention and will try to vote in the last hour, will fail.

When will we know

The polling stations will be open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on March 31. About then, pollsters will be set to announce the preliminary results of the national exit poll. At 11 p.m. on Election Day, the final results of the national exit poll will be in.

During the evening after the election, campaigns will release alternative exit polls. The 1+1 TV channel, a major station that has gone to great length to support Zelenskiy, will have its own exit poll.

The turnout will be announced within two hours of the 8 p.m. cutoff time.

The first results will start arriving in the early hours of April 1.

Opora election watchdog will announce the results of its parallel vote tabulation on April 1, while the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Election Observation Mission will hold a press event the same morning.

In 2014, 20 percent of ballots were processed by 6 a.m. of the day after the election and 40 percent by 8 a.m. Although it took three days to complete the count, the majority of the ballots were processed by the end of the first day after the election. The runoff will take place on April 21, three weeks after the first round.

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Editorials

Free & fair election...

Not only the winner of the Ukrainian presidential election matters. The conduct of the contest is inextricably tied to the public's acceptance of the result as a true expression of the free will of Ukraine's 30 million voters.

Ukrainians are acutely sensitive to election-rigging and voter fraud. The first revolution of the 21st century was fought over Viktor Yanukovich's attempt to falsify vote totals in the 2004 election, triggering the Orange Revolution and a new vote in which Viktor Yushchenko ultimately prevailed.

Conducting a free and fair vote is a tricky business, even in advanced democracies such as the United States, especially in close contests. Dishonesty and flaws in the process become especially magnified in close contests, such as the 2000 presidential election that saw George W. Bush prevail over Al Gore after disputes went to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Already, the conduct of Ukraine's election campaign is troubling: the lack of true public debate among candidates, the effective disenfranchisement of many voters living abroad or out of their home city by overly bureaucratic procedures, the lack of transparency in the financing of campaign as well as the lack of penalties for violations.

But now attention turns to Election Day itself as well as the honesty and transparency of the vote counting and tabulation. There are opportunities for cheating all along the way amid a campaign that has focused attention on the voter register and allegations of vote-buying.

Ukraine has 30,000 polling stations. At 8 p.m., election officials watched by local and international observers begin the count. Those results move their way up the line to 199 district election commissions and ultimately the Central Election Commission. The speed, honesty and transparency of this tabulation are of fundamental importance. This is where the cheating occurred in Ukraine's 2004 presidential election and, likely, others.

The vote audit — the honesty of the aggregation — is ensured by the wide distribution of official protocols at each level of counting.

While the official results won't be known the next day, three preliminary events are worth watching on April 1. They include the preliminary findings of the Central Election Commission, the parallel vote count by the civil network Opora and the first impression by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Election Observation Mission, run by the Office of Democratic Initiatives and Human Rights.

On the morning after, we won't know everything, but we'll know a lot.

...followed by unity

Whether it's Petro Poroshenko, Yulia Tymoshenko, Volodymyr Zelenskiy or any of the other candidates, Ukraine will have only one elected president come April 22 for the next five years. We will have to unite behind this person. We need all losing candidates, all Ukrainians and all foreign friends to unite around a common set of principles, be open to compromise in solving our differences and forge ahead with the hard work ahead of building a democratic nation with a robust economy.

Ukraine cannot afford to move from one campaign to the next — the one for parliamentary elections in October — right after Election Day.

Ukraine has a war to fight and an economy to build. It has a debt of \$13 billion to pay this year alone, more in future years, and it must find ways to stop the exodus of so many hundreds of thousands of its brightest and most talented people who have given up and gone abroad.

To do that, we must support the next president, assuming the person upholds democratic principles and doesn't veer towards the authoritarianism of the past.

For this to happen, the victor needs to be magnanimous and reach out to the losers, recognizing that the president represents the whole nation — not only those who supported him or her. The losers, in turn, must dial down their divisive rhetoric, find shared goals with the winner, and work together to make them happen. Tragically, Russia has shown Ukraine what can happen if we let our divisions get the best of us.



NEWS ITEM: Ukrainian officials often take credit for the achievements that have little to do with their direct duties. Infrastructure Minister Volodymyr Omelyan on March 26 announced that Ryanair airline will start flying to two more cities in Ukraine — and thanked President Petro Poroshenko for it.



NEWS ITEM: Prosecutor General Yuriy Lutsenko told the U.S.-based Hill Television that he opened a probe into alleged intervention in the 2016 American election by his opponent, Head of the National Anti-Corruption Bureau Artem Sytnyk. This worked well for U.S. President Donald Trump and his circle - faced with accusations of colluding with Russia to win the election, they hurried to take up and promote the idea that it was in fact Ukraine that intervened in the American election.



NEWS ITEM: A week before the election, President Petro Poroshenko's campaign rolled out a new campaign slogan: "Think!" The message is the continuation of Poroshenko's positioning as a "serious" candidate - in contrast to his more populist opponents Volodymyr Zelenski and Yulia Tymoshenko.

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Journalist leads team investigating murder of activist Katya Gandziuk



Anti-reformer

Andriy Gordeyev
Presidential ally accused of complicity in activist Katya Gandziuk's murder

Ukraine's Friend & Foe Of The Week



Friend

George Soros
Billionaire financier supports fight against corruption in Ukraine.



Foe

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Right-wing journalist helps Kyiv game U.S. President Donald Trump.

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Divided and undecided, Donbas readies for presidential elections

BY OKSANA GRYTSENKO
GRYTSENKO@KYIVPOST.COM

KRAMATORSK, Ukraine — With the largest number of voters of all Ukrainian regions — more than 3 million people — Donetsk Oblast used to play a big role in national elections.

But since the start of the occupation of a swathe of the oblast by Russia in 2014, the country's political forces have shown little interest in this area. And while most candidates promise to stop Russia's war against Ukraine if they are elected, voters in the war zone are skeptical.

Since the beginning of the year, only former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko has had a public rally in Donetsk Oblast. She did it in Sloviansk on March 18.

Other candidates have been there, but for closed events — either with local officials and soldiers, like President Petro Poroshenko, or with their supporters or the workers of local enterprises, as did former Energy Minister Yuriy Boyko, the leader of the Opposition Bloc Oleksandr Vilkul, and the nationalist candidate Ruslan Koshulynskiy.

"Some candidates are simply afraid to come here. Others don't see a point of coming because all these stories about bringing peace don't work here anymore," said Anastasiya Prokopenko, an activist of Tochka Dostupu civic group and a local coordinator of the Opora election watchdog.

With part of this war-torn oblast, including its provincial capital Donetsk, remaining under Russian occupation, the Central Election Commission estimates that less than a half of the local electorate, some 1.4 million people, will come to the polls. The rest either can't do so, as they live in the part of the oblast under the Russian control, or they fled from war to other regions. Still others simply don't want to vote.

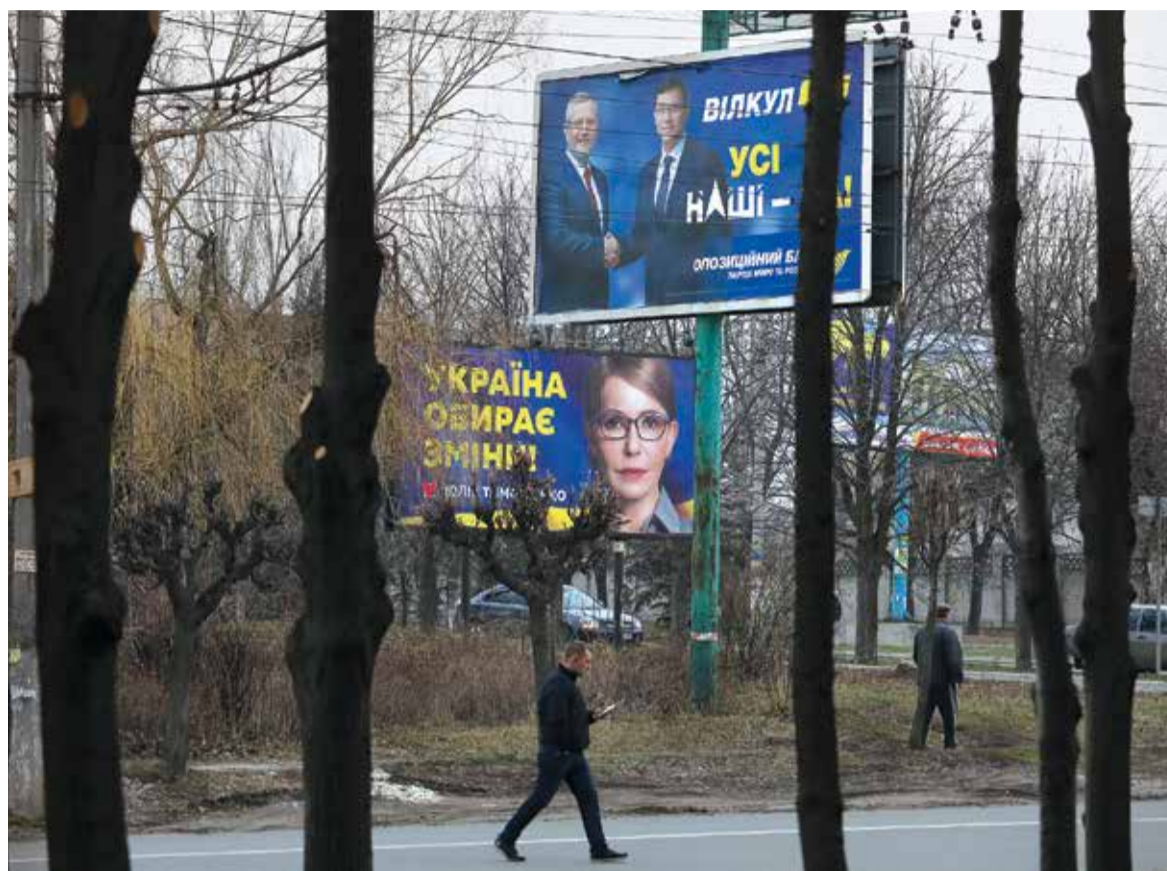
And although Donetsk Oblast has the largest number of internally displaced people in Ukraine, only a very small number of them have registered to vote. Some believe the registration procedures were made deliberately difficult to prevent IDPs from voting, as they are seen as more likely to be in favor of a change in political leadership.

Prokopenko said that as of early March, internally displaced persons accounted for just 2 percent of all those who have changed their voting address so as to take part in the first round of the election on March 31.

Polls

At the presidential election in 2010, Donetsk Oblast voted solidly for a native of the region, Viktor Yanukovich, who was later ousted as president by the EuroMaidan Revolution and fled to Russia in February 2014.

In 2014, it was impossible to hold presidential elections in a large part of the oblast, which was at that time controlled by Russian-led forces. Those who managed to vote mainly supported Poroshenko, who prom-



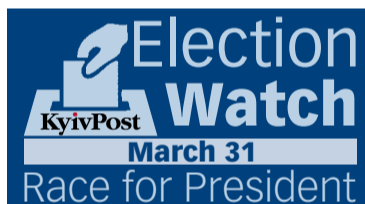
A man walks under the billboards of presidential candidates Yulia Tymoshenko and Oleksandr Vilkul in the city of Kramatorsk on March 26, 2019. (Oleg Petrasuiuk)

ised to swiftly end the war.

The polls now show locals are divided between the openly pro-Russian candidate Boyko and the political satirist Volodymyr Zelenskiy, a political newcomer and surprise frontrunner in the campaign.

Both Boyko and Zelenskiy have 15 percent support in the Donbas region, which includes Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, according to a joint poll conducted by the Rating sociological group together with the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology and the Razumkov Center on March 5-14.

The third is Oleksandr Vilkul



who has 7 percent support, likely thanks to his links to Ukraine's richest man, the oligarch Rinat Akhmetov, whose business empire is predominantly located in Donetsk Oblast. Tymoshenko has 6 percent, followed by Poroshenko with 5 percent.

The leader of Radical Party Oleh

Lyashko, who has campaigned a lot at Akhmetov's plants, has 4 percent support. Former Defense Minister Anatoliy Grytsenko and the former head of the SBU state security service, Ihor Smeshko, are both on 3 percent.

Twenty percent of Donbas residents remain undecided, and 12 percent told the pollsters they are not planning to vote at all.

Hard choice

In Kramatorsk, an industrial city of 157,000 located 620 kilometers southeast of Kyiv — now the capital of the government-controlled

part of Donetsk Oblast — campaign tents of arch-rivals Poroshenko and Tymoshenko have been set up about two meters from each other near a local trade center.

There is no antagonism between the Poroshenko and Tymoshenko campaign workers, however.

"We have friendly relations here," said an elderly woman campaign worker as she handed out Tymoshenko campaign flyers emblazoned with the candidate's promise to cut utility tariffs.

Poroshenko's campaign worker, a woman in her 30s, who was handing out leaflets featuring famous Ukrainians endorsing Poroshenko, said she was most afraid that Zelenskiy might win the election.

Sitting on a bench in a few meters from both tents, Valentyna, 68, a university professor, said she was yet to decide whom she would support on March 31.

"The only thing I know for sure is that it won't be Poroshenko. We have seen his deeds," she said, refusing to give her last name because of fear of retribution at her state-sector workplace.

In the past, she voted for Tymoshenko, but had become disillusioned with her. She said stopping the war, along with tackling corruption and ensuring economic growth, should be priorities for the new president. However, she had doubts that the inexperienced Zelenskiy could achieve that.

Bogdan Novak, 29, a local journalist who fled from his native Donetsk in 2014 because of the war, said many locals support the pro-Russian Boyko, hoping he will bring peace and better relations with Russia. Many also like Zelenskiy for his jokes about those in power. "People here traditionally like mocking the author-

more Donbas on page 11

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Kremlin house: Ukrainian empire of top Putin ally

BY JACK LAURENSEN
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Something is rotten in the heart of Ukraine's capital, festering in one of the city's most beautiful, up-market hotels. A secretly kept crown atop a Russian-owned, Ukrainian business empire that appears to belong to one of President Vladimir Putin's most important henchmen.

Russian-owned businesses with links to the Kremlin continue to operate throughout Ukraine, despite its years of war against the country. Commercial real estate and electricity supply monopolies are siphoning profits into the obscured, off-shore accounts of the Moscow elite while also posing a security threat to Ukraine.

Many such assets, including a group of 19 hotels, a pair of shopping malls and an alarming amount of regional electricity supply networks, appear to be tied up in the shadily structured holdings of the powerful Russian senator and Putin proxy, Alexander Babakov.

Babakov, also an intelligence officer according to Russian sources who spoke to the Kyiv Post, is sanctioned by the European Union, United States and the United Kingdom, who note his tight connections to the Kremlin and support for the Russian invasion of Crimea. He and his businesses are not under any Ukrainian sanctions.

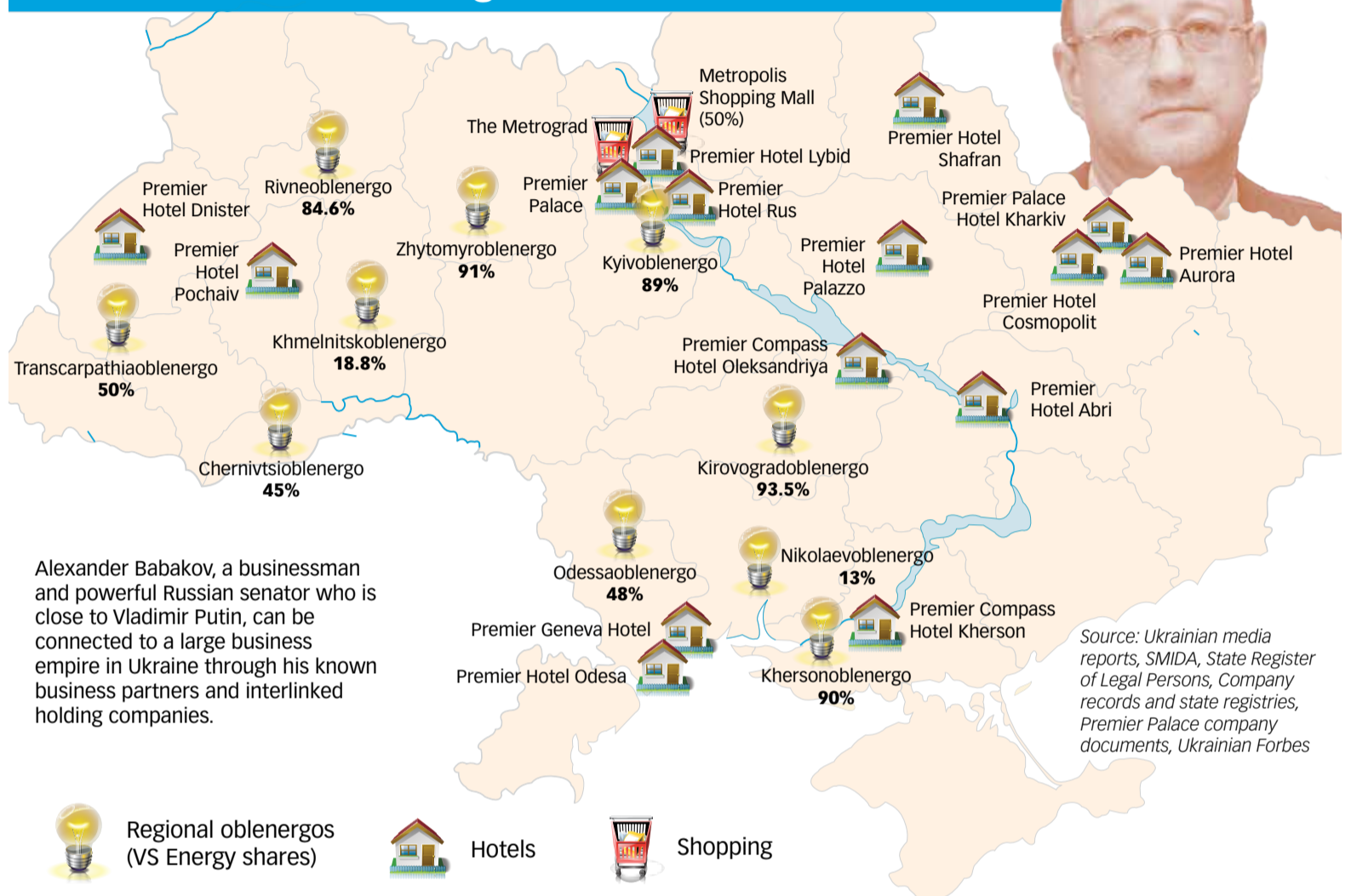
Babakov's secret hotels

Kyiv's centrally-located Premier Palace hotel is a popular lodge and recreation retreat for weary politicians, diplomats and corporate executives who are in town on official business — few of them seem to know who owns this hotel.

Some allege that the hotel is a nest of Russian spies in the very center of Kyiv and could have some of its high-powered guests under surveillance, although this claim is difficult to verify. During the 2014 EuroMaidan Revolution, 100 activists surrounded the hotel, alleging that gangs of so-called "titushki" and Russian agents were using it as a base of operations.

In a brief telephone conversation with the Kyiv Post, a senior spokes-

Alexander Babakov's alleged business interests in Ukraine



person for the Premier Palace denied any knowledge of Babakov before declining to answer any further questions about who owned the hotel. A subsequent email response to the Kyiv Post also denied that Babakov is connected to the company in any way. Alexander Babakov could not be reached for comment.

But finding connections between Babakov, an alleged Russian intelligence officer, and the Premier Palace hotel chain, as well as his other alleged holdings in Ukraine, was not too difficult.

Documents leaked during the so-called Panama Papers scandal in 2016 indicate that Babakov's company in the British Virgin Islands, AED International, has been managed since 2010 by two Latvian

nationals: Villis Dambinis and Valts Vigants. Neither could be reached for comment and both appear to be mid-level businessmen that act on behalf of Babakov. At the time, Babakov admitted to reporters that AED International was registered to himself, but said it was managed by his partners.

Both Dambinis and Vigants appear again and again throughout Ukrainian state registries and company records seen by the Kyiv Post. They are named as the beneficiary owners of the energy company VS Energy International Ukraine. Dambinis is also the official, on-paper owner of the Premier Palace, along with other individuals whose names can be linked to Babakov.

On its website, VS Energy says it is located on 4 A Hospitalna Street in Kyiv. But state records show the firm is officially registered to an address on the corner of Pushkinska Street and Tarasa Shevchenka Boulevard — the exact location of the Premier Palace.

The companies Premier Hotel Rus — also a hotel in Kyiv — and East European Hotel, are also registered to 4 A Hospitalna Street and have Villis Dambinis as the named, beneficiary owner.

"It's quite simple," said Ilya Ponomarev, a former Russian member of parliament who lives a life of exile in Ukraine after opposing Russia's illegal annexation of Ukrainian Crimea.

"He owns the Premier Palace... It's controlled by Babakov and other shareholders. I have heard they are trying to sell it, but nobody wants

to do a deal directly with him... because he is the main political actor on behalf of (advisor to Russian President Vladimir Putin) Vladislav Surkov."

Babakov and his associates are allegedly in the process of using obscure holdings and shady loans to arrange the sale of the hotel chain, where a new owner would take over the shares in holding companies, according to Ponomarev.

At the center of the spider's web of holding companies and assets is the Cyprus-registered company Pumori Enterprises Investments, which, while seeming to have considerable interests throughout the whole of Russia, appears to also tie together Babakov's interests in Ukraine.

Ultimately, it becomes clear that Babakov very likely owns — with his partners or through his proxies — not only the Premier Palace, Premier Rus and Premier Lybid in Kyiv, but a string of 19 hotels throughout Ukraine, including the Oreanda in Yalta (Crimea), the Dnister in western Lviv, the Cosmopolite, Premier Palace and Aurora in eastern Kharkiv.

Companies connected to Babakov through VS Energy also, ultimately, are alleged to own the underground shopping mall in Kyiv — Metrograd — and a 50 percent stake in Metropolis, another Kyiv shopping center, according to Ukrainian media.

Putin proxy, FSB agent

That Babakov seems to own a chain of hotels in Ukraine might not be a problem, were it not for his other, alleged roles. Those with knowledge

of the man say that Babakov is one of Putin's most important foot soldiers and most probably a highly-active, state intelligence operative.

"For me, it's obvious that Babakov was an FSB officer executing tasks given by the Kremlin," said Igor Eidman, the cousin of murdered Russian politician and former Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov. Eidman is also a distinguished sociologist and one of the world's most published authorities on the social and political phenomenon of "Putinism."

"Around 2008... I visited his office in the center of Moscow, next to the Lenin library. It looked like a feudal fortress and was crowded with bodyguards — very much FSB-style," added Eidman, who now lives in exile in Germany.

According to Ponomarev, who says Babakov is close to the Putin adviser Surkov, it's more likely that Babakov is associated not with the FSB, but with the GRU, Russia's Main Intelligence Directorate. Either way, it is strongly alleged that Babakov is a Russian intelligence officer or asset.

Anastasia Kirilenko, a Paris-based, Russian investigative journalist with The Insider, says that Russian oligarchs like Babakov use their resources and influence abroad to subvert countries, and Ukraine is a case in point.

"In France, we have an oligarch with criminal connections whose business is linked to major French enterprises — but the French call him a friend... like shady Babakov in

Action on Russian oligarchs

Property and assets that are allegedly owned by Russian oligarchs with ties to the Kremlin, FSB or the GRU could threaten state security, but seizing them is not easy and requires a lot of political will.

Many argue that assets gifted to alleged Russian agents by the Yanukovich regime should be investigated more thoroughly and possibly seized, on the basis of national security concerns or anti-corruption actions. But it seems unlikely to happen to a significant degree.

Oleksii Boiko, a legal expert and lawyer with the Anti-Corruption Action Center, says that such individuals could be deserving of having their assets seized, but the authorities should proceed with caution.

"Private property must be sacred," he said. "We can't just seize property like a witch hunt... potential investors could be put off, if they fear they could just have their assets and investments seized by the state."

But Boiko also says that agreements entered into with foreign investors, especially when it comes to vital state assets, should be kept under constant review and taken back if necessary.

"Ukrainian elites are perfectly aware of who owns what. But they are extremely reluctant to fix the problem because they could open Pandora's Box and see retaliation... against their investments in Russia," said exiled Russian lawmaker Ilya Ponomarev.

Alexander Babakov under sanctions in West, but has vast business empire in electricity, hotels

Babakov from page 6

Ukraine, he's acting beautifully in the shadows, behind the scenes."

"Babakov's position... and role is pretty simple," said Ponomarev. "He is loyal to the Kremlin and to Kremlin objectives, and he has a lot of economic interests in Ukraine... so he clearly wants some of his old friends like (former Ukrainian President Viktor) Yanukovich back in power."

Now an official presidential envoy and senator, Babakov is officially tasked with defending Russian-linked interests and organizations abroad. In France, he seems to have been highly active.

According to French newspaper investigations, the well-connected Babakov played a significant role in securing a 9.4-million-euro loan for the French National Front, the far-right, Kremlin-friendly political party in France headed by Marine Le Pen.

The lender, First Czech-Russian Bank, is said to be ultimately owned by Putin ally Gennady Timchenko and is widely believed to have strong ties to Russian intelligence. Babakov is also said to have helped arrange meetings between Le Pen and Putin as she eyed the French presidency.

As for the 9.4 million euro loan itself: that was arranged by the alleged Babakov employee or proxy Vilis Dambinis — the on-paper owner of Premier Palace in Ukraine — according to an exposé published in French and Latvian newspapers that named him.

"Without the pressure of public opinion, every oligarch can do what he wants — in Ukraine or in Europe," said Kirilenko.

Ties to Yanukovich

To understand Babakov's shady activities and extensive business empire in Ukraine, one has to understand his close connection to ousted Ukrainian President Yanukovich.

According to Ponomarev, who was a Russian member of parliament between 2011 and 2016 and personally watched Babakov's meteoric

rise within the Moscow hierarchy, Yanukovich was sponsored and supported by Babakov. The Kremlin-backed Yanukovich fled to Russia in 2014 after Ukraine's EuroMaidan Revolution forced him from power, but Babakov's influence and money in Kyiv remain.

And if Babakov was already rich, it seems likely that Yanukovich made him much richer.

He was, on paper, throughout his 13-year tenure as a Russian member of parliament, one of the country's poorest lawmakers, declaring annual income no higher than about \$60,000. That changed when he took a seat in the country's unelected upper house, becoming a powerful senator in the Federation Council. Only then, his true status as a wealthy oligarch was revealed.

His more recent declarations, from 2017, show sudden, annual incomes of about \$5 million. His assets are estimated by investigative journalists at well over \$350 million in Ukraine alone. Focus magazine, a Russian-language news weekly in Ukraine, reports that Babakov is regularly ranked somewhere in the middle of Ukraine's richest 100 people. His true assets in Russia are unknown.

Much of Babakov's wealth seems to be concealed in offshore company holdings, according to the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, or OCCRP, and invested into properties in France (he owns a castle with adjoined servant's quarters, situated on a ten-hectare estate just outside Versailles) and England (a luxury penthouse in up-market Knightsbridge, London).

Much of this wealth was allegedly acquired through mafia-style organized crime.

"He is a mobster, who gained much of his wealth dealing with dirty money generated by the 'free-market' in Moscow," said Ponomarev, who added that the lawmaker, who he likened to a mafia boss, became well-acquainted with Putin and his top adviser and fixer Surkov around 2003, through the oligarch and mutual friend Roman Abramovich.



The Premier Palace is evasive about who owns its luxury hotel chain, but records show that it is part of the vast Ukrainian business empire of Alexander Babakov, a top ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin. He owns 19 luxury hotels, two shopping malls, and several regional electricity supply networks. (Pavlo Podufalov)

Incidentally, when Roman Abramovich's English football club Chelsea FC has been in Kyiv to play, they have stayed at the allegedly Babakov-owned Premier Palace hotel.

The process of how Babakov quickly acquired his lucrative assets in Ukraine, is tied to his close, professional relationship and support for Yanukovich. Around 2003, the Kremlin was looking to consolidate and strengthen its political hold over Ukraine and looked to Viktor Yanukovich to help accomplish this. To support him, they sent Babakov into battle.

"Babakov has extensive connections to Yanukovich," said Ponomarev.

"It is very likely he was a sponsor of Yanukovich," added Eidman.

"These connections to Yanukovich could be seen everywhere," said Ponomarev. "And for his sponsorship and support of Yanukovich in 2004 (the Ukrainian presidential election) Babakov was rewarded with ownership of energy companies in Ukraine."

Danger: Electricity

Babakov doesn't only own hotels — and that's a problem. If Putin decided to escalate his war against Ukraine, his ally Babakov could, theoretically, simply switch off the power.

Despite U.S., UK and EU warnings that Babakov's properties should be subject to asset freezes or seizures (he is sanctioned by all), VS Energy in Ukraine still has control of considerable, strategically important holdings.

State registries seen by the Kyiv Post show that VS Energy owns

Premier Palace & assassinations

For Denis Voronenkov, an outspoken former member of Russian parliament, a meeting at the Premier Palace hotel exactly two years ago was to be his last.

The former Russian lawmaker who became a fierce critic of Russian President Vladimir Putin, was murdered, in broad daylight, outside the hotel, which has strongly denied that the killing or killer has anything to do with the hotel.

He was understood to be under surveillance by the Kremlin or its proxies in Kyiv. It had been threatened that he would pay dearly for his betrayal of Moscow. The 45-year-old former lawmaker was walking to meet his friend Ilya Ponomarev when he was shot dead on March 23, 2017.

Voronenkov's killing is not the only assassination with a connection to the Premier Palace. In May 2007, its alleged owner at the time, a shady Russian businessman named Maksim Kurochkin, was also shot dead, by a sniper, as police escorted him from the Kyiv courthouse where he was on trial for extortion. The shooting took place before Babakov or his proxies allegedly began a Premier Palace takeover.

Ponomarev says he would never consider staying at the hotel, and it wasn't his choice as a meeting place. "Lots of Russians are staying there... and there's no doubt that the SBU (Ukrainian State Security Service) have it under surveillance. It should be supervised by the SBU," Ponomarev said. "I would never stay there because I'm not sure that the rooms are not under surveillance... Audio bugs and video cameras — it's common practice that hotel owners in Russia would record, and many times I have heard from my friends about this happening. This happens a lot."

But Ponomarev says he doesn't think the hotel, its management or guests had any connection to the killing of his friend. "I think it was a coincidence that it was this hotel," he said.

sizeable stakes in eleven oblenegos, or regional electricity supply networks. On the VS Energy website, the company boasts that it owns seven outright.

More broadly, most electricity supply companies in Ukraine, despite the ongoing war, are still owned by Russian oligarchs — 21 out of 27. The others are owned by controversial Ukrainian oligarchs like Kolomoisky, Hryhoriy Surkis and Akhmetov.

Records show that VS Energy has a majority stake in seven oblenegos and a minority holding in four others.

In its largest stakes, the Babakov-linked company appears to own 89.1 percent of the electricity supplier for Kyiv region, 90 percent for Kherson and 93.4 percent for Kropyvnytskyi (formerly known as Kirovograd). Even in far-western Zakarpattya, bordering Hungary, he owns 50 percent of the electricity supply.

"It is unfathomable that eleven of Ukraine's 24 regional electric distributors are to a large extent owned by a Russian group led by the Russian nationalist Aleksander Babakov, who is sanctioned by all relevant countries for his role in Russia's occupation and annexation of Crimea," wrote Anders Åslund, a senior fellow

at the Atlantic Council.

"Here we worry about Russian cyberattacks on the Ukrainian grid, when a large part of it is owned, controlled, and operated by the enemy," Åslund writes.

Ilya Ponomarev knows Babakov, and indicates he should be seen as a clear and present danger to Ukraine — for all intents and purposes Ponomarev's adopted home. According to his observations, Babakov is the right hand and main political actor of the expansionist, neo-colonial ideologist and Putin strategist, Vladislav Surkov, a so-called "grey cardinal" of Moscow.

For the most part, Igor Eidman seems to agree, but Babakov's threat could still be understated, Eidman says.

"Babakov is more important than Surkov, who is only a hired manager. Babakov is a rich oligarch who existed even before Putin. Now he's a devoted soldier for the president, obeying only him — executing delicate tasks given to him," Eidman said.

"People like Babakov, known for their ties with Putin and Russian intelligence, officially own businesses in Ukraine — where is the resistance?" ■



Russian President Vladimir Putin, Putin's strategist Vladislav Surkov and Alexander Babakov. (AFP, kremlin.ru, Alexander Savin)

Editor's note: This story was produced with support from the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, a Kyiv Post partner.

Poroshenko, insiders divvy up Kyiv's hidden island

BY MATTHEW KUPFER
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On the surface, nothing about Rybalsky Island — a triangular peninsula in northern Kyiv jutting into the Dnipro River — screams residential hotspot.

Much of the island is occupied by Kuznya on Rybalsky, a shipbuilding plant with a 150-year history that, until recently, belonged to President Petro Poroshenko. The atmosphere is decidedly industrial. Many of the local buildings are rundown. Several streets lack sidewalks.

On the southern end of the peninsula, Soviet-era apartment buildings abut village-style single-family houses, which, in turn, abut a drainage ditch and de facto garbage dump. In the early spring, before greenery can take root, the cold wind blows the island's omnipresent dust into pedestrians' faces. Of four crossings onto the island, one is closed to automobiles and the fourth has never been fully constructed. In its current state, Rybalsky is hardly a place one would want to live.

Despite that, Ukraine's entrepreneurs have dreamed of building up Rybalsky Island for over a decade. And currently the peninsula appears to be the center of a major land grab by powerful and politically-connected business.

Banker Sergiy Tigipko, who purchased Kuznya in 2018, will turn the factory into an elite residential area. Across Vulytsia Elektrikiv — “Electricians Street” in Ukrainian — another group of politically-connected companies is building the Rybalsky Residential Complex. And Russian-Ukrainian businessman Pavlo Fuks — noted for his involvement in Donald Trump's failed Trump Tower project in Moscow — also appears to have plans to build on Rybalsky Island's southern rim. The connections likely go all the way up to Poroshenko.

At the center of it all is an official document permitting construction on the island. Pushed by a former city official who moved seamlessly from public service into the development business, it was passed in 2016 by a city council loyal to Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko and Poroshenko.

And activists believe the document is absolutely illegal.

Almost the city center

While Rybalsky's current conditions don't make it a particularly attractive residential neighborhood, its location is distinctly enticing. The peninsula is just a kilometer or two from Kyiv's historic Podil neighborhood and not much farther from the city center.

In overcrowded Kyiv, that makes it a developer's dream come true. Unsurprisingly, there have been several proposals to construct.

In 2005, Kyiv's city building council approved a proposal by Kuznya on Rybalsky — then known as Lenin Kuznya — to build up the island. However, the council only allowed administrative and office buildings, the Nashi Groshi investigative outlet reported.

Around the same time, Fuks pro-



Andriy Vavrysh, CEO of Saga Development, speaks with the Kyiv Post in his office on the top floor of Kyiv's 101 Tower office complex on March 22. Vavrysh previously worked as a city official and signed off on the contract to produce the detailed plan of the territory allowing construction on Rybalsky Island. Today, his company has a housing development project there. (Oleg Petrasniuk)

moted another project: building Kyiv City, a business district filled with skyscrapers, on Rybalsky. That project was valued at \$1 billion, but the 2008 global financial crisis forced Fuks to freeze his plans, he told Ukraine's Focus magazine in March 2017.

Both then and now, the key obstacle to real estate development in Kyiv has been the city's General Plan. It zones different areas of the city for different types of construction and sets out clearly what can and cannot be built.

A second type of document — called a detailed plan of the territory, or DPT — exists to clarify the General Plan. For example, if the General Plan zones a plot of land for residential construction, a DPT can specify the number of floors allowed in the apartment complexes set for construction there.

However, in recent years, the Kyiv authorities, in cooperation with developers, have begun abusing DPTs and using them to contradict the general plan, according to Yuriy Levchenko, a lawmaker from the nationalist Svoboda Party and an activist against illegal construction in the city.

Under current legislation, if there is no DPT for a certain block or neighborhood, the Kyiv City Council cannot give out the land for construction. That adds an additional incentive for their creation.

“The main reason why they do these DPTs is that it overrides the General Plan illegally,” Levchenko told the Kyiv Post. “Once it's enacted, it allows the Kyiv City Council to give plots of lands for building sites.

“That's the main reason why, in the last few years, we have seen a

huge amount of DPTs,” he added.

Rybalsky Island fits this pattern. On July 30, 2015, the Kyiv Administration's City Planning and Architecture Department signed a contract with two companies to draw up a DPT for Rybalsky. The two companies were the Inter-Regional Center for Technical Inventorization, listed in the contract as the “investor,” and Terra Project, listed as the “executor.”

The end result was a DPT that proposed a “total refunctionalization” of Rybalsky Island, an area it described as occupied by loss-making industrial enterprises.

The next step was to have the DPT passed by the Kyiv City Council. This proved a challenge: initially, in July 2016, the plan did not receive enough votes, Nashi Groshi reported. However, on Sept. 29, 2016, the council's ruling coalition, widely viewed as subordinate to Mayor Klitschko and Poroshenko, voted in favor of the DPT.

Rybalsky Island was now open for construction.

Not without a fight

Yuriy Levchenko is young and enthusiastic. Most of all, he isn't afraid of criticizing the Ukrainian authorities.

Levchenko grew up in Cyprus, where his father — a maritime captain in Soviet times — worked in shipping. After graduating from an English-language high school there, Levchenko studied at the London School of Economics and Otto von Guericke University of Magdeburg in Germany.

In 2008, he returned to Ukraine and soon got involved in politics. After several attempts to run for parliament — in two cases, he says

the regime of ousted President Viktor Yanukovich stole his victory — he finally made it. In November 2014, Levchenko was elected to the Verkhovna Rada from a single-mandate district in Kyiv.

He soon cut his teeth opposing a DPT and the construction of a residential complex in his district. Then activists began turning to Levchenko asking him to help fight illegal construction — a problem he describes as “widespread” — in other parts of the city.

That's how he got involved with Rybalsky Island. Soon, he was attending sessions of the Kyiv City Council whenever he could, and arguing against the Rybalsky DPT.

Levchenko credits his efforts with preventing the DPT from being passed twice. He also says he informed Mayor Klitschko that the document was illegal. Many of the people involved in producing the DPT were the mayor's direct subordinates, and Klitschko controls the city council's ruling coalition. He also has veto power. Still, appeals to the mayor yielded no results, Levchenko says.

After the DPT passed, Levchenko submitted a complaint with the Kyiv district administrative court, alleging that the DPT both violated the General Plan and had been passed without the requisite public hearings. In February 2018, a judge ruled in Levchenko's favor and voided the decision of the Kyiv City Council to pass the document.

But that victory was short-lived. Less than two months later, an appeals court overturned the ruling. And on June 2018, the Supreme Court declined to alter the appeals court's ruling. For all intents and pur-

poses, the Rybalsky DPT was legal.

Levchenko suggests the decision demonstrates the failure of legal reform.

“The court of appeals and the supposedly reformed, wonderful Supreme Court made an absolutely illegal decision,” he says. “I firmly believe this was a corrupt scheme. I'm sure the judges were contacted or bribed.”

He notes that, despite having an enormous backlog of cases, the Supreme Court somehow managed to hear this one in just two months. Furthermore, the court held a quick hearing that was closed to the public.

That is legal under Ukrainian legislation, but Levchenko believes that any honest judge would understand that this issue affects millions of people in Kyiv and had provoked a “media outcry.” It should be heard publicly, he says.

How will it affect millions? The Rybalsky DPT is not the worst document that Levchenko has seen, but he believes it will do damage to the city.

The island simply lacks the transportation infrastructure to support the amount of people who would inhabit the new developments, and turning Rybalsky into a residential area will likely make Kyiv's already intense traffic worse, he says.

His assessment echoes that of city building expert Viktor Gleba, who told RFE/RL's Schemes investigative journalism program that construction on Rybalsky would put 20,000 more cars on the island amid an already “colossal burden” on the city's transport system.

“They are creating a ghetto, a

Controversial construction permit on Kyiv's Rybalsky Island benefits powerful insiders

Rybalsky from page 8

place where it will be an isolated island with roads and industrial zones all around it," Levchenko says. "The end result will be a run-down area where the quality of life for most people will not be that good."

And there's another issue, one that affects Ukrainians far beyond Kyiv: at a time of heightened military tensions with Russia in the Azov Sea, Levchenko says the construction will lead to the destruction of Kuznya on Rybalsky, the only factory that repairs ship engines and can produce Gurza gumboats for the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Public-private partners

Levchenko's loss in court was a victory for the companies and individuals involved in developing Rybalsky Island. There are many of them, and virtually all are powerful and well-connected.

But the most important is likely also the least conventionally powerful: Andriy Vavrysh, a former Kyiv city official and current CEO of Saga Development (formerly known as Riverside Development).

In July 2015, as deputy director of Kyiv's City Planning and Architecture Department, he signed the contract to produce the Rybalsky DPT.

Just two weeks later, on August 12, Klitschko signed an order removing Vavrysh from his post. According to the mayor's document, the official was released at his own request.

However, in December 2014, Klitschko had Vavrysh temporarily suspended from his position and investigated for allegedly giving cover

to unspecified corrupt practices. And during a July 2015 meeting of the anti-corruption council, Klitschko said he had asked Vavrysh to write a resignation letter.

Vavrysh denied any involvement in corruption and told the Kyiv Post he never had any conflict with Klitschko.

After Vavrysh left office, the Kyiv City Council passed the Rybalsky DPT that he had signed off on. But the former official already had a new role. According to the official protocol, Vavrysh took part in a June 30, 2016 session of the a Kyiv City Planning and Architecture Department committee that considered the Rybalsky DPT as a representative of the investor in the plan, the Inter-Regional Center for Technical Inventorization.

Additionally, in the months after Vavrysh left the civil service, a new developer firm appeared: according to Ukraine's unified company register, on Sept. 30, 2015, the company Riverside Development Ltd. was registered. It listed its address as 23B Electricians Street — the site on Rybalsky Island where the company would soon begin building a new housing development, Residential District Rybalsky.

As of 2016, Riverside's beneficiary owners were listed as Antonina Volkova, the Inter-Regional Center for Technical Inventorization, and that company's owner, Dmytro Ovsy. And, in November 2016, Vavrysh became Riverside's executive director, according to the company register. He is also the company's founder, he told the Kyiv Post.

To build Residential District



Two women walk past one of the buildings of Saga Development's Residential Complex Rybalsky on March 27, 2019. (Volodymyr Petrov)

Rybalsky, Riverside chose as its partner the Perfect Group, a construction company that builds housing complexes across Ukraine. Little is known about the internal workings of the organization. Its website does not list a director or executive, and it may not even be formally registered. That is likely because it is not a firm, but a group of companies that claims to have 30 members.

But while Perfect Group's structure is mysterious, the parties building the Rybalsky complex are not, thanks to official documents published on the company's website. The construction permit for the Rybalsky building site lists the Kyiv River Port firm as the party ordering the construction, while the general contractor carrying out the work is KDD Engineering.

Ownership puzzle

Understanding who exactly is behind these firms can be a challenge, according to activist Georgiy Mogylny, who advocates against illegal construction and has contributed to an investigation by Nashi Groshi.

"Nowadays, almost all companies are registered to offshore or nominal owners," he told the Kyiv Post. "Few people actually put themselves out there and write their own names."

However, in the case of Kyiv River

Port, a fair bit is known. According to Ukraine's company registry, Svitlana Brodska controls roughly 17 percent of the Kyiv River Port's share capital and has 24 percent voting rights in the company through her firm Dandy Plus. Brodska is the wife of Mykhailo Brodsky, a businessman and politician who owns news outlet Obozrevatel, one of the most popular websites in Ukraine.

Meanwhile, RFE/RL's Schemes has connected the River Port to both Brodsky and another powerful political player: Nestor Shufrych, a lawmaker with the Russia-friendly Opposition Bloc. The company is partially owned by two other firms: Suchasne Partnerstvo and San Galen Holding. Viktor Sydoruk, an aide to Shufrych, previously served as the former's CEO. And the latter — which owns 25 percent of Kyiv River Port — shares a phone number with the Sikorsky Museum of History of Aeronautics and Aviation, an international charitable foundation. The co-founder of that foundation is Shufrych's late mother, according to Schemes.

Another company is also likely connected to the businessmen: Kyiv River Station, whose name ties it to the derelict ferry station on the Dnipro River. In January 2016, the Segodnya news site announced that the station would soon be restored to feature restaurants, night clubs, and even a pool. The newspaper attributed the information to the "ideologue of the project and the representative of the River Station's management" — Andriy Vavrysh. Indeed, Vavrysh is listed as the director of Kyiv River Station in the company registry as of July 2016.

However, beyond the big names involved in Residential District Rybalsky, there are also significant and ethically questionable ties between the government and the private sector.

According to the YouControl database of registry information, since April 2017, Riverside Development has listed its founders as two offshore firms: Trevor Business S.A. in Panama and Rockbery Invest Inc. in Belize. The two firms equally split Riverside's unusually miniscule share capital, Hr 1,000 (roughly \$36.50).

Trevor Business S.A. is also listed as co-owner of Kyiv River Station, controlling Hr 500 — or half — of its share capital. Due to Panamanian and Belizean legislation, the offshore firms' beneficiary owners are confidential.

In June 2018, Riverside became

Saga Development. It attributed the name change to a geographic shift in its activities. The company's first development project, Residential District Rybalsky, was directly on the Dnipro River. Two years later, however, the company had ten projects broadly aimed at turning industrial zones into comfortable housing, the company said in a press release.

However, officially Saga is registered as a separate company from the Riverside.

Vavrysh's trail

And that company was not registered in 2018. Rather, according to the YouControl database, it appears to have been initially registered in 2012 as Arkhmarket. As of 2017, it had changed its name to Riverside Development Co. And in 2018, it finally became Saga Development. Initially, the company's founder and executive was listed as Iryna Terekh, who now runs cement design studio Dwell the Space.

However, in January 2017, Vavrysh became its director. And, as of March 2017, Trevor Business S.A. had taken over all Hr 10,000 (\$371) of the developer company's share capital. That offshore appears to have connections to Vavrysh long predating his work at Saga.

In December 2012, Kyiv's City Planning and Architecture Department — where Vavrysh then worked — cut a deal worth Hr 8.53 million (\$313,000) with company A+S Ukraine to create a transportation model for the city of Kyiv.

According to the Nashi Groshi investigative program, the only other participant in the tender to produce the model was the Terra Project company, which had the same address and phone number as A+S. Terra Project's founder, Vyacheslav Bondarchuk, had previously worked for the private pension fund Tiger Sunny, which was owned by Tiger Asset Management. And the daughter of Liudmyla Ivasiuk, the latter's co-owner until 2012, had worked for Vavrysh's company Gabbro Plus, Nashi Groshi concluded.

However, there is another interesting detail about A+S Ukraine. According to YouControl, the company was founded in 2007 by German national Veit Appelt, who owned all Hr 46,000 (roughly \$9,030 at the time) of its share capital. However, as of 2012, another owner had entered the picture and taken control of Hr 41,400 of share capital: Trevor

Who benefits from housing construction on **Rybalsky Island**?

Petro Poroshenko, Serhiy Tigipko, Ihor Kononenko

1 Kuznya on Rybalsky, a shipbuilding company

Previously owned by Poroshenko and Kononenko, Kuznya was sold to Tigipko in late 2018. The southern edge of this territory also hosts the headquarters of Poroshenko's **Channel 5 TV station** and an office of his **Roshen confectionery company**.

2 5th Element fitness club

This elite fitness club is owned by Poroshenko and Kononenko.

Andriy Vavrysh, Nestor Shufrych, Mykhailo Brodsky

Residential Complex Rybalsky

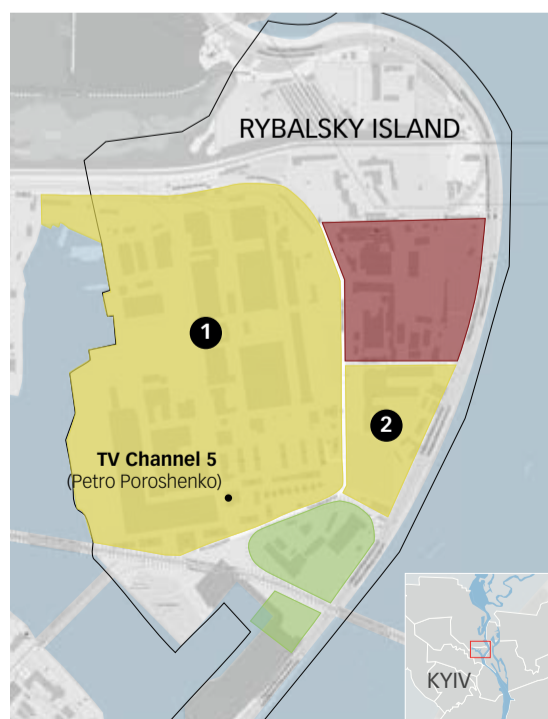
Companies Saga Development, Kyiv River Port, and KDD Engineering are building Residential Complex Rybalsky. The founder and CEO of Saga Development is Andriy Vavrysh, a former Kyiv city official. Investigative journalists have tied Kyiv River Port to lawmaker Nestor Shufrych and businessman and politician Mykhailo Brodsky.

Pavlo Fuks

Interstroi Group

Fuks confirmed that he owns one of the land plots on the island, but froze all construction work there in 2008-2009. He is now considering restarting unspecified development work.

Source: Kyiv Post, Nashi Groshi, Schemes, official documents



Developer has big plans for underused Rybalsky Island

Rybalsky from page 9

Business S.A.

By the time Nashi Groshi published its story on the transportation model, Trevor Business S.A had already left A+S and been replaced by a man named Igor Kornev. However, its brief appearance in A+S indicates that the offshore firm is neither new, nor was Rybalsky its first connection to Vavrysh.

There is another connection: Trevor owns a 99-percent share in a company called Media Coworking LLC, which was registered in March 2018. The other one percent of the company's Hr 1,000 of share capital belongs to its director, Dmytro Ovsy — the same man whose Inter-Regional Center for Technical Inventorization was the "investor" in the contract to create the Rybalsky DPT.

A deeper dig online reveals that, in 2008, Ovsy gave two interviews where he was presented alternately as lawyer and legal consultant to the company Terra Development. According to the company registry, Vavrysh owns a third of its Hr 500,000 (\$18,577) in share capital. The rest belongs to the previously mentioned Liudmyla Ivasiuk.

Additionally, the YouControl database reveals that in January 2008 — when Ovsy worked at the company — Vavrysh owned 99 percent of that same share capital and served as the company's director. Only midway through that year did Ivasiuk take control of two-thirds.

There is one more key piece of evidence. According to official documents provided to the Kyiv Post by a source who did not wish to be identified so as not to reveal the source of the documents, in July 2015, just a month before leaving office, Vavrysh signed at least three other contracts to produce DPTs. As in the case of Rybalsky, in all three contracts the "investor" was the Interregional Center for Technical Inventorization and the "contractor" was Terra Project.

Today, Saga is already building on a site outlined in the DPT contract: its Novy Podil housing complex on the right bank of the Dnipro.

What does this all mean? At a maximum, it suggests that Vavrysh used his post in the Kyiv city administration to advance personal business interests. At a minimum, it suggests that deep ties between an official and the construction business helped to get developers access to Rybalsky Island, something the General Plan and accountable officials might otherwise not have allowed. And that official himself also benefited from these ties.



A construction team works on Chicago, a residential complex under construction by Saga Development, in central Kyiv on May 21, 2018. (Volodymyr Petrov)

Vavrysh's take

Andriy Vavrysh makes a good first impression: stylishly dressed, calm, and erudite.

His office in Saga Development's headquarters, on the top floor of central Kyiv's elite 101 Tower business center, offers a breathtaking view of the city that Saga is developing.

Since its launch around 2016, Saga has gone from creating one housing development — Rybalsky — to 12 of them. Artist renderings of these residential complexes (most are still under construction) show hip, sleek, and modern buildings.

In contrast to Kyiv's standard architectural fare — which tends toward decaying czarist era buildings and Soviet-style constructions alternating between bland and garish — these housing developments truly resemble something out of the West.

Vavrysh seems very much at home in this environment. When asked by the Kyiv Post why he left the Kyiv city administration, he quotes Friedrich Schiller's drama *Fiesco*: "The moor has done his duty, the moor can go."

He says there is no conflict of interest in his work on Rybalsky.

"While working in the state service, the only thing I did vis-a-vis (Rybalsky Island) was to initiate that we need to create city development plans for that territory," Vavrysh told the Kyiv Post. "But I didn't have any ties to any development (of the plans) or to them being passed."

After that, all his work was outside

the state service. Vavrysh did it to continue the work he started in the city administration when no one else wanted to do it, he says.

"That probably predestined my choice of that territory. I really love Podil and I want it to look different, and simply didn't abandon what I started in the state service. And I am going to continue," Vavrysh says.

He believes his actions demonstrate "a degree of responsibility and not a conflict of interests."

Vavrysh also puts little stock in claims that residential construction on Rybalsky will increase traffic or that the Rybalsky DPT violates the General Plan.

Kyiv has a history of bad planning that did not take into account available resources. In contrast, Saga was involved in a project to alleviate traffic in connection with Rybalsky Island, and the company is subservient to the city's transport plans in this area, he says.

As for the DPT, Vavrysh stresses that the Supreme Court is on his side. He characterizes the General Plan and DPTs as contradictory documents that hold the city back. He notes that the General Plan calls for removing industry from the Dnipro to improve the river's ecological situation. The DPT and Saga's residential complex are doing that, Vavrysh says.

"We showed these activists many times: 'Guys, please have a look at the acting General Plan,'" he says. "It's written in big letters, but (Ukrainian) people love to perceive that it is only some kind of crime."

Who benefits?

Whether you believe Vavrysh or the activists against residential construction on Rybalsky, many people are clearly benefiting from the DPT.

Vavrysh, Saga Development, Brodsky, and Shufrych are hardly the only ones. The winners also

include some of Ukraine's most powerful business people and politicians.

According to lawmaker Levchenko, who challenged the Rybalsky DPT in court, the obvious beneficiaries of DPTs are the developers that these documents — which Levchenko argues violate the city's General Plan — allow to build.

But he believes that any account of the beneficiaries of construction on the island must begin with Kyiv's mayor. Klitschko could easily have stopped this construction. He has been repeatedly told by activists that the DPTs are illegal, Levchenko told the Kyiv Post. Yet the mayor has never vetoed them.

"I believe that he gets a hefty percentage from all of these building sites," Levchenko says. "I believe there are corrupt payments to him. Otherwise it wouldn't work."

Klitschko did not respond to the Kyiv Post's request for comment by press time.

Beyond that, there are more straightforward beneficiaries. Businessman Pavlo Fuks, who controls land at the south of the island and has long planned to build on Rybalsky, is an obvious winner. Activists expect he will construct a residential complex on the land he controls.

In a message to the Kyiv Post, Fuks confirmed that he owns one land plot on Rybalsky Island, but had halted construction after 2008. He is considering restarting work on a development project there, he said.

He had no role in the creation of the DPT, Fuks added.

But perhaps the most interesting victor is President Petro Poroshenko. In late 2018, he and business partner Igor Kononenko sold Kuznya on Rybalsky to Sergiy Tigipko.

The president had faced criticism

for owning the company which made its profit on military contracts. In November 2017, the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine investigated the firm for alleged corruption and supplying overpriced equipment to the military, but nothing came of the charges. The Ukrainian government has also faced accusations of delaying the transfer of two Island-class patrol boats from the United States in order to avoid undermining Kuznya's defense contracts.

However, in September 2019, Bihus.Info — the anti-corruption news site behind Nashi Groshi — reported that, shortly before selling Kuznya, Poroshenko and Kononenko transferred the real estate on the territory of the factory to a new company: Bud-Renovatsia. Poroshenko and Kononenko are its end beneficiaries.

Why would Poroshenko and Kononenko benefit from selling Kuznya, a working enterprise that receives state contracts? Because the factory requires modernization to be truly profitable. Meanwhile the land under it had little value while it was still zoned for industry.

But after the Rybalsky DPT, passed by a Kyiv City Council and supported by a mayor loyal to the president, the value of Kuznya — whose ownership grants access to the land below it — increased significantly.

Between 2016 and 2017, the estimated value of Kuznya's net assets rose from \$6.8 million to almost \$11.3 million, according to data from Ukraine's Stock Market and Infrastructure Development Agency.

In November 2018, Ukrainian media reported that Tigipko could have paid up to \$300 million dollars for Kuznya. Using data from the same agency, activist Mogylunny came to a similar conclusion, but says Tigipko may not have paid all the money up front.

Neither the Presidential Administration, nor Tigipko's TAS Group responded to requests for comment in time for publication.

In a February 2019 interview with the *Novoye Vremya* magazine, Tigipko explained why he purchased Kuznya.

"Large amounts of territory on Rybalsky Island are not being used for production, and are being used ineffectively," he said. "On that territory, we soon plan to launch a massive construction project. Most likely, it will be a residential area — with schools, kindergartens, and commercial real estate."

Soon a website for the project had gone online. Lipki Island City Resort — to be built by City One Developers and Tigipko's TAS Group — will reportedly feature 36 buildings ranging from two to 30 floors and will house 15,400 people.

But Mogylunny, who so actively opposes the Rybalsky DPT, isn't impressed.

"It has nothing in common with the DPT," he told the Kyiv Post. "In the DPT it's a middle-sized structure with 6–7 floors. Here it's high-rises with up to 30 floors." ■

Editor's note: This story was produced with support from the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, a Kyiv Post partner.

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Once occupied by Russia, Donbas voters revel in ability to elect president

Donbas from page 5

ities in Kyiv," he said.

But Novak himself supports Poroshenko "as the lesser evil," saying many politically active residents in Kramatorsk would do the same. Novak said Kramatorsk has developed significantly over the last few years, and he believes this was partly thanks to Poroshenko.

Bitter memories

On March 27, polling station workers in Kramatorsk were setting up ballot boxes and hanging drapes around voting booths. Many recalled the bitter elections of 2014, when Kramatorsk was controlled by Russian-led forces.

Mykola Podushko, the head of a polling station in the local community center, burst into tears when he recalled how armed men broke into a district election commission in May 2014, which was located in a kindergarten. They hit the election commission chairman's head with a Kalashnikov assault rifle, and then kidnapped him.

The next day, Podushko risked a visit to his polling station, but saw the men in military uniform there. "I had to escape from them by bicycle. They were following me for some time by a car, but I managed to escape from them through some house yards," he said.

The district election commission of Kramatorsk is now located in City Hall, where in 2014 the Russian-led forces had their headquarters. People come there one after another to complain about problems at the polling stations.

"If you don't work there, there could be fraud," a district commission member warned a woman who wanted to quit as the secretary of one polling station. "The observ-

ers don't decide anything. Only the commission staff can register violations," he added.

But she wasn't persuaded.

Violations

Prokopenko, an observer, said she had filed 15 complaints with the police about violations during this campaign. They included the fact that Tymoshenko's campaign workers had given sweets to children living near the frontline — they had been specially bused to Sloviansk on a day of Tymoshenko's rally there.

"Her team later explained that some businessmen had paid for the sweets," Prokopenko said.

In Lyman, a town to the north of Kramatorsk, observers saw a Poroshenko banner hanging in the window of the local state administration office. In Kostiantynivka, the newspapers of Poroshenko's party were found in City Hall. The observers also witnessed Poroshenko campaign workers collecting personal data from voters, asking people to sign a consent form.

Nevertheless, Prokopenko doesn't think there will be any serious problems with the vote on March 31.

Polling stations have been set up all over the oblast — even in the towns of Zaitseve and Ocheretyne, which have been split in two by the frontline. Sixty-five special polling stations have also been set up on the frontline so soldiers serving there can vote too.

"Some of these polling stations will be located somewhere in the fields, and can be visited only with special permission from the army," Prokopenko said. She said Opora observers would be present at three of them. ■



A worker of a polling station irons the drapes to the voting booths on March 27, 2019, preparing to presidential elections in the city of Kramatorsk. (Oleg Petrasuiuk)



Comedic actor and the leading candidate for president of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, performs during his comedy show Vecherniy Kvartal on the stage of Dnipro-Arena stadium in Dnipro on March 26, 2019. (Kostyantyn Chernichkin)

Zelenskiy leads Dnipro, but faces challenge in protecting voting results

BY BERMET TALANT
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DNIPRO, Ukraine — March 26 was a workday, but hundreds of people lined up in front of the Dnipro Arena football stadium starting at 3 p.m. The diverse public of all ages — students, parents with young kids, the elderly — came to see the new comedy show, Vecherniy Kvartal, starring Volodymyr Zelenskiy, the front-runner for Ukrainian presidency.

While other candidates have been touring the country with campaign rallies and appearances at public events, Zelenskiy went on a short tour with his comedy show to eight cities in central and eastern Ukraine, where he holds the highest electoral rating.

The tour ends on March 29, on the eve of the "silence day" when campaigning is prohibited. The vote will take place on March 31, and according to polls, Zelenskiy will go in the runoff.

Zelenskiy, a native of Kryvyi Rih in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, was greeted as a native son in Dnipro, the provincial capital of 1 million residents located 477 kilometers southeast of Kyiv, on March 26.

The city has given the Ukrainian nation a number of prominent politicians and businessmen: President Leonid Kuchma, presidential candidate Yulia Tymoshenko, billionaire oligarchs Victor Pinchuk and Ihor Kolomoisky, banker Sergiy Tigipko, to name a few. At least nine presidential candidates out of 39 on the ballot are from Dnipropetrovsk Oblast.

Like in previous tours, Kvartal 95 gave a charity concert in the afternoon and a commercial one for

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March 30-31

Choose With Love

Those tired of the political buzz ahead of the March 31 presidential election will have a chance to escape it at the local street food festival Ulichnaya Eda: either before voting on March 30 or after visiting the polls the day after. The regular festival is starting the season with a themed two-day event called "Choose With Love" hinting that people should listen to their hearts choosing both presidential candidates, and food with drinks. This time, Ulichnaya Eda has prepared over 60 street food stands by local producers, a wine terrace and bar spots. The organizers promise to offer all kinds of food from almond croissants to marble steaks. The festival's entertainment includes music show by Ukrainian singer Sergey Babkin, screenings of Wes Anderson's films, and a play zone for children.

Choose With Love. Platforma Art Factory (1 Bilomorska St.) March 30-31. 11 a.m. - 10 p.m. One-day entrance - Hr 130

Friday, March 29

Classical music

Tchaikovsky, Beethoven (Belgian violinist Mark Bushkov and philharmonic orchestra). National Philharmonic. 7 p.m. Hr 100-500

Live music

Jazz for Adults (jazz show by Alexey Kogan). Caribbean Club. 8 p.m. Hr 180-850

Red Hot Chili Peppers Tribute (Symbol Sound band). Docker's ABC. 10 p.m. Hr 100-1,000

Sax in the City (smooth jazz by Andrey Chmut). Freedom Hall. 10 p.m. Free

Clubs

Guilty Pleasure Party ("guilty pleasure" pop, rock and rap songs). Khvylovyi. 8 p.m. Free

Criminal Practice, Pest and Others (electronic dance music). River Port. 10 p.m. Hr 150-200

Dolkraut, Alex Savage and others (electronic dance music). Otel'. 11:55 p.m. Hr 250. Visitors must be over 21

Gerd Janson (house, techno, disco). Closer. 11:55 p.m. Price to be announced. Visitors must be over 21

Radian Futur, Xorsia, Mella and Others (electronic, experimental). Mezzanine. 11:59 p.m. Hr 200

Miscellaneous

Fearless (photographs and installations about the history of feminism and female activists in Ukraine). Creative Women Space. 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Free

The Ukrainian Canadians (documents, photographs, publications of Ukrainian diaspora in Canada). Museum of Ukrainian Diaspora. 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Hr 25-50

Afterimage (paintings by Artem Volokitin and Tetiana Malinovska, sculptures by Maria Kulikovska, video art by Alina Fedotova). Voloshyn Gallery. 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. Free

Alabaster Atlas (paintings by Ksenia Hnylytska dedicated to Soviet architectural modernism). The Naked Room. 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. Free

Amazing Stories of Crimea (artworks about the history of Crimea and its citizens). Mystetskyi Arsenal. 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. Hr 80. Hr 40 for retirees, school and university students. Free for children under 12, people with disabilities of the 1st, 2nd group, veterans and any museum employee

I Touch (graphics, photos, videos by Daria Koltsova). Shcherbenko Art Center. 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. Free

Late (artworks by Mariia Proshkovska exploring gender issues with emphasis on women's lives in modern society). America House. 11 a.m. - 9 p.m. Free. Bring ID

Puzzle Connection (artworks by young Ukrainians, including artists displaced because of Russia's war in the east of Ukraine). Kyiv History Museum. 11 a.m. - 9

p.m. Free

Sweet Sensation (paintings by Viacheslav Malyna on hexagonal canvases in "expressive pointillism" style). Triptych. 11 a.m. - 7 p.m. Free

Future Generation Art Prize (various artworks by 21 nominees for the prize). Pinchuk Art Center. 12-9 p.m. Free

Wooden Churches of the Carpathians (photographs by French artist Jean-Piere Durand). Art 14. 1-7 p.m. Free

Ash (paintings by Rustam Mirzoev exploring the feeling of loneliness). Tsek. 2-8 p.m. Free

Ethno-Futurism (drawings by Anrew Getmanchuk and Ivan Dudchenko expressing "traditional views in futurist style"). Dom. 2-11 p.m. Free

Chinese Lantern Festival (huge light installations symbolizing ancient Chinese fairy tales and legends). Spivoche Pole. 5-11 p.m. Mon-Fri. Adult - Hr 160, children from 5 to 16 - Hr 130. Sat-Sun. Adult - Hr 200, children - Hr 160. Free for children under 5

Movies

Docudays UA (documentary film festival). Zhovten, Kyiv Cinema, Kyivan Rus, Lira, Izone and other locations. 10 a.m. - 11 p.m. Festival pass - Hr 900, one-day pass - Hr 300, one screening - Hr 50, 90

The Help (drama). America House. 8:30 p.m. Free. Bring ID

Shows

Glava 94 (hip hop). Otel'. 8 p.m. Hr 220

Mykola Zinchenko Quintet (jazz). 32 Jazz Club. 8 p.m. Hr 400

Oleg Kadanov (solo rock performance by member of Orkestr Che and Mennerheim Line bands). MK Music Space. 8 p.m. Hr 200-250

Worn Pop: Gents (synth pop). Closer. 8 p.m. Hr 250

Motorolla (rock). Docker Pub. 10 p.m. Hr 125-1,400

Theater

Carmen (opera in French). National Opera. 7 p.m. Hr 50-600

Saturday, March 30

Classical music

Baroque Music (Bach, Forqueray and others on harpsichord). St. Catherine Church. 6 p.m. Hr 200

Astor the "Killer" of Tango (Astor Piazzolla and the history of tango). National Philharmonic. 7 p.m. Hr 70-300

Mozart (Kyiv Mozart Quartet). Actor's House. 7 p.m. Hr 250-350

Music of Earth (classical music concert dedicated to Earth Hour with lights out). Cinema House. 8 p.m. Hr 175-425

Live music

Game of Thrones (symphonic versions of

soundtracks to famous films, series). Ukraine Palace. 7 p.m. Hr 299-1,159

Classic Rock Cover Night. Docker-G Pub. 9 p.m. Hr 100-125

Back to the 90s (90s hits covers). Docker's ABC. 10 p.m. Hr 100-1,000

Rock You (rock covers). Docker Pub. 10 p.m. Hr 125-1,400

Clubs

Octave One (techno). Film Studio Building. 11 p.m. Hr 400

Steve Marie, Bru, Dolu and Others (house, techno, trance). River Port. 11 p.m. Hr 200-250

Florian Kupfer, Fabiano José and Others (electronic dance music). Otel'. 11:30 p.m. Hr 250

Shanti Celeste (house, techno). Closer. 11:55 p.m. Price to be announced

Miscellaneous

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Choose With Love (this year's first Ulichnaya Eda fair with street food, bars, live music, movies and lectures). Platforma Art Factory. 11 a.m. - 10 p.m. Hr 130

Movies

Docudays UA (documentary film festival). Zhovten, Kyiv Cinema, Kyivan Rus, Lira, Izone and other locations. 10 a.m. - 11 p.m. Festival pass - Hr 900, one-day pass - Hr 300, one screening - Hr 50, 90

Fastball (documentary). America House. 2 p.m. Free. Bring ID

Shows

Skryabin (music show dedicated to the band's late frontman Andrii Kuzmenko). Caribbean Club. 7 p.m. Hr 300-1,500

Los Samos Meets The Police and Sting (electro funk). 32 Jazz Club. 8 p.m. Hr 400

Theater

De Walkure (live broadcast of opera in German with Ukrainian subtitles). Multiplex (Lavina Mall). 6 p.m. Hr 190-240

The Snow Queen (ballet). National Opera. 7 p.m. Hr 50-600

Sunday, March 31

Live music

Ukraine's Big Band Parade (jazz, blues, marches by Ukrainian big bands). National Philharmonic. 7 p.m. Hr 70-300

Miscellaneous

Fearless (photographs and installations about the history of feminism and female activists in Ukraine). Creative Women Space. 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Free

The Ukrainian Canadians (documents, photographs, publications of Ukrainian diaspora in Canada). Museum of Ukrainian Diaspora. 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Hr 25-50

Afterimage (paintings by Artem Volokitin and Tetiana Malinovska, sculptures by Maria Kulikovska, video art by Alina Fedotova). Voloshyn Gallery. 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. Free

Alabaster Atlas (paintings by Ksenia Hnylytska dedicated to Soviet architectural modernism). The Naked Room. 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. Free

Amazing Stories of Crimea (artworks about the history of Crimea and its citizens). Mystetskyi Arsenal. 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. Hr 80. Hr 40 for retirees, school and university students. Free for children under 12, people with disabilities of the 1st, 2nd group, veterans and any museum employee

Puzzle Connection (artworks by young Ukrainians, including artists displaced because of Russia's war in the East of Ukraine). Kyiv History Museum. 11 a.m. - 9 p.m. Free

Sweet Sensation (paintings by Viacheslav Malyna on hexagonal canvases in "expressive pointillism" style). Triptych. 11 a.m. - 7 p.m. Free

Future Generation Art Prize (various artworks by 21 nominees for the prize). Pinchuk Art Center. 12-9 p.m. Free

Ethno-Futurism (drawings by Andrew Getmanchuk and Ivan Dudchenko expressing "traditional views in futurist style"). Dom. 2-11 p.m. Free

Chinese Lantern Festival (huge light installations symbolizing ancient Chinese fairy tales and legends). Spivoche Pole. 5-11 p.m. Mon-Fri. Adult - Hr 160, children from 5 to 16 - Hr 130. Sat-Sun. Adult - Hr 200, children - Hr 160. Free for children under 5

Choose With Love (this year's first Ulichnaya Eda fair with street food, bars, live music, movies and lectures). Platforma Art Factory. 11 a.m. - 10 p.m. Hr 130

Movies

In the Aisles (drama in German). Zhovten. 12:50, 9:10 p.m. Hr 80, 100

The Impressionists (exhibition on screen). Kyiv Cinema. 3 p.m. Hr 150

Beautiful Boy (drama, biography). Zhovten. 3 p.m. Hr 100

Shows

Heinali (electronic music show with lights off). Cinema House. 8 p.m. Hr 100-350

Theater

Don Carlo (opera in Italian). National Opera. 7 p.m. Hr 50-600

Gone With The Secs (amateur play). ProEnglish Theater. 7 p.m. Hr 80

Monday, April 1

Classical music

Oiha Nahorna (Strauss, Donizetti, Charpentier). National Philharmonic. 7 p.m. Hr 70-300

Live music

Live Jazz Monday: Dennis Adu Quintet.

Caribbean Club. 8 p.m. Hr 150-350

Miscellaneous

Fearless (photographs and installations about the history of feminism and female activists in Ukraine). Creative Women Space. 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Free

Alabaster Atlas (paintings by Ksenia Hnylytska dedicated to Soviet architectural modernism). The Naked Room. 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. Free

Puzzle Connection (artworks by young Ukrainians, including artists displaced because of Russia's war in the East of Ukraine). Kyiv History Museum. 11 a.m. - 9 p.m. Free

Sweet Sensation (paintings by Viacheslav Malyna on hexagonal canvases in "expressive pointillism" style). Triptych. 11 a.m. - 7 p.m. Free

Movies

In the Aisles (drama in German). Zhovten. 12:50, 9:10 p.m. Hr 70, 95

Beautiful Boy (drama, biography). Zhovten. 7 p.m. Hr 100

Theater

Julie (British Theater recording, drama). Kyiv Cinema. 7 p.m. Hr 190

Tuesday, April 2

Classical music

Season Opening at Berlin Philharmonic (concert recording screening). MK Music Space. 7 p.m. Free

Live music

Peter Bence (piano covers of world-famous pop hits). Zhovtnevyi Palace. 7 p.m. Hr 550-2,500

Miscellaneous

Fearless (photographs and installations about the history of feminism and female activists in Ukraine). Creative Women Space. 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Free

The Ukrainian Canadians (documents, photographs, publications of Ukrainian diaspora in Canada). Museum of Ukrainian Diaspora. 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Hr 25-50

Alabaster Atlas (paintings by Ksenia Hnylytska dedicated to Soviet architectural modernism). The Naked Room. 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. Free

Amazing Stories of Crimea (artworks about the history of Crimea and its citizens). Mystetskyi Arsenal. 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. Hr 80. Hr 40 for retirees, school and university students. Free for children under 12, people with disabilities of the 1st, 2nd group, veterans and any museum employee

I Touch (graphics, photos, videos by Daria Koltsova). Shcherbenko Art Center. 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. Free

Late (artworks by Mariia Proshkovska exploring gender issues with emphasis on women's lives in modern society). America House. 11 a.m. - 9 p.m. Free. Bring ID

Puzzle Connection (artworks by young Ukrainians, including artists displaced because of Russia's war in the East of Ukraine). Kyiv History Museum. 11 a.m. - 9 p.m. Free

Sweet Sensation (paintings by Viacheslav Malyna on hexagonal canvases in "expressive pointillism" style). Triptych. 11 a.m. - 7 p.m. Free

Future Generation Art Prize (various artworks by 21 nominees for the prize). Pinchuk Art Center. 12-9 p.m. Free

Ethno-Futurism (drawings by Andrew Getmanchuk and Ivan Dudchenko expressing "traditional views in futurist style"). Dom. 2-11

French Spring

The 16th French Spring festival kicks off in Kyiv aiming to reflect the contemporary French and Ukrainian art. This year, the festival will be held in nine Ukrainian cities with a grand opening at Kyiv's Sofiiska Square at 8:30 p.m. on March 30. The latest French Spring festival will feature French movies, music shows, theatrical performances and art exhibitions, and a number of workshops on cooking and craftwork. Apart from that, the festival will give its visitors a chance to try some national French cuisine. The French Spring festival will be held in Kyiv until April 26. **French Spring. March 30 - April 26. Check the detailed program, dates, prices, and locations at www.institutfrancais-ukraine.com**



March 30 - April 26

p.m. Free 🆓

Movies**In the Aisles** (drama in German). Zhovten. 12:50, 9:10 p.m. Hr 70, 95 🎟**Beautiful Boy** (drama, biography). Zhovten. 7 p.m. Hr 100 🎟**Shows****Kristina Marti Quintet** (ethno jazz). Caribbean Club. 8 p.m. Hr 150-450 🎟**Theater****Viennese Waltz** (ballet). National Opera. 7 p.m. Hr 50-600 🎟**Wednesday, April 3****Classical music****Schumann. Poet's Love** (piano and vocals concert). Actor's House. 7 p.m. Hr 100-500 🎟**Live music****Vincent Bourgeyx Trio** (jazz). National Philharmonic. 7 p.m. Hr 100-500 🎟**Miscellaneous****Fearless** (photographs and installations about the history of feminism and female activists in Ukraine). Creative Women Space. 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Free 🆓**The Ukrainian Canadians** (documents, photographs, publications of Ukrainian diaspora in Canada). Museum of Ukrainian Diaspora. 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Hr 25-50 🎟**Afterimage** (paintings by Artem Volokitin and Tetiana Malinovska, sculptures by Maria Kulikovska, video art by Alina Fedotova). Voloshyn Gallery. 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. Free 🆓**Alabaster Atlas** (paintings by Ksenia Hnylytska dedicated to Soviet architectural modernism). The Naked Room. 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. Free 🆓**Amazing Stories of Crimea** (artworks about the history of Crimea and its citizens). Mystetskyi Arsenal. 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. Hr 80. Hr 40 for retirees, school and university students. Free for children under 12, people with disabilities of the 1st, 2nd group, veterans and any museum employee 🆓**I Touch** (graphics, photos, videos by Daria Koltsova). Shcherbenko Art Center. 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. Free 🆓**Late** (artworks by Mariia Proshkovska exploring gender issues with emphasis on women's lives in modern society). America House. 11 a.m. - 9 p.m. Free. Bring ID 🎟**Puzzle Connection** (artworks by young Ukrainians, including artists displaced because of Russia's war in the East of Ukraine). Kyiv History Museum. 11 a.m. - 9 p.m. Free 🆓**Sweet Sensation** (paintings by Viacheslav Malyna on hexagonal canvases in "expressive pointillism" style). Triptych. 11 a.m. - 7 p.m. Free 🆓**Future Generation Art Prize** (various artworks by 21 nominees for the prize). Pinchuk Art Center. 12-9 p.m. Free 🆓**Wooden Churches of the Carpathians** (photographs by French artist Jean-Piere Durand). Art 14. 1-7 p.m. Free 🆓**Ethno-Futurism** (drawings by Andrew Getmanchuk and Ivan Dudchenko expressing "traditional views in futurist style"). Dom. 2-11 p.m. Free 🆓**Movies****In the Aisles** (drama in German). Zhovten. 12:50, 9:10 p.m. Hr 70, 95 🎟**Beautiful Boy** (drama, biography). Zhovten. 3:05 p.m. Hr 80 🎟**The Curious Case of Benjamin Button** (drama). American Library. 4 p.m. Free 🆓**Shows****ic3peak** (experimental, electronic, rave). Atlas. 7 p.m. Hr 900-1,000 🎟**Theater****Carmen Suite** (one-act ballet). National Opera. 7 p.m. Hr 350-3,550 🎟**Thursday, April 4****Classical music****The Great Classics** (by Israeli violinist Shlomo Mintz). Ivan Franko National Academic Drama Theater. 7 p.m. Hr 700-1,450 🎟**Live music****World Hits** (National Presidential Orchestra). National Philharmonic. 7 p.m. Hr 70-300 🎟**Caribbean Jazz Dinner Show** (performance by Freedom Jazz band). Caribbean Club. 8 p.m. Hr 390-1,800 🎟**Miscellaneous****Fearless** (photographs and installations about the history of feminism and female activists in Ukraine). Creative Women Space. 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Free 🆓**The Ukrainian Canadians** (documents, photographs, publications of Ukrainian diaspora in Canada). Museum of Ukrainian Diaspora. 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Hr 25-50 🎟**Afterimage** (paintings by Artem Volokitin and Tetiana Malinovska, sculptures by Maria Kulikovska, video art by Alina Fedotova). Voloshyn Gallery. 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. Free 🆓**Alabaster Atlas** (paintings by Ksenia Hnylytska dedicated to Soviet architectural modernism). The Naked Room. 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. Free 🆓**Amazing Stories of Crimea** (artworks about the history of Crimea and its citizens). Mystetskyi Arsenal. 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. Hr 80. Hr 40 for retirees, school and university students. Free for children under 12, people with disabilities of the 1st, 2nd group, veterans and any museum employee 🆓**I Touch** (graphics, photos, videos by Daria Koltsova). Shcherbenko Art Center. 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. Free 🆓**Late** (artworks by Mariia Proshkovska exploring gender issues with emphasis on women's lives in modern society). America House. 11 p.m. - 9 p.m. Free. Bring ID 🎟**Puzzle Connection** (artworks by young Ukrainians, including artists displaced because of Russia's war in the East of Ukraine). Kyiv History Museum. 11 a.m. - 9 p.m. Free 🆓**Future Generation Art Prize** (various artworks by 21 nominees for the prize). Pinchuk Art Center. 12-9 p.m. Free 🆓**Wooden Churches of the Carpathians** (photographs by French artist Jean-Piere Durand). Art 14. 1-7 p.m. Free 🆓**Ethno-Futurism** (drawings by Andrew Getmanchuk and Ivan Dudchenko expressing "traditional views in futurist style"). Dom. 2-11 p.m. Free 🆓**Movies****Touch Me Not** (drama in English, German with Ukrainian subtitles). Zhovten. 9 p.m. Price to be announced 🎟**Shows****Freedom Jazz** (cabaret, jazz). Caribbean Club. 8 p.m. Hr 390-1,800 🎟**Kovacs** (pop). Stereo Plaza. 8 p.m. Hr 590-4,000 🎟**Theater****Nights in the Gardens of Spain** (one-act ballet). National Opera. 7 p.m. Hr 50-600 🎟**Friday, April 5****Classical music****Sibelius, Franck** (violin concert by Vadym

Brodskiy). National Philharmonic. 7 p.m. Hr 80-400 🎟

Live music**Music is Coming** (music from fantasy films by Lords of the Sound). Ukraine Palace. 7 p.m. Hr 300-950 🎟**Queen vs. Scorpions Tribute** (Beast band). Docker Pub. 10 p.m. Hr 125-1,400 🎟**Clubs****Etapp Kyle** (techno). Closer. 11:55 p.m. Hr 300-400. Visitors must be over 21 🎟**Adis Abbé** (electronic). Dom. 11 p.m. Price to be announced 🎟**Miscellaneous****Fearless** (photographs and installations about the history of feminism and female activists in Ukraine). Creative Women Space. 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Free 🆓**The Ukrainian Canadians** (documents, photographs, publications of Ukrainian diaspora in Canada). Museum of Ukrainian Diaspora. 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Hr 25-50 🎟**Afterimage** (paintings by Artem Volokitin and Tetiana Malinovska, sculptures by Maria Kulikovska, video art by Alina Fedotova). Voloshyn Gallery. 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. Free 🆓**Alabaster Atlas** (paintings by Ksenia Hnylytska dedicated to Soviet architectural modernism). The Naked Room. 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. Free 🆓**Amazing Stories of Crimea** (artworks about the history of Crimea and its citizens). Mystetskyi Arsenal. 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. Hr 80. Hr 40 for retirees, school and university students. Free for children under 12, people with disabilities of the 1st, 2nd group, veterans and any museum employee 🆓**I Touch** (graphics, photos, videos by Daria Koltsova). Shcherbenko Art Center. 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. Free 🆓**Late** (art-objects by Mariia Proshkovska exploring gender issues with emphasis on women's lives in modern society). America House. 11 a.m. - 9 p.m. Free. Bring ID 🎟**Puzzle Connection** (artworks by young Ukrainians, including artists displaced because of Russia's war in the East of Ukraine). Kyiv History Museum. 11 a.m. - 9 p.m. Free 🆓**Future Generation Art Prize** (various artworks by 21 nominees for the prize). Pinchuk Art Center. 12-9 p.m. Free 🆓**Wooden Churches of the Carpathians** (photographs by French artist Jean-Piere Durand). Art 14. 1-7 p.m. Free 🆓**Ethno-Futurism** (drawings by Andrew Getmanchuk and Ivan Dudchenko expressing "traditional views in futurist style"). Dom. 2-11 p.m. Free 🆓**Movies****The Circus** (silent film accompanied by live jazz). Architect's House. 8 p.m. Hr 175-250 🎟**Shows****Moon Zoo and Stone From the Sky** (electronic, post-punk; psychedelic rock, trip-hop). Mezzanine. 7:30 p.m. Hr 200 🎟**Theater****Free!**

Ukrainian artist Freel embodies Ukrainian rap music before and after Russia's war against the country started in 2014. From 2004 he was one of Na Vidminu Vid, a fun and naive hip hop project of two friends from Cherkasy, a city of 270,000 residents 200 kilometers southeast of Kyiv. But those were the innocent days, and since then Freel, whose real name is Andriy Shalimov, has lived through two breakups (with his girlfriend and the band) and most importantly, five years of war in his country. Freel put his experiences into music, resulting in an honest and serious rap album by the artist, whose flow has been tested for years. Freel will present what may be the first Ukrainian conscious rap album in Mezzanine club.

Freel. Mezzanine (31 Nyzhnyourkivska St.) April 6. 8 p.m. Hr 350

April 6

'Puzzle Connection'

An art project based and aimed at dialogue between young Ukrainians occupies the temporary exhibition space at the Kyiv History Museum. Six young artists, some of which have been displaced after the start of Russia's war in the east of Ukraine in 2014, created artworks as a result of dialogue among themselves on issues important to their peers. Their paintings and installations focus on problems like re-socialization, interactions with own self, relatives and wider society. The project was implemented by the informal Youth Contact Group of young Ukrainians supported by the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine.

"Puzzle Connection." Kyiv History Museum (7 Bohdana Khmelnytskoho St.) March 22 - April 7. 11 a.m. - 9 p.m. Free**Tosca** (opera in Italian). National Opera. 7 p.m. Hr 50-600 🎟**Saturday, April 6****Classical music****Kyiv Chamber Orchestra** (Debussy, Ravel). National Philharmonic. 7 p.m. Hr 70-350 🎟**Clubs****Residents Night** (electronic DJ set). Closer. 11:55 p.m. Hr 300-400. Visitors must be over 21 🎟**Best Hits of AC/DC** (cover show). Docker's ABC. 10 p.m. Hr 125-1,250 🎟**Miscellaneous****Fearless** (photographs and installations about the history of feminism and female activists in Ukraine). Creative Women Space. 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Free 🆓**The Ukrainian Canadians** (documents, photographs, publications of Ukrainian diaspora in Canada). Museum of Ukrainian Diaspora. 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Hr 25-50 🎟**Afterimage** (paintings by Artem Volokitin and Tetiana Malinovska, sculptures by Maria Kulikovska, video art by Alina Fedotova). Voloshyn Gallery. 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. Free 🆓**Alabaster Atlas** (paintings by Ksenia Hnylytska dedicated to Soviet architectural modernism). The Naked Room. 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. Free 🆓**Amazing Stories of Crimea** (artworks about the history of Crimea and its citizens). Mystetskyi Arsenal. 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. Hr 80. Hr 40 for retirees, school and university students. Free for children under 12, people with disabilities of the 1st, 2nd group, veterans and any museum employee 🆓**I Touch** (graphics, photos, videos by Daria Koltsova). Shcherbenko Art Center. 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. Free 🆓**Late** (artworks by Mariia Proshkovska exploring gender issues with emphasis on women's lives in modern society). America House. 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Free. Bring ID 🎟**Puzzle Connection** (artworks by young Ukrainians, including artists displaced because of Russia's war in the East of Ukraine). Kyiv History Museum. 11 a.m. - 9 p.m. Free 🆓**Future Generation Art Prize** (various artworks by 21 nominees for the prize). Pinchuk Art Center. 12-9 p.m. Free 🆓**Wooden Churches of the Carpathians** (photographs by French artist Jean-Piere Durand). Art 14. 1-7 p.m. Free 🆓**Ethno-Futurism** (drawings by Andrew Getmanchuk and Ivan Dudchenko expressing "traditional views in futurist style"). Dom. 2-11 p.m. Free 🆓**Urban Jungle and Ceramics Markets** (plants, pots, décor, posters, textiles and furniture with floral patterns, ceramic tableware by Ukrainian producers). Vsi Svoi D12. 10 a.m. - 8 p.m. Free 🆓**Shows****Dakh Daughters** (cabaret, world music). KPI Culture and Arts Center. 7 p.m. Hr 290-1,190 🎟**Summer of Haze** (electronic dance music).**Bingo**. 7 p.m. Hr 300-500 🎟**Detach** (alternative, rock, metal). Atlas. 8 p.m. Hr 330-950 🎟**Free!** (rap). Mezzanine. 8 p.m. Hr 350 🎟**Breaky Boxes** (indie rock, folk, pop). Docker-G Pub. 9 p.m. Free 🆓**Grazhdanin Topinambur** (rock, ska, pop). Docker Pub. 10 p.m. Hr 125-1,400 🎟**Theater****Frankenstein: Lee Miller** (theater recording starring Jonny Lee Miller, Benedict Cumberbatch). Multiplex (Lavina Mall). 3 p.m. Hr 190-240 🎟**The Marriage of Figaro** (two-act ballet). National Opera. 7 p.m. Hr 150-2,900 🎟**Sunday, April 7****Live music****Música. Pasión. Tango** (piano, vocals, dancing show). Architect's House. 7 p.m. Hr 200-450 🎟**Eric Clapton and Buddy Guy Tribute** (by guitarist Pavel Geruk). Docker's ABC. 9 p.m. Free 🆓**Miscellaneous****Fearless** (photographs and installations about the history of feminism and female activists in Ukraine). Creative Women Space. 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Free 🆓**Afterimage** (paintings by Artem Volokitin and Tetiana Malinovska, sculptures by Maria Kulikovska, video art by Alina Fedotova). Voloshyn Gallery. 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. Free 🆓**Alabaster Atlas** (paintings by Ksenia Hnylytska dedicated to Soviet architectural modernism). The Naked Room. 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. Free 🆓**Amazing Stories of Crimea** (artworks about the history of Crimea and its citizens). Mystetskyi Arsenal. 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. Hr 80. Hr 40 for retirees, school and university students. Free for children under 12, people with disabilities of the 1st, 2nd group, veterans and any museum employee 🆓**Puzzle Connection** (artworks by young Ukrainians, including artists displaced because of Russia's war in the East of Ukraine). Kyiv History Museum. 11 a.m. - 9 p.m. Free 🆓**Future Generation Art Prize** (various artworks by 21 nominees for the prize). Pinchuk Art Center. 12-9 p.m. Free 🆓**Ethno-Futurism** (drawings by Andrew Getmanchuk and Ivan Dudchenko expressing "traditional views in futurist style"). Dom. 2-11 p.m. Free 🆓**Urban Jungle and Ceramics Markets** (plants, pots, décor, posters, textiles and furniture with floral patterns, ceramic tableware by Ukrainian producers). Vsi Svoi D12. 10 a.m. - 8 p.m. Free 🆓**Shows****Epolets** (alternative, rock). Atlas. 7 p.m. Hr 340-800 🎟**Theater****Un Ballo in Maschera** (opera in Italian). National Opera. 7 p.m. Hr 50-600 🎟**Venues****Classical Music**

- Actor's House (7 Yaroslaviv Val St.) +38044 235 2081
- National Philharmonic of Ukraine (2 Volodymyrskyi Uzviz St.) +38044 278 6291
- St. Catherine Church (22 Liuteranska St.) +38044 253 6319
- Ivan Franko National Academic Drama Theater (3 Ivana Franka Sq.) +38044 279 5921

Live Music

- Caribbean Club (4 Petliuryi St.) +38067 224 4111
- Docker Pub (25 Bohatyrka St.) +38050 358 5513
- Docker's ABC (15 Khreshchatkyi St.) +38050 440 1525
- Docker-G Pub (13/5 Ihorivska St.) +38095 280 8340
- Cinema House (6 Saksahanskoho St.) +38044 287 7557
- Freedom Hall (134 Kyrylivska St.) +38067 239 8461
- Zhovtnevyi Palace (1 Heroiv Nebesnoi Sotni Alley) +38044 279 1582
- Ukraine Palace (103 Velyka Vasylykivska St.) +38044 247 2476

- Closer (31 Nyzhnoirukivska St.) +38067 250 0308
- Dom Music Bar (10/5A Petra Sahaidachnoho St.) +38096 011 0515
- Khylovoyi Bar (18 Verkhniy Val St.) +38063 443 0925
- Otel' (31 Nyzhnoirukivska St.) +38063 618 0145
- River Port (67 Nyzhniy Val St.) www.facebook.com/riverportkyiv
- Film Studio Building (86 Kyrylivska St.)

- American Library Kyiv (8/5 Voloska St.) +38044 462 5674
- Kyiv Cinema (19 Velyka Vasylykivska St.) +38044 234 7381
- Creative Women Space (9B Mykhailivskyi Ln.) +38063 158 2008
- Kyiv History Museum (7 Bohdana Khmelnytskoho St.) +38044 520 2825
- Voloshyn Gallery (13 Tereshchenkivska St.) +38044 467 0007
- Triptych Global Arts Workshop (34 Andriivskyi Uzviz St.) +38044 279 0759
- Platforma Art Factory (1 Bilomorska St.) +38044 461 8810
- Multiplex Cinema (Lavina Mall, 6D Berkovetska St.) 0800 505 333
- Zhovten Cinema (26 Kostiantynivska St.) +38044 428 5757
- Kyivan Rus Cinema (93 Sichovykh Striltsiv St.) +38044 486 7474
- Izone (8 Naberezhno-Luhova St.) +38067 622 8794
- Lira Cinema (40 Velyka Zhytomyrska St.) +38044 272 4100
- Architect's House (7 Borysa Hrinchenka St.) +38050 386 7410
- 32 Jazz Club (32 Volodymyrska St.) +38044 462 5674
- Kyiv Cinema (19 Velyka Vasylykivska St.) +38044 234 7381
- Mystetskyi Arsenal (10-12 Lavrska St.) +38044 288 5225
- Art 14 Gallery (14 Mykhailivskyi Ln.) +38044 461 9055
- Shcherbenko Art Center (22V Mykhailivska St.) +38096 801 2041
- Museum of Ukrainian Diaspora (40B Moskovska St.) +38044 280 6418
- Vsi Svoi D12 (12 Desiatynna St.) www.facebook.com/vsi.svoi
- Mystetskyi Arsenal (10-12 Lavrska St.) +38044 288 5225
- Art 14 Gallery (14 Mykhailivskyi Ln.) +38044 461 9055

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IT Sector

What technology firms value in legal assistance

BY VYACHESLAV HNATYUK
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Tech companies have taken full advantage of the internet's global reach, often working in multiple jurisdictions.

But while such companies tend to be physically headquartered in the West and have legal teams there, local legal help is sometimes needed, and in this way Ukrainian law firms can pick up profitable work, and, hopefully, long-term clients.

In fact, many tech companies operating in Ukraine work mainly outside of the country and are headquartered abroad — like Astound Commerce, a provider of internet trade solutions for global retail giants like Crocs, Moosejaw, and BBC Shop. The company, founded in 1999, has several international offices, including its headquarters in San Francisco, and four software development centers in Ukraine.

Darja Gornitska, the general manager of Astound Commerce Ukraine says that for her company, the legal course is set by the head office.

"We have our head office in San Francisco, and that is where our Global Legal team works, who are responsible for global law-related issues, as well as compliance and the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation, or GDPR," Gornitska says. "They set the standard approaches and directions of the company's operations."

Homegrown

But a number of big tech companies, rather than expanding into Ukraine by opening sales and R&D centers



Oleg Zelisko (left) and Dmytro Hural (right), two legal counsels at Intellias, bet on both experience and specialisation when hiring external legal advisors for their firm. (Courtesy)

in the country, instead started up here and expanded outward. One example is Intellias, founded in Lviv in 2002 and now working from there and from additional offices in Kyiv, Kharkiv and Odesa, plus operating a delivery center in Berlin.

Intellias engages external legal advisors to tackle "specific or complex issues" and that happens about "once a year," says Dmytro Hural, an in-house lawyer with Intellias.

"There are also small legal tasks, which are outsourced for the purposes of optimization. These are tasks like the legalization of the employment of foreigners in Ukraine," Hural says.

Astound Commerce also has a legal team in Ukraine, which deals with the issues of Ukrainian offices

only, such as legislative changes in Ukraine, contractual and labor relations, as well as contracts with suppliers and other partners. The company mainly relies on international law firms, as they can provide solutions that cover several jurisdictions at once.

The selection of legal advisors within Astound Commerce is centralized, but sometimes local advice is necessary as well, and often the company asks for recommendations of local law firms and looks at top companies and top lawyers, Gornitska says.

To get on the selection shortlist of companies like Astound Commerce, local law firms are well advised to participate in legal rankings. Some experience in the field of IT law is also a must, Gornitska says.

Oleg Zelisko, an in-house lawyer at Intellias, agrees: "Previous experience in the IT industry is important. We really don't want to be a learning exercise for people (lawyers), as this will cause additional expenditures of time, and bring risks."

International experience

For a law firm to gain the trust of IT players it will have to have a well-developed suite of services tailored to the demands of the industry. This indicates to potential clients that the firm's lawyers have taken the time to research the industry and develop insights into the industry's needs.

For a law firm to win business with a big IT client, these insights have to be supported with practical experience in the industry. The firms have to show off a track record of completed projects on which clients can give testimony and feedback.

A local law firm has an added advantage if it is a constituent part of an international company, says Gornitska, but she underscores that it is not an absolute must. Often it is enough for a local firm to give evidence of experience working internationally, perhaps with clients from neighboring countries.

Intellias announced a tender when the firm was selecting lawyers for its GDPR project. The criteria for winning the tender included previous experience, the price, and the scope of work on offer for the price. The firm's management awarded the contract to PwC. The first stage of the GDPR compliance lasted for half a year, and now Intellias is considering whether to continue independently or jointly with PwC.

The swiftness of a law firm's reaction to a potential client's request is a major factor when IT companies look for local legal help, while pricing is always an issue, but not the most important one, says Gornitska.

Last year Intellias attracted investments from Horizon Capital, a direct investment management company based in Kyiv. The IT company engaged lawyers for that project but declined to reveal their identity to Kyiv Post.

Overspecialization

While market for legal services for the IT sphere is growing, Hural sees pluses and minuses to this. On the one hand, it is good for lawyers to specialize and raise their levels of professionalism. But on the other hand, "too narrow positioning can play an evil joke" on such lawyers, as they are not aware of other issues that can affect the firm, he says.

"Maybe it is right from a marketing point of view, but the niche is getting (too) concentrated," says Hural, adding that some lawyers that brand themselves as IT lawyers are not really up to the job.

Specialization brings most value when it is achieved with the help of good-quality and reputable training, he says.

Zelisko agrees.

"There are several courses, which help you learn (IT law well), such as the Digital Law Course offered by the Business Consulting Academy in Kyiv, or the Ukrainian Catholic University's IT Law program," he says.

"These are respected for the experience of the lawyers teaching there." ■

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APRIL 19

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APRIL 26

AUDITING & ACCOUNTING

8th YUNA honors the best in music on March 22

The Hardkiss, who won three awards such as the Best Album, Best Concert Show and became the Best Rock Band of the year, performs at the YUNA music awards on stage at the Ukraine Palace of Arts in Kyiv on March 22, 2019. Often referred to as "Ukrainian Grammy," the eighth YUNA music awards took place at the capital's Ukraine Palace of Arts, on March 22, 2019. This year, the nominations have expanded from 11 to 16 categories, adding the Best Other Language Song, Best Electronic Music Hit, Best Pop Hit, Best Hip-Hop Hit, and the Best Artist's Management. YUNA Music Awards was founded in 2011 by Kyiv Post ex-publisher Mohammad Zahoor with the help of radio host and producer Pavlo Shylko. The winners of the award are determined by the team of judges, all connected to Ukraine's music industry. Apart from that, the auditing firm Deloitte monitors the process of winners' selection. This year, the ceremony was hosted by the TV presenter and radio host Volodymyr Ostapchuk, who emphasized the importance of having more songs in Ukrainian language. (Volodymyr Petrov)



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Government faces blame in delay of e-revolution

BY IGOR KOSSOV
KOSSOV@KYIVPOST.COM

Ukraine's ongoing process to connect all government bodies electronically and take all public services digital is running into delays, experts have told the Kyiv Post.

Various online platforms to be used by state bodies are being introduced in a "chaotic and fragmentary" manner without a common vision, said Volodymyr Flontz, chairman at NGO e-Democracy and software engineer at state procurement service ProZorro. He added that the laws on e-governance, while in force, need further refinement.

"There is no common vision or any clear plan," he said in an email. "One of the largest launches of this year – the e-court platform – has been postponed indefinitely."

Experts say that this lack of a clear roadmap is the biggest obstacle to digitizing the work of the Ukrainian government. Solving this problem will be a major challenge for lawmakers and the various ministries and state agencies. Digitizing municipal services at the local level will be an even bigger challenge.

National level

The planned backbone of Ukraine's e-governance, Trembita, named after a traditional horn, is an IT system modeled on Estonia's X-road platform. It would allow state agencies to quickly exchange up-to-date information from their respective databases and enable all public services to be processed electronically.

Trembita was developed in partnership with Estonia's e-Government Academy and the European Union delegation in Ukraine. The core of the platform is now finished, has its security certification, and is awaiting implementation.

Oleksandr Ryzhenko, the head of the State Agency for E-Governance of Ukraine, said in an interview that last year's challenge was to launch an operable electronic system, while this year's challenge is to hook it up to the multitude of registries and databases being used by the various parts of the government. Getting everyone on the same page will not be easy, he said.

Government bodies are all working at different speeds, with different deadlines, amid constantly shifting standards, said Jaanika Merilo, an e-governance expert and adviser to the Dnipro Oblast administration.

"There are different informatization projects whose deadlines passed and they weren't created," said Merilo.

Ivar Tallo, a founder of the e-Gov-

ernance Academy, who evaluated Ukraine's e-governance reforms, agreed that the lack of major registries was a major obstacle to further development. Furthermore, "major ministries have not embraced digital procedures yet in their day to day activities," he said.

Legislation is in the works to create common standards for state registries, of which there are more than 350, and link them into a unified system. The bill passed the Rada's Communication and Informatization committee in October and is awaiting to be debated by parliament.

Despite this legislation, several experts said that interoperability is not as prioritized as it should be by the government. Flontz called this work "insufficient," saying that Trembita could be a good system but that there are a bunch of other systems already operating in parallel with it.

"This 'zoo' does not contribute to transparent and planned development," said Flontz.

Ryzhenko said that top-down integration of government IT is more feasible in authoritarian regimes than it is in a country like Ukraine. The problem of trying to herd various state bodies together comes out of the way that the Ukrainian government is set up, he added.

The agency has come under fire before. The Accounting Chamber of Ukraine released a January audit, finding that the agency "failed to effectively use Hr 837 million (about \$35 million), of which 46 percent was spent unproductively, since the electronic system was not working as intended." The audit also said that some of the agency's procurements violated regulations.

Ryzhenko said that the agency missed deadlines due to the nature of IT work and because the deadlines often depended on the work of other bodies. He added that the agency expects to work more efficiently in the future.

Not everything is in a sad state. The country already offers 120 e-services through a central portal, with 50 more expected to come online in 2019. Flontz said that the recent launch of an electronic system for drivers, as well as the preparation for the launch of a unified electronic identification system look encouraging.

Tallo did not agree that implementation was as sloppy as some other experts said. According to Tallo, the political desire to catch up very quickly to more digitized governments led to unrealistic

more E-revolution on page 18



OpenDataBot founder Oleksiy Ivankin explains opportunities of using open data for society's benefit as he speaks with the Kyiv Post on March 1, 2019, in Kyiv. (Kostyantyn Chernichkin)

Information technology drives changes in legal profession

BY VYACHESLAV HNATYUK
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Information technology is becoming an essential element of every industry, and the legal sphere is no exception. But while some lawyers are threatened by the advances of IT and artificial intelligence, others are looking for ways to adapt to the changing conditions.

For some routine legal functions, lawyers could even be completely replaced by artificial intelligence as technology becomes more and more sophisticated: online platforms for dispute resolution, case analysis and legal education are already starting to appear.

Disruption opportunities

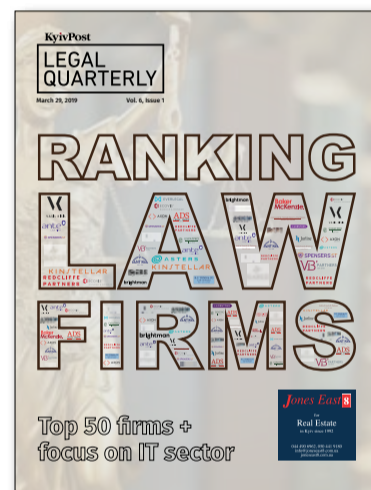
However, it's unlikely the traditional legal industry will come to an end: Most lawyers say rather that the legal industry is facing short-term disruption from the advancement of technology, which is introducing some challenges, but that technology is hardly going to revolutionize the core of the industry. In fact, it is actually bringing opportunities.

"Over the last 50 years, technology has significantly changed the business of law," says Dima Gadomsky of Axon Partners law firm. All the same, the bedrock of the law profession remains untouched. For Gadomsky, a disruptive innovation would be something on the level of Uber changing the taxi market, or Amazon changing retail trade.

So while people can now shop without going to a bricks-and-mortar shop, for legal advice "a person still comes to see a lawyer, and you don't yet come to see a bot," Gadomsky says. However, lawyers have always used newly emerging technologies to automate standard procedures in their work, and can use algorithms to streamline legal processes.

Legal innovations

A notable success story in the area of Ukrainian legal tech is Axdraft, a startup founded by Yuriy Zarembo. Axdraft promises to save lawyers hours of work by automating legal drafting tasks, through gathering,



The Kyiv Post Legal Quarterly published on March 29, 2019, includes a ranking of top law firms and covers the information technology sector.

analyzing, classifying and synthesizing bits and pieces of legal contracts from dozens of sources.

Axdraft has already attracted a number of Ukrainian clients – big law firms and legal departments of major corporations. Zarembo is currently on an internship in Silicon Valley learning how to develop his business and increase his client portfolio.

Kyiv-based Aequo law firm has also been investing into legal innovation. The firm's partner Anna Babych says that these innovations could make the business much more efficient and effective.

The firm has created the AequoFriends platform for legal interns. The platform opens access to Aequo to interns from all over Ukraine, meaning they don't have to come to the physical office. Instead, interns receive tasks and feedback remotely. "This fosters a proactive approach, gives (interns) an opportunity to choose their tasks, and provides students from the regions a chance to compete against their peers from the capital," Babych explains.

Aequo also launched the Legal Tech Challenge, a competition for those who want to create innovations in the legal industry. The competition has supported legal tech startups like

Court On The Palm, an analytical platform for court decisions, and Rent it Bot – a self-help application for drafting rental contracts.

Three years ago IT-entrepreneur Oleksiy Ivankin saw there was a need to create a search engine to sift through public data in Ukraine. Since then, Ivankin and his colleagues have been working hard on developing Open Data Bot, an open data platform for Ukrainian citizens and businesses.

"The major task of legal tech is to ensure flow of expertise from top lawyers to the mass market," Ivankin says. His Open Data Bot now serves more than 300,000 users by collecting data from public registries and making it available on its centralized platform.

"We're not taking away work from lawyers," Ivankin says. "But we're taking away the routine, the (technical) mistakes, and adding timeliness."

The Ukrainian legal tech scene is already well connected with the global legal community and with various institutions abroad.

For example, Dmytro Foremny of the Hague Institute for the Innovation of Law, or HILL, collaborates with both entrepreneurs and the Ministry of Justice.

Foremny scouts for the best legal innovation ideas and provides them with support in the form of training, grant money and acceleration events. Through such support, HILL says it is promoting "the development of a legal tech ecosystem in Ukraine." So far about a dozen startups have received 5,000-15,000 euros each in grants from HILL – a total of 120,000 euros.

But the growth of legal tech will not eradicate the legal profession, as "you cannot copy and paste complex things like litigations and transactions," Babych explains. "They will always be there for lawyers."

However, the demand for a typical lawyer will not be growing, she says.

Meanwhile, the legal business will see new professions appear, and will open up to more non-lawyers, Gadomsky says. Be on the lookout in future for job ads for "a big data lawyer," "an analyst lawyer," or a "legal engineer," he adds. ■

White-hat hackers ride to cyber-rescue in Ukraine

BY NATALIA DATSKEVYCH
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In the information age, data has become such a valuable commodity that its loss can cost companies everything. So, it's worth hiring experts to protect it.

Recent cyberattacks on Ukraine show the country is far from meeting European legislation and standards of cybersecurity: in 2015, around 225,000 people in western Ukraine lost electricity supplies after a cyber-attack on a power grid, probably originating from Russia; and in 2017 the "NotPetya" virus hit Ukrainian banks, government offices and numerous companies across the country before going on to spread around the world.

That attack cost companies around the globe billions of dollars. Just one company — Maersk, the world's largest container shipping company — lost anywhere between \$200-\$300 million, business magazine *Forbes* reported on Aug. 16, 2017.

There have been no such massive attacks since then, but the assaults continue. In 2018, Ukraine was hit with at least nine serious cyberattacks, making the country the top target in Central and Eastern Europe, according to U.S. based Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The reason is simple — weak legislation and lax cyber security standards.

"Despite the fact that two years ago a cybersecurity law was passed that demanded the adoption of a number of regulatory documents," not much has changed, said Yuriy Kotliarov, a partner at Asters law firm.

So malicious hackers, whoever they are, have continued to probe for weaknesses in Ukraine's information technology systems, and launching occasional attacks.

Luckily, not all hackers are bad.

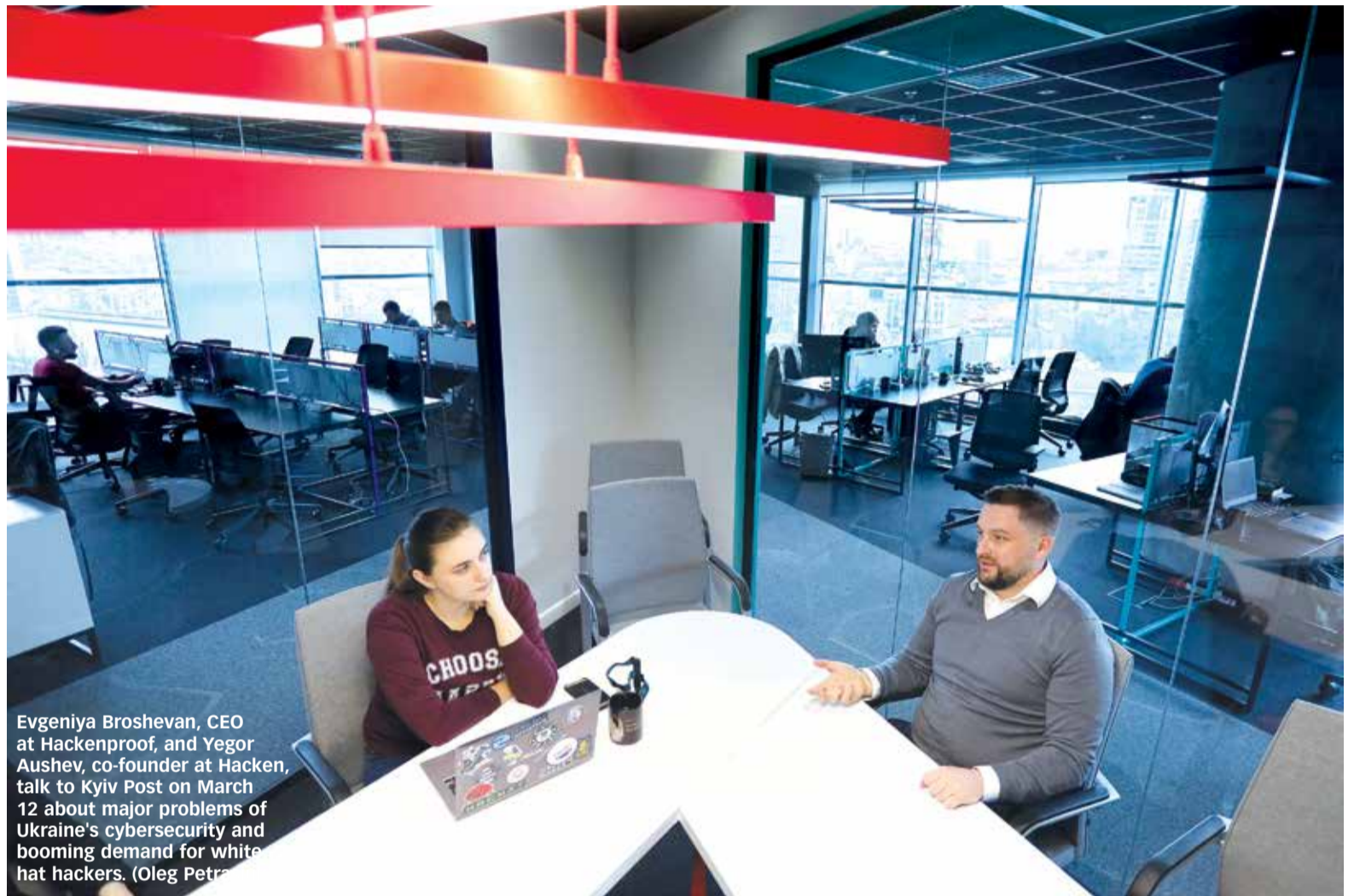
Bug hunters

Since the massive "NotPetya" virus attack a year-and-a-half ago, ethical "white-hat" hackers have started to work in Ukraine.

These computer specialists uncover security flaws, or bugs, before "black-hat" cybercriminals can detect and use them, often causing enormous damage as they do.



Asters partner Yuriy Kotliarov (Oleg Petrasiiuk)



Evgeniya Broshevan, CEO at Hackenproof, and Yegor Aushev, co-founder at Hacken, talk to Kyiv Post on March 12 about major problems of Ukraine's cybersecurity and booming demand for white-hat hackers. (Oleg Petrasiiuk)

"In the (average) person's mind, a hacker is an evil guy with a hoodie who hacks everything and steals," Yegor Aushev, co-founder of Hacken, a Ukrainian company specializing on cybersecurity consultancy, told the Kyiv Post. "But when someone pays a white-hat hacker, they pay for results. A white-hat hacker will find vulnerabilities, and might even help to fix them."

Trying to catch up with the increasing global demand for cybersecurity services, Hacken created a special platform called Hacken Proof, which already unites 1,500 white-hat hackers located in 70 countries. It serves as a link between ethical hackers and companies struggling to find security weaknesses in their systems. Around 80 percent of Hacken's clients are foreign companies, but the number of big Ukrainian companies in their client base is also growing due to the country starting to implement the required international data safety standards.

And bug hunting can cost a lot.

While the prices for the most basic service start from \$100, it can cost up to \$250,000 to detect a major vulnerability.

That's why white-hat hackers in developed countries can earn good money without the need to worry about being arrested for cybercrime. Unfortunately, in Ukraine there is still no punishment for black-hat hackers.

"On average, newcomers and average guys earn \$5,000-\$10,000 per month, whereas more experienced people can earn \$20,000-\$50,000. The most experienced earn

\$100,000 per month," said Evgeniya Broshevan, CEO of Hacken Proof.

Recently BBC news agency reported on 19-year-old Santiago Lopez from Argentina, the first white-hat hacker millionaire. Santiago was able to find vulnerabilities in the software of some of the largest global tech companies, such as Twitter and Verizon.

Bug bounty

And it's not only the private sector that uses the services of ethical hackers.

While in Ukraine it is still forbidden by law to probe the systems of various ministries for cybersecurity vulnerabilities, many other states use the services of white-hat hackers, experts say.

"In Switzerland, the government offered a bug bounty (compensation for reporting bugs) in its e-voting system," said Broshevan. "They allocated 250,000 euros for the project, of which 150,000 euros was paid to a company to manage the process and 100,000 euros to hackers for finding the vulnerabilities."

In the United States there is a "bug bounty" center called HackerOne, one of the clients of which is the U.S. Department of Defense.

"Why isn't Ukraine introducing such systems? I don't think that The Pentagon has any fewer secrets than the Ministry of Defense or Ukraine's State Service of Special Communications. I don't think this is right," said Kotliarov.

Another option to improve the national level of cybersecurity is to increase the number of special

centers that accept vulnerability reports, in both the public and private sectors.

Ukraine currently has only one such center, called the Computer Emergency Response Team of Ukraine, or CERT.

"In Europe, (such centers) are sprouting up every year, like mushrooms after rain," said Aushev. "There were 28 of them in Germany, then 30, 32... We should be having a cybersecurity explosion, we should have 10, 15, 20 centers like this."

But even if a private company offered to do cybersecurity tests for the Ukrainian government at no cost, it would come up against a bureaucratic firewall.

"At this time it's easier for us to sign three contracts with Asia and provide them with services," said Aushev.

What to expect next

However, despite all the difficulties and sluggish progress, there are still positive trends to be seen in Ukraine.

Just a couple of years ago, when the "NotPetya" virus hit Ukraine, most of the work for lawyers concerned addressing the consequences of the attack — broken contracts,

unforeseen losses, and so on. Now companies are asking their lawyers about cyber-risk management and how to come into compliance with the new regulatory requirements.

"A well-run business makes information security management part of its strategy — today it's a must," said Kotliarov.

Vitaliy Yakushev, operations director at 10 Guards, another Ukrainian cybersecurity consulting company, says that cybersecurity due diligence is an investment for a company.

"It's still too early to talk about growth in the (cybersecurity) market, but I'm completely confident that it will definitely happen, since it's impossible to ignore the impact of cyber-attacks on businesses," he said.

This year parliament is expected to pass a law on information security auditing, which could open up the Ukrainian market for the provision of "white-hat hacker" services. In addition, lawmakers are discussing another law on the cybersecurity of objects of critical importance, such as energy companies, banks, healthcare, infrastructure and the central election commission.

It's still unclear, however, when these laws will be adopted. ■

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Government faces blame in delay of e-revolution

E-revolution from page 16

expectations, especially in a country as complex as Ukraine. This government has been doing a good job, he said.

Local level

There are also challenges with e-governance at the local level, said experts. Merilo said that 90 percent of cities do not have up to date electronic registries, which are being implemented on a voluntary basis.

Most of the public, especially in smaller population centers, still does not fully understand electronic services and many local government officials don't want or understand digitization, according to Ryzhenko.

The best-known local platform is iGov, now controlled by Dnipro Oblast and used in 63 towns and cities in Ukraine. The platform enables residents to apply for passports and licenses, sign up for a doctor's appointment, register their place of residence and family composition,



The Dnipro City Council meeting with e-governance expert Jaanika Merilo, center, to discuss transparent government tenders in September 2016. While e-governance has grown in Ukraine since then, administrative chaos is holding it back. (Courtesy)

and access a variety of other services online.

Being government-controlled allows iGov to link to a series of municipal registries and become a one-stop-shop service for local residents and businesses, said Merilo.

Not everyone is as optimistic. Dmytro Dubilet, former IT director at PrivatBank, who developed iGov before handing it over to Dnipro Oblast and no longer actively works with it, said that he sees iGov's expansion being obstructed by the government.

"Unfortunately, the central authorities have done a lot to ensure that regional assets on iGov are not developing as quickly as we would like," Dubilet wrote in an email. "There were a number of cases when services were launched, and then it was instructed from Kyiv to close them immediately."

Dubilet did not provide additional information, saying he wanted to keep the backlash against iGov to a minimum. Merilo said that she was not aware of this kind of obstruction. ■

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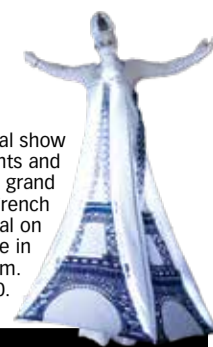
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Enjoy a theatrical show with music, lights and acrobatics at the grand opening of the French Spring festival on Sofiivska Square in Kyiv at 8:30 p.m. on March 30.



Ukraine's first-time voters: What are they thinking?



A voter yawns at a polling station in the Ukrainian local elections in Kyiv on Oct. 25, 2015. (Pavlo Podufalov)

BY ARTUR KORNIENKO
KORNIENKO@KYIVPOST.COM

The turnout of the youngest of voters can make all the difference in the Ukrainian presidential elections on March 31, more so than in any other election in the country's history.

The results of the front-runner Volodymyr Zelenskiy, actor and comedian, depend heavily on the

first- and second-time voters.

Zelenskiy's lead with 27.7 percent is driven by the support of the 38 percent of these 18 to 22-year-olds, according to the March 25 poll by Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, Razumkov Center and Rating sociological group.

However, younger Ukrainians historically don't vote as actively as the older generation.

Zelenskiy could lose up to one-third of his potential votes, because younger voters may not show up at the polls, political analyst Volodymyr Fesenko told *Novoye Vremya* magazine.

This would equal Zelenskiy chances of winning in the first round of elections with the chances of former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko and President Petro Poroshenko,

who have 16.6 and 16.4 percent of support respectively, according to the same poll. The probable runoff election is scheduled for April 21.

The Kyiv Post spoke to five first-time voters from different parts of Ukraine. Most of them say they will come to the voting polls but still have not made up their minds on who to vote for.

more Voters on page 21

Go healthy at new Good Girl restaurant

It's not easy to go bad at Kyiv's new healthy restaurant Good Girl.

The place sticks to the good-for-you lifestyle concept serving breakfast and dinner. For example, they don't use sugar and lactose and mostly work with products from local farmers.

Good Girl opened less than half a month ago on one of Kyiv's busiest business streets, Mechnykova. It's a new restaurant by the owners of Milk Bar, the city's trendy place famous for serving a wide range of tasty American-style desserts.

Vegan and healthy food venues have been popping up in Kyiv lately, but many of them don't set the bar high for tasty food, good service, convenient location, unique concept and environmental responsibility. Good Girl does just that.

The restaurant doesn't have any sign outside yet, however, it's still easy to find. The place is located right next to one of the exits from Klovska metro station — it's a corner part of the building number 7 of Mechnykova Street. The entrance's wall-sized windows that look dark from the outside have striped awning canopy above them. But the key to finding the new restaurant is actually its entrance adorned by two large vases filled with dried plants.

I decided to start my day at the restaurant and try out their breakfast options.

It is impossible to book a table for the morning and day time at Good Girl: Before 4:30 p.m. it works on the first-come, first-served basis seating guests from a line one by one, similar to its sister restaurant Milk Bar. As for dinner time, the restaurant's guests can book a table for after 5 p.m. every day.

So I came at 10 a.m. on a working day having no reservation. There was no issue with seating, however, the place was crowded — something I didn't expect.

I entered the restaurant and found myself greeted by a waitress right away. She helped me with picking a table and brought a menu right after.

The atmosphere was filled with lively conversations and

more Restaurant on page 20

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Food Critic

'Have you been a good girl?' asks the neon sign on this restaurant's wall

Restaurant from page 19

music, and designed with seats that resemble city benches complementing each other and creating the image of a busy city venue.

Apart from benches, the restaurant has plenty of thoughtful touches like potted plants, glass vases with fresh flowers and dried spikelets, as well as a huge glass stillage with pottery, which divides the place into two halls.

The whole restaurant has a stylish combination of grey and dark green colors and the latter is actually part of Good Girl's official style: Their logo, menus, and staff's uniform is also dark green.

The restaurant offers a wide range of breakfast options including gluten-free oatmeal with chia seeds, banana, and cocoa, smoothie bowl with strawberries, banana, granola, coconut and sesame. Apart from that, they serve eggs Benedict with salmon, spinach and buckwheat flour, English muffin, as well as avocado toast either with shrimp or with poached eggs and vegetables.

But I had my eyes on the breakfast meal called "Good Girl" for Hr 265, which offered a house-made coconut yogurt with granola and berries, avocado toast and an egg – I ordered mine poached.

My meal was ready in a matter of minutes but before it even was served I had already been won over by a bottle of free water, a rare thing in Kyiv, where restaurants don't miss a chance to cash in on selling a pricey basic drink.

The breakfast was served on a tray with small white plates. I was surprised by how good their home-made yogurt was given that they don't use lactose, and I certainly didn't expect my strawberries and raspberries to be as juicy and tasty in March.



A waiter serves food at the new Kyiv restaurant Good Girl, which promotes healthy lifestyle, mostly uses farmers' products and offers good-for-you dishes and drinks, on March 28, 2019. (Oleg Petراسиuk)

After finishing the yogurt, I moved to try the poached egg, which had a plain but good taste and was perfectly cooked. Being a fan of poached eggs, I certainly noticed that the egg wasn't from a mass production site such as most eggs sold at supermarkets – it had a strong flavor and its yolk was bright. This is the kind of products we, in Ukraine, call "home-like" meaning they are

organic and are grown at farms or people's homes.

I was a bit disappointed, however, by my avocado toast. Although the mashed avocado was fresh and it blended well with the buckwheat whole-grain bread, the dish was a bit too bland lacking colors in taste. Or is it my spices-spoiled receptors speaking?

My flat white with coconut milk

(Hr 69) was sourish, strong, and tasty. All Good Girl's coffee drinks including macchiato, cappuccino, and latte, are made with house-made plant milk – almond, coconut or the one made from chufa sedge (earth almond) with basmati rice.

Apart from breakfast, the restaurant's day menu, which is served from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. offers soups, salads, "Good Girl Burger" with turkey or veggie patty, zucchini pasta with turkey bolognese sauce and noodles with salmon.

Although I was tempted to try Good Girl's sugar-free desserts, my breakfast was so filling I couldn't make myself eat again. So I decided to place a to-go order. My server was helpful describing all the desserts on the showing window – I eventually picked matcha cheesecake with strawberries for Hr 120, which tasted unusual and pleased my sweet tooth, and a mango muffin for Hr 75, which, again, was delicious but didn't burst in flavors. As for desserts, the place also served carrot cake and key lime pie.

Ordering take-out, I couldn't resist but get one of Good Girl's trademarks, enticing smoothies. The restaurant makes the drink in six ways, and my choice was "Healthy Snack" with peach, mango, coconut cream, artichoke, and oat flakes. The smoothie was not only a tasty drink but also a filling option to tame hunger. The place also makes cold-pressed juices for Hr 69–110.

At 4:30 p.m., Good Girl takes a 30-minute break closing their kitchen – guests can still order drinks and desserts during this time. After

5 p.m. the restaurant switches to dinner mode and offers a range of tempting dishes. They serve appetizers such as cauliflower flatbread, guacamole with spelt chips, and tuna ceviche, as well as soups and salads. The entrées include: turkey and veggie burgers, octopus with black rice, farmer's chicken served with baked vegetables, Norwegian trout with artichoke puree, and a cauliflower steak with mashed Brussels sprouts.

And all of the courses can be complemented with red, white or sparkling wine from the sixteen-option cart.

What added to my pleasant experience at Good Girl was its environmental consciousness. The place uses wooden straws for drinks, and their take-out bags are made from biodegradable material that decays in three years.

The rare find combines everything that is necessary from a good restaurant and even more. It is definitely worth a visit and is certainly a must for those who eat healthy and care about the planet.

"Have you been a good girl?" the neon sign hanging on one of Good Girl's walls reads.

Well, it's almost impossible not to be at a place like this. ■

Good Girl

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First-time voters tell all about top presidential candidates

Voters from page 19



Oleksandr Kolesnik,
Luhansk-Kharkiv

"I don't know. Of course, there is a choice, but I'll go vote and decide on the spot," says Oleksandr Kolesnik, 21, a student in Kharkiv, who was displaced from Luhansk after the start of Russia's war in eastern Ukraine.

The one candidate Kolesnik won't vote for is Yulia Tymoshenko, because of the gas contracts she signed with Russia in 2009. The contracts are generally considered unfavorable for Ukraine, and Kolesnik fears she could do something similar again.

As for Poroshenko, Kolesnik says the incumbent president rebuilt the Ukrainian army and helps keep the border safe. However, nothing has changed in the country dramatically. Zelenskiy, he says, may not have enough experience in politics.

Kolesnik wants the new president to bring stability that was lost after the start of the war. He thought about leaving Ukraine to study abroad but then decided that it was better to stay with his family.

"Young people don't pay much attention to politics," he says. "The main thing for them is finding themselves."



Uliana Nikitin,
Ternopil

"If Volodymyr Zelenskiy was not on the election ballot, then I would probably not vote," says Uliana Nikitin, 19, a makeup artist from Ternopil.

Nikitin has not felt any positive changes in the country since Poroshenko has become president in 2014. As Kolesnik, she thought about moving to work abroad, because of higher salaries and living conditions. The foremost thing she expects

from a new president is to end the war in eastern Ukraine.

"I have never been interested in politics, but now I understand how important it is, especially for the young people. We are creating our own future," Nikitin says.



Nastia Zadykhailo,
Kyiv

"It's 50-50 for me. There are two candidates I'm choosing between: Zelenskiy and Tymoshenko," says Nastia Zadykhailo, 18, a student from Kyiv. She says there are pros and cons about each candidate.

She favors Tymoshenko's determination "to change the country." However, Zadykhailo says that Tymoshenko's 2009 gas contracts with Russia have damaged her reputation.

The fact that Zelenskiy has never been in politics can be both good and bad, Zadykhailo says. On the one hand, he may destroy the system of corruption in Ukraine. On the other, he can be inexperienced in diplomacy. And there are also rumors about him being the puppet of oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky, she says.

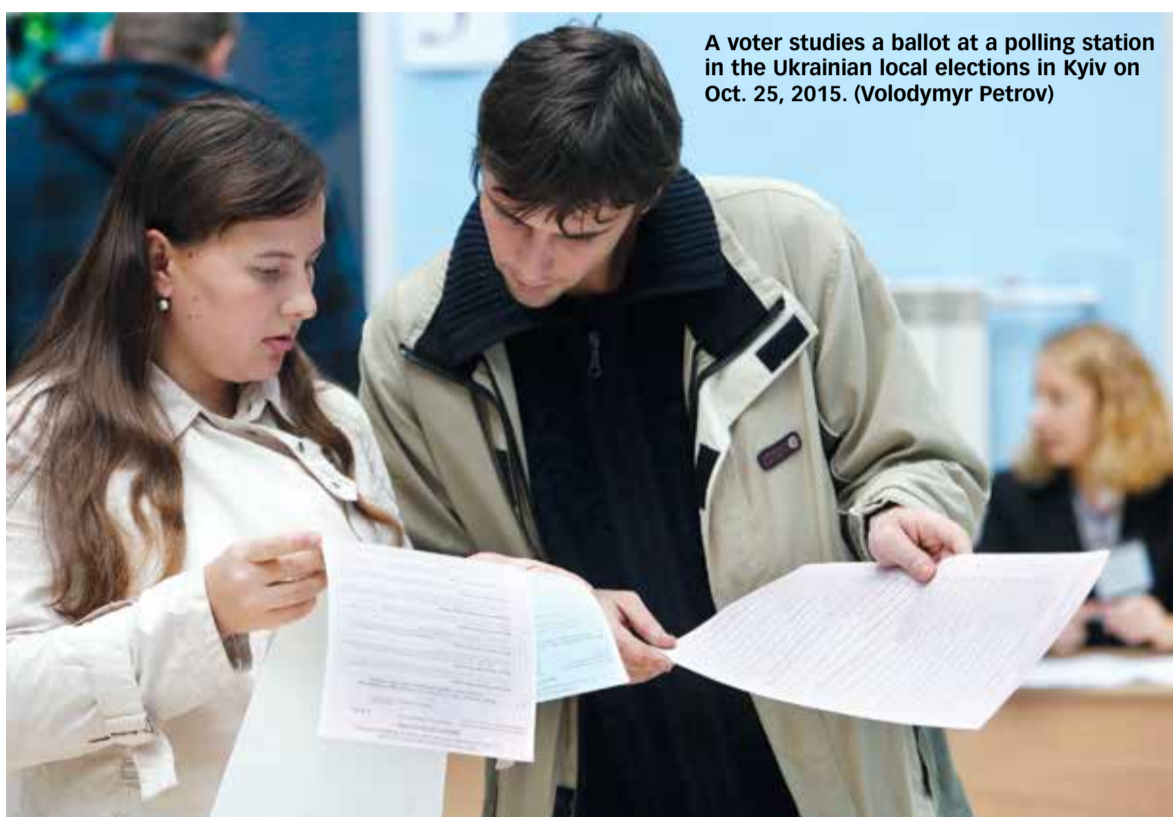
Zadykhailo says that about half of what she hears about Poroshenko's presidency is negative feedback. She says that the top priorities for the next president should be stopping the war and decreasing utility bills.

"Maybe there will be some agreements with our neighbor, the Russian Federation. Of course, we hope for the best, but we'll see how it goes."



Korneliy Petrus,
Mukachevo-Kyiv

"I won't vote, because they're all old generation, people from the 90s and 2000s, who are not adjusted and do not intend to develop the



A voter studies a ballot at a polling station in the Ukrainian local elections in Kyiv on Oct. 25, 2015. (Volodymyr Petrov)

country," says Korneliy Petrus, 20, a photographer and videographer from Mukachevo in Zakarpattia Oblast, who lives and works in Kyiv.

The only reason that he sees in voting is so that another empty ballot won't be used for fraud — an opinion that most respondents share. Petrus feels that his vote won't change a thing and that elections in Ukraine may have been pre-determined by the oligarchs and top political players.

As for the new political figure Zelenskiy, Petrus says he doesn't believe in the actor who is allegedly strongly connected to oligarch Kolomoisky. He says that Zelenskiy, who played a lovable president on TV, has an ingenious campaign, but has to prove he can be a good civil servant with real actions.

The top priority for Petrus is to end the hostilities in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, "a war inside Ukraine" that drains the people and the economy. Another important issue for Petrus is ecology.

"The ecology in Kyiv is sh*! There should be strict rules for carbon emissions and waste disposal like it is in the Netherlands," Petrus says.



Anastasiia Tsikhomska,
Tomashpil-Kyiv-Kraków

"I can't say I made up my mind 100 percent. But I'll vote for Poroshenko,

most likely," says Anastasiia Tsikhomska, 22, who comes from the town of Tomashpil in Vinnytsia Oblast, but who lived in Kyiv for 15 years and now studies and works in Kraków, Poland.

Tsikhomska will vote in Poland. She says that the visa-free status with the European Union, pushed by Poroshenko, has made her travels between Ukraine and Poland much easier. She also compliments Poroshenko on his international diplomacy and strengthening the army.

"I'm not saying he's the best and I am not defending him. He failed in some things and could have done much more," Tsikhomska says. "But I want to believe that he did enough good things which no one has done before him."

Tsikhomska thinks that voting for Zelenskiy would be ridiculous and irresponsible, because "he won't do and change anything." She sympathizes with candidate Anatoliy Grytsenko, former minister of defense in 2005-2007, but doesn't think he has a good enough rating to enter the runoff.

There is a range of things she wants the new president to improve: to strengthen the national currency, the hryvnia, complete health-care reform and undertake pension reform. The corruption fight should also start in earnest.

"I want everything to be normal. I want the kind of conditions that will make me think 'Wow, everything is good, I can go back,'" Tsikhomska says. ■

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Dnipro mayor favors Poroshenko, but Zelenskiy wows with free show

Dnipro from page 11

those who purchased tickets in the evening.

While most of the free show was apolitical, the election vibe was in the air. In the beginning, Zelenskiy announced half-jokingly: "No campaigning today." Yet, there were plenty of allusions.

"Why campaign? You are smart people, you know who to vote for on March 31," Zelenskiy said calling the public to go to the polling stations.

The lyrics of a song called "Life is beautiful" bore not-so-subtle hint that Ukrainians will live better after the election: "Year 2019, April 1, just imagine and believe that everything you wished for came true." But Zelenskiy still has two rounds of the election on the way to the presidency.

And in another song, Zelenskiy appealed to the audience: "What kind of world will we leave for our children?" and "Admit to yourself that we came to terms with vote-buying and the rotation of leaders."

Zelenskiy, the 41-year-old comedic actor and television producer, has built his campaign on anti-elite sentiment. He is younger than his main rivals, Petro Poroshenko and former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, and he doesn't have a trail of corrup-



Dnipro fans cheer Kvartal 95, led by comedic actor Volodymyr Zelenskiy, during their concert on Dnipro Arena stadium on March 26, 2019. (Kostyantyn Chernichkin)

tion scandals and broken promises. Concert-goers Mykhailo Ostrenko and Yasiya Yakimenko, both 26 years old, said they would vote for Zelenskiy because they wanted

someone new in politics — a phrase repeated by many among his voter base.

"Other candidates have been in politics for a long time," said Ostrenko. "We are in the 21st century, but other candidates live in the 1990s," echoed Yakimenko.

Lack of political experience, which Zelenskiy presented as his advantage, doesn't deter his young voters either. They say he can learn and he will have a team of professionals.

"The most important thing for a president is the attitude to people. Unfortunately, people don't exist for our (current) politicians."

While Zelenskiy is an indisputable leader among young voters under 30, he also appeals to so-called protest voters, weary of the long-time ruling elites, and Russian-speaking Ukrainians living in the south and east of the country.

"I'm going to vote for Zelenskiy because I want the youth in power. I'm tired of old men," said Svetlana Lavrova, 45.

Vote-buying

Zelenskiy scores great in polls but election watchers say that he will face major challenges to protect the voting results amid allegations of massive vote-buying and misuse of administrative resources by other candidates.

Over the course of the election campaign, both law enforcement and investigative journalists have uncovered vote-buying networks and bribery schemes.

Ivan Krasikov, a Dnipro-based journalist and activist, believes that networks are at the center of this year's election campaign.

"Vote-buying is built on the same principle as network marketing. First, they find one member who will campaign for a certain candidate. Then this person creates a network of his or her relatives and acquaintances who receive money for campaigning," he said.

Forcing civil servants to vote for

Activist Oleksandr Dzyuba wasn't in financial need but applied for welfare aid for the experiment.

"Crowds of people lined up in front of the city council building. All you had to do was to write a letter about why you needed money. Then a commission decided on the amount of aid," he told the Kyiv Post.

Dzyuba eventually received a confirmation letter signed by the city mayor Borys Filatov. It said: "Dnipro city authorities care about citizens in difficult straits."

The number of people willing to receive money was so high — local media reported up to 90,000 people applied for the aid — that the city council urged calling off the simplified procedure and requiring the full package of documents for financial aid again.

On March 27, Nashi Groshi investigative program revealed that social welfare aid budgets were increased in other cities too, such as Odesa, Kyiv, and Kherson.

Denys Davydov, an observer for Dnipro with the OPORA election watchdog, says that while such aid can be justified and there's no direct violation of the electoral law, it contradicts the spirit of equal opportunities for all candidates.

Filatov vs. Kolomoisky

The sudden generosity of Dnipro city authorities had been attributed to the Mayor Borys Filatov.

Filatov worked with Yulia Tymoshenko in the early days of his career, and then was on the team of oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky during his tenure as governor of Dnipropetrovsk Oblast. But his relationship with the oligarch went sour a few years ago, and today Filatov supports the re-election of President Poroshenko.

Speaking at the forum on Feb. 1 where Poroshenko announced he was running for a second term, Filatov highly praised the president's decentralization reform, which gave more autonomy to local authorities.

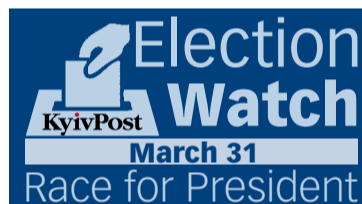
Many believe that oligarch Kolomoisky backs Zelenskiy in a bid to prevent Poroshenko's re-election. The actor has denied the allegations.

Kolomoisky lives in self-exile in Israel and has promised to come back to Ukraine, where he still owns a vast business, after Poroshenko is out of office. He holds resentment against the incumbent president for the nationalization of his assets, including PrivatBank in 2016. Kolomoisky also claimed that Poroshenko tried to take control of his television channel 1+1.

Filatov is reportedly on a work trip in Japan this week and wasn't available for comment.

In a February interview to Ukrainian website Liga.net, Filatov said that he supported not Poroshenko personally but his decentralization policy.

He also denied that giving out welfare aid during the election campaign could be counted as vote-buying. "You can understand it differently. We have always given aid. Of course, not to so many people, and not in such amounts" ■



a certain candidate is also common, he says. In his words, Dnipro municipal departments were ordered to provide the city council lists of all employees and their relatives. And all municipal companies and public agencies have to provide the city council a list of curators who will be responsible for how their employees vote.

According to the head of the OPORA election watchdog, Olga Aivazovska, over 80 percent of Ukrainian voters believe that the election will be rigged. This is the lowest level of confidence in the fairness of presidential election. The Gallup pollster points that only 12 percent of voters trust that the election will be fair.

In Dnipro, activists have also suspected city authorities of vote-buying. In the midst of the election campaign in late January, the city council allocated an additional Hr 140 million (\$5 million) on welfare aid to financially struggling citizens. The increase was almost tenfold from Hr 18 million (\$185,000) for the same purpose in 2018.

At the same time, the Dnipro city council simplified the procedure for receiving welfare aid. Instead of a big package of documents proving why someone needed money from the city budget, it was enough to write an application and attach a copy of one's passport and identification number.

A local anti-corruption movement, People's Control, launched a flash-mob #грошидозарплати (money until salary) explaining how literally any Dnipro citizen could receive up to Hr 3,842 (\$141) from the city budget.

TOP 10 KYIV POST exclusives online this week

1. Ukrainian's aerial photo wins international prize
2. Ukraine out of running as site for new Volkswagen and Skoda car plant
3. Ukraine International Airlines loses nearly \$100 million
4. Ryanair to begin flights from Odesa and Kharkiv in June
5. Biden contacts with Burisma resurface as issue in 2020 presidential bid
6. Lutsenko claims US ambassador gave him 'untouchables list,' US embassy denies it
7. Here are all 39 candidates for president of Ukraine
8. French warship is latest NATO vessel to visit Ukraine
9. New poll: Zelenskiy still in lead, Poroshenko draws closer, Tymoshenko behind
10. Retired UK ambassador devotes himself to Ukraine



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SALE OF NON-RESIDENTIAL PREMISES
 Kyiv, Ukraine
 Moskovska Street is in the central area of the city of Kyiv.
 The premises is located near Lesi Ukrainky Boulevard – one of the main arterial streets of the city. The building was constructed in 2006 as a special project. It has from 10 to 24 floors. The building type is cast-in-place concrete frame. The asking price – UAH 3,697,744 ONO.
General and technical information for the non-residential premises:
 The property is based on the 2nd floor of a 24-floor building • the premises have fine both internal and external decorations • the total area is 123.6 sq m • the building area consists of 160.68 sq m • the ceiling height is 3.3 sq m • the material of the walls is brick • the dividing walls are plastered, consisting of brick and gypsum board • the premises have timber doors and metal-plastic windows • the floor is made with paving tiles • the interior decoration includes wallpapered walls, whitewashed ceilings, and oil and water mixture painted areas • utility systems include electric power and water supplies, and autonomous heating and sewerage systems.
 Non-residential premises No 1 - 8, 30% of balcony (group of premises No 144 - in letter A) at 46/2, Moskovska Street
 tel: +38 044 221 04 54



SALE OF FOUR-ROOM APARTMENT & PARKING SPOT
 Kyiv, Ukraine
 Lesi Ukrainky Boulevard belongs to Pecherskyi District in Kyiv (the right bank of the Dnipro River).
 The building was constructed in 2010. It has 29 floors. The construction material of the walls is brick. With regard to infrastructure, the following is located nearby the building: Pecherska and Klovska metro stations • Oleksandrivska Clinical Hospital • Main Military Clinical Hospital.
 The asking price of the apartment and parking spot – UAH 11,130,361 ONO.
General and technical information of apartment:
 The property is based on the 15th-17th floors of 29-floor building • the apartment does not have decoration and is incomplete • the total area is 335.3 sq m • the living area consists of 149.8 sq m • the area of the kitchen is about 97.7 sq m • the area of the terrace is 3.3 sq m.
General and technical information of parking lot:
 The total area of the parking slot is 15.5 sq m • located in basement No. 1 in the underground parking area • the technical condition is incomplete • the footings are piled and reinforced concrete, the walls are concrete panels, the floors are concrete, and the coverings are also reinforced concrete plates.
 Four-room apartment No. 35 and parking slot No. 65 at 7-B, Lesi Ukrainky Boulevard
 tel: +38 044 221 04 54



SALE OF TWO-ROOM APARTMENT
 Kyiv, Ukraine
 Ivana Franka Street is in Shevchenkivskyi District of Kyiv (on the right bank of the Dnipro River).
 The building was constructed in 1938. It has six floors. The construction material of the walls is brick. With regard to infrastructure, the following is located nearby the building: • Bohdana Khmelnytskogo Street • Yaroslav Val Street • Zolotovirsky Park • Sofiivska Square and Mykhailivska Square.
 The asking price – UAH 2,561,723 ONO.
General and technical information:
 The property is based on the 1st floor of a six-floor building • the apartment is in a good technical condition • the total area is 69.1 sq m • the living area consists of 42.9 sq m • the area of the kitchen comprises of 12.4 sq m • the ceiling height is 3.3 sq m • no balcony • the materials of the floor are industrial carpet and tile • the apartment has timber doors and metal-plastic windows • the interior decoration consists of wallpapered walls, whitewashed ceilings, and ceramic tiles in the kitchen and bathroom • utility systems include electric power, gas and water supplies, heating and sewerage systems.
 Two-room apartment No 12 at 9, Ivana Franka Street
 tel: +38 044 221 04 54



SALE OF TWO-ROOM APARTMENT
 Kyiv, Ukraine
 Chervonoarmiyska Street is in Pecherskyi District in Kyiv (on the right bank of the Dnipro River).
 The building was constructed in 1917. It has five floors. The construction material of the walls is brick. With regard to infrastructure, the following is located nearby the building: • Lva Tolstoho Square • Shevchenko Park • Taras Shevchenko Boulevard.
 The asking price – UAH 2,343,632 ONO.
General and technical information:
 The property is based on the 1st floor of a five-floor building • the apartment is in good condition • the total area is 66.4 sq m • the ceiling height is 4.7 sq m • the materials of the floor are laminated flooring and tiles • the apartment has timber doors and metal-plastic windows • the interior decoration consists of wallpapered walls, whitewashed ceilings, and ceramic tiles in the kitchen and bathroom • utility systems include electric power, gas and water supplies, heating and sewerage systems.
 Two-room apartment, No. 34 at 25, Chervonoarmiyska Street
 tel: +38 044 221 04 54



Participants of 16th Kyiv Post CEO Breakfast ask: What happens after Election Day?



Participants of the 16th Kyiv Post CEO Breakfast on March 26 talked about how Ukraine can unite after the presidential election. The winner won't be known until after a probable April 21 runoff election. The breakfast partners were DHL Ukraine and S&P Investment Risk Management Agency. Participants included: Vadim Sidoruk, CEO, DHL Ukraine; Nataliya Osadcha, partner, S&P Investment Risk Management Agency; Ismet Yazici, CEO, lifecell; Andriy Borovyk, CEO, Transparency International; Mohammad Zahoor, president, ISTIL Group; Lenna Koszarny, CEO, Horizon Capital; Svetlana Mikhailovska, deputy director of advocacy, European Business Association; Peter Tejler, ambassador and head of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission; Sergii Leshchenko, member of parliament; Martin Hagstrom, ambassador of Sweden; Dincer Sayici, country manager, Turkish Airlines; Josef Graf, managing director, Porsche Ukraine; Alessandro Zanelli, country manager, Nestle; Goesta Ljungman, country manager, International Monetary Fund; Bernd Wurth, country manager, Deutsche Bank; Brian Bonner, chief editor, Kyiv Post; and Alyona Nevmerzhytska, commercial director, Kyiv Post. (Volodymyr Petrov)

Head of Opora watchdog puts faith on parallel vote count

Opora from page 2

thrown in prison along with his ally Hladkovskiy.

"This is a violation of Poroshenko's right to campaign for election," Aivazovska said.

She added that the National Squads, which is registered as an observing organization for the current election, was threatening to physically punish members of election commissions for violations. This is unacceptable, she said. Opora fears there might be violence on election day because of such threats.

"Physical violence is a serious risk to the legitimacy of the elections and to the legitimacy of the new president," she said.

"We survived in 2014 as a country largely thanks to the fact that our elections were held in an honest way."

Fake candidates

On March 21, the Central Election Commission started publishing the ballots, revealing that the name of one of the campaign's leaders Yulia Tymoshenko, would be placed next to that of lawmaker Yuriy Tymoshenko,

a candidate whose name and initials are almost identical to hers. Yulia Tymoshenko accused Poroshenko of using a "clone" candidate to confuse her voters. She attempted to challenge the other Tymoshenko's candidacy in court, but lost.

Aivazovska said the Central Election Commission had no right to ban Yuriy Tymoshenko from participating in the election, as it would violate his right to be elected. But the problem of the clone candidates, which have been used in Ukraine for years at the parliament elections, could be solved by making it a crime to sell one's right to be elected.

Moreover, when Tymoshenko claimed that half of the 39 presidential candidates are being used as vehicles to get Poroshenko's representatives onto election commissions, she also has some fake candidates, Aivazovska said.

"The fact that one person submitted documents on behalf of nine candidates shows this," she said.

Poroshenko Bloc lawmaker Maksym Savrasov published on March 20 the alleged minutes of a meeting of a district election commission in Chernivtsi,

at which Tymoshenko's representative claimed she was the coordinator of a group of representatives of eight other candidates. Tymoshenko's team called the minutes a "fake."

Aivazovska said that when several members of an election commission are in fact working for one candidate this opens up opportunities for collusion and violations.

"For example, they may give a person a voting ballot even if they are not allowed one. They may share out the tasks at a polling station, with the most important ones being controlled by them, or they may even agree and come an hour earlier to open a polling station without observers being there, or even the representatives of other candidates," she said.

"They may say, for example, the clocks have been set to summer time on that day. And the clocks indeed will be changed on March 31."

Fake observers

No less worrying is the presence of fake observers. "Out of 135 observing organizations registered for this elections, 85 have never been involved in

election observing before. Moreover, 55 of them have links to political parties, which can be tracked through the founders of these organizations," Aivazovska said.

Since mid-March, someone has started calling random people allegedly on behalf of Opora and threatening Tymoshenko voters. "They say: we have information that you sold your vote, so now you're facing two years in prison. But if you disclose your accomplices your sentence will be reduced," Aivazovska said.

Opora notified the police about the calls. As of March 12, such phone calls had been reported in more than half of Ukraine's oblasts, Opora reported on its website.

Calculating the results

At the previous presidential elections in May 2014, Russian hackers attacked a server of the Central Election Commission, briefly changing the preliminary election results to register a win for nationalist candidate Dmytro Yarosh.

While this incident was widely shown on Russian TV, it didn't affect the outcome of the vote. While there

is a risk of a Russian hacking attack, Ukraine's election results are protected thanks to the fact that paper ballots are still used, rather than electronic voting machines, Aivazovska believes.

"That fact that our election documentation is all in written form reassures me," she said. "It's impossible to destroy ballot papers from 30,000 polling stations with cyberattacks."

To make sure the election results are delivered fairly, Opora plans to conduct a parallel vote count using observers at a representative group of 1,500 polling stations all over Ukraine. The observers will collect voting data and report on the election results based on them.

Aivazovska said these calculations are usually more accurate than exit polls, because people sometimes lie to exit pollsters. Opora is planning to publish the results of its parallel vote count on April 1, the day after the election.

"Opora was the only agency to predict the win of the People's Front at the parliament elections in 2014, and the fact that the Svoboda Party failed to win seats in parliament," Aivazovska said. ■