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Getting Relationship Back On Track



Ukrainians hoping for stronger bilateral ties under US President Joe Biden have been disappointed by early moves. Experts offer their advice.

President Volodymyr Zelensky and U.S. President Joe Biden haven't talked on the phone yet, let alone met in person. The American administration hasn't named an ambassador to Ukraine. And, most troubling, Biden appears to have chosen Germany over Ukraine by refusing so far to expand sanctions on people and companies to stop completion of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. Moreover, Biden's soft sanctions against Russia for imprisoning opposition leader Alexei Navalny and Saudi Arabia for murdering journalist Jamal Khashoggi invite comparisons to Barack Obama's tepid response to Russia's war against Ukraine. Policy experts have recently outlined their prescriptions and some say it is too early to judge the new U.S. administration, which did impose sanctions on Ukrainian oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky on March 5. See coverage on pages 2, 3, 6 and 10.



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Брайан Боннер

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Mailing address:
Kyiv Post, 68 Zhylianska St.,
Kyiv, Ukraine, 01033

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

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

Subscription & Distribution
tel. +380 44 591-3344
subscribe@kyivpost.com

Employment Advertising
tel. +380 44 591-7788
advertising@kyivpost.com

Adnan Kivan
Publisher

Brian Bonner

Executive Director/Chief Editor

Olga Rudenko | **Alyona Nevmerzhytska**
Deputy Chief Editor | Commercial Director

News Editor
Igor Kossov

Business Editor
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Pavlo Podufalov

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Cartoonist: Anatolii Vasylenko.

12 points to strengthen the strategic partnership between the US and Ukraine

Editor's Note: The following plan to improve US-Ukraine relations was released publicly on March 10 at the Kyiv Security Forum, part of Open Ukraine, a foundation run by ex-Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk. The signatories can be found on the forum's website: <https://ksf.openukraine.org/en>.

1 Democratic values

An unbending mutual commitment to enhance democratic values must remain at the core of the U.S.-Ukrainian relationship. This includes strengthening democracy and the rule of law, individual liberty, freedom of speech, a fully independent judiciary and anti-corruption agencies, greater transparency, accountability and open government, independent media, and vibrant civil society. Solidarity and concrete actions in advancing these values are needed to build greater trust, advance the democratic aspirations of Ukrainians, and provide a basis for the two countries' common efforts.

2 Stop Russia's war

The United States and Ukraine should cooperate on measures to restore Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and deter further Russian aggression. This includes expanding our strategic partnership and defense cooperation, and the United States looking afresh to increase defense assistance with the objective of enhancing Ukrainian capabilities to deter further Russian attacks. This includes continued provision of lethal defensive assistance and strengthening naval forces. Other areas for possible military cooperation include the development of special operations forces, air defense, and coastal defenses.

3 Strengthen sanctions

The United States and Ukraine should consult closely on how to change the Kremlin's calculation of the costs and benefits regarding the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine. The United States should also consult closely with Europe on this question, including on the issue of strengthened sanctions. Those discussions, and discussions with Russia about Ukraine, should be based on the principle of "nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine."

4 Active US role in talks

As it consults with Ukraine and its European partners, the Biden administration should consider whether more active senior-level U.S. involvement in the process now led by the German chancellor and French president could break the current stalemate and facilitate a true end to the conflict in the Donbas, the withdrawal of all Russian and Russian-proxy forces, and the restoration of full Ukrainian sovereignty over the Donbas.

5 Restore Crimea

The United States and Ukraine



A pair of U.S. Air Force B-1B Lancer strategic bombers cross the Ukrainian airspace accompanied by Ukrainian jet fighters as part of a planned air patrol event to achieve interoperability between NATO and key Allied partners on May 29, 2020.

Air Force of Ukraine

should also consult on political, diplomatic, and economic steps that can be taken to restore Crimea to Ukraine. They should work together to promote internationally the principle that "Crimea is Ukraine" and to ensure that sanctions applied against Russia for its illegal seizure of the peninsula remain in place. We applaud the government of Ukraine's efforts to organize the "Crimean Platform," as it keeps occupied Crimea on the international agenda and reminds people, including in Russia, that Crimea is still Ukraine in the eyes of the international community.

6 Black Sea security

The United States and Ukraine should consult on steps to enhance security and stability in the Black Sea region including with support of NATO and European partners. The United States, together with its NATO allies, should continue its regular deployments of air, land, and sea forces into the region, where Russia, Europe, the Middle East, the Balkans, and the Caucasus come together. The region is at the center of four great forces: democracy on its western edge; Russian military aggression to its north; Chinese financial influence to its east; and instability in the Middle East to its south. Ukraine and the United States should work with other allies in the area to protect common interests and deescalate tensions.

7 Information war

In recent years, the United States and Ukraine have both been targets of Russian political interference, disinformation campaigns, and cyber incursions. They should exchange lessons learned from their respective experiences and share best practices for combatting these and other forms of Russian hybrid warfare.

8 Stop Nord Stream 2

The Nord Stream 2 pipeline, if completed, would threaten Euro-Atlantic unity and deprive Ukraine of significant transit revenue. The United States and Ukraine should consult on how to build and maintain a unified transatlantic stance against the pipeline's completion as well as on what steps that Russia might take with regard to Ukraine that could lead to a removal of Nord Stream 2 sanctions. At the same time, Ukraine must undertake serious reforms to become more energy efficient and root out corruption in that and other sectors.

9 Ukraine to NATO

The United States and Ukraine should cooperate to advance Ukraine's integration into NATO, with the ultimate aim of achieving Kyiv's goal of NATO membership. The United States should hold firm on NATO's "open door" policy and advise Kyiv on how Ukraine might best prepare itself for membership as was promised by NATO leaders at the 2008 Bucharest summit. Ukraine should commit to undertaking the necessary reforms and practical actions that will bring its military and other defense and security structures into conformity with NATO standards and norms. Ukraine's membership in NATO will strengthen the Alliance, contribute to the process of the historic unification of Europe, and create the pre-conditions for transforming relations with Russia.

10 Establish rule of law

A renewed U.S.-Ukrainian partnership is tied to the Ukrainian government's willingness to rapidly implement and uphold transformational democratic reforms and actions to protect and strengthen the independence of key institu-

tions, including the National Anti-Corruption Bureau and others. A robust anti-corruption campaign requires effective reforms of the office of the general prosecutor and the judicial system. Ukraine also should strive to make irreversible the significant reforms already achieved, including land privatization, progress on state-owned enterprise privatization, the independence of the National Bank of Ukraine, decentralization, and fiscal and budget transparency in addition to gas price reform, government procurement reform, and transparency regarding the assets and incomes of government officials and parliamentarians.

11 Curb oligarchs

Also important are steps to eliminate the outsize political influence of oligarchs, to establish the rule of law with fair economic rules and practices for large, medium-sized, small, and foreign businesses, and to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Ukrainian state — all of which are critical for improving the lives of the Ukrainian people. Ukraine needs to safeguard property rights for all Ukrainian and foreign investors.

12 Commitments

The Ukrainian government should commit immediately to the implementation of reforms as a matter of urgency, and the United States should, in coordination with international financial institutions, the European Union, and G7 partners continue to provide advice and assistance to help Ukraine build a modern democratic economy that is fully compatible with the standards and norms of the European Union. The EU Copenhagen criteria offer a sound roadmap. That assistance should be linked to effective reform measures. ☐

No shortage of advice for Biden on Ukraine

By Brian Bonner
bonner@kyivpost.com

U.S. President Joseph Biden should call his Ukrainian counterpart, Volodymyr Zelensky, then quickly follow up with a personal meeting.

The U.S. administration also should:

- toughen sanctions against Russia until the Kremlin gets out of the Donbas and ultimately Crimea;
- take leadership in ending Russia's seven-year war against Ukraine;
- increase annual military assistance for Ukraine to \$500 million, a sharp hike from security assistance that has averaged nearly \$300 million a year since 2014;
- bolster security in southeast Europe and the Black Sea;
- deepen Ukraine's integration with NATO;
- stop the Russian-German Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline at all costs;
- appoint an ambassador to Kyiv as soon as possible;
- take action against major corrupt figures undermining reform in Ukraine;
- press Ukraine's leaders to reform the courts, Prosecutor General's Office and Security Service of Ukraine;
- encourage Ukraine to prohibit not only Russian TV but also television channels working in the Kremlin's interests, including Inter TV, co-owned by exiled oligarch Dmytro Firtash, and others;
- champion anti-monopoly legislation to limit the influence of oligarchs on Ukraine's economy and political system; and
- reward reform with the promise of support for new U.S. investment in Ukraine.

There's more — a lot more — but one would have to read the entire 14-page "Biden and Ukraine: A strategy for the new administration" report published recently by the Eurasia Center of the Atlantic Council, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank promoting U.S. policies that encourage a democratic, prosperous and stable Eurasia.

The report includes an unusually comprehensive set of recommendations, coming from six co-authors with deep knowledge of Ukraine.

The creators of the report include two former U.S. ambassadors to Ukraine, John Herbst and William B. Taylor; Swedish economist Anders Aslund; former U.S. assistant secretary of state for Europe Daniel Fried; former U.S. ambassador to Russia Alexander Vershbow; and Melinda Haring, deputy director of the Atlantic Council.

Sense of urgency

The authors strive to inject a sense of renewed urgency into U.S.-Ukraine relations, which suffered during U.S. President Donald J. Trump's four years in office.

Trump's attempted extortion of Zelensky — temporarily withholding financial assistance while urging an investigation of his rival Biden — served as the centerpiece of Trump's impeachment trial. The Democratic-controlled

Joint Multinational Training Group Ukraine/Facebook



Ukrainian and American troops greet each other during training on Nov. 24, 2018.

House impeached him, but the Republican-controlled Senate acquitted him, allowing Trump to serve out his term that ended on Jan. 20, 2021.

"Zelensky is keen to engage with the new Biden team and seeks recognition as a global leader," the authors write. "The Biden administration would be wise to seize this opportunity."

Zelensky comes in for criticism, however, for sacking a reform-minded government in March 2020, backtracking on needed reforms, and surrounding himself with an inner circle that "doesn't seem to comprehend" how to fulfill the president's 2019 election promises "to make Ukraine rich, end corruption, and bring peace to Ukraine."

Why Ukraine is important

Lest anyone in the West diminish Ukraine's importance, the authors provide clear historical reminders of what is at stake.

"Ending the Russian-led war in Ukraine and seeing Ukraine move beyond its oligarchic system are interlocking goals. Ukraine must win both fronts to succeed as a modern, democratic European country," the authors write. "Ukraine's success in its fight against Kremlin aggression is in the US national interest for at least three reasons:

- Russia's war is against the West, not just Ukraine;
 - the future of a rules-based international order depends on Russian withdrawal from Ukraine; and
 - the United States has a moral commitment to both Ukraine's fight for independence and democracy in general."
- The authors note that the Kremlin is waging a war against the West on several battlefields — military, cyber, election interference, information, economic and cultural. "In each of these domains, Russian aggression first targets Ukraine but does not end there," the authors write. "On each of these battlefields, Ukraine is on the front line. To defend itself, the United States — and Europe — must

support Ukraine's fight on these fronts."

The consequences of not stopping Russia's war against Ukraine are dire — for the West and Ukraine.

"If the logjam remains, the (war in the) Donbas risks becoming a permanent stalemate that will continue to work against Ukraine's efforts to build a prosperous, democratic society and become an integral part of the Euro-Atlantic community," the authors note.

Economic woes

Despite progress in creating macroeconomic stability, and despite Russia's war and occupation of 7 percent of Ukrainian territory, Ukrainians are suffering. "Ukraine has become the poorest country in Europe, even poorer than Moldova," the six co-authors lament.

Ukraine can move to higher annual economic growth rates of 7 percent, but not until it establishes "far better governance and sound protection of property rights that Ukraine lacks," the report underscores.

The consequences of corruption and poor governance are clear: Foreign direct investment in Ukraine slumped to 0.2 percent of the gross domestic product in 2020.

"Foreigners dare not invest in Ukraine because they fear their property will be stolen," the authors write. "Only oligarchs invest in Ukraine today, but even they are cautious, fearing attacks from competing oligarchs."

Judicial system

"The judicial system does not function," the authors write. "Worst of all is the high court, the Constitutional Court. Eleven of its 15 appointed judges consistently vote for corruption."

Even the best-functioning branch of the court system — the Supreme Court — consists of 25 percent of justices who have failed a required integrity test as part of the selection process.

"This is the most transparent

and qualified court in Ukraine," the report concludes. "The problem is that the rest of the court system has not been reformed."

Prosecutors, SBU

The General Prosecutor's Office and the Security Service of Ukraine, or SBU, compound the weakness and corruption of the courts.

"With the firing of the prosecutor general and his team in March 2020, prosecutors have reverted to their old habit of ignoring high-ranking criminals and prosecuting reformers instead," the authors write. "The SBU remains unreformed. While its counterintelligence might be praiseworthy, its large economic crime and corruption department is a major corporate raider."

Bad attitude to Western aid

Noting that the International Monetary Fund has frozen lending to Ukraine, the authors lament the tendency of the Ukrainian government "to view international donors as cash machines, offering cheap credit, while it is reluctant to pursue reforms that would improve Ukraine's economic growth rate because it is subservient to vested interests with little interest in national growth."

Kremlin to blame

But none of Ukraine's shortcomings should obscure the fundamental problem for international security: The Kremlin — and Vladimir Putin

in particular — do not recognize Ukraine, a former Soviet republic dominated by Russia since the mid-17th century, as a truly independent nation.

"Putin, his team, and many Russians seem to accept Ukrainian independence only in the context of its close association with and ultimate subordination to Moscow," the authors conclude.

Putin's kleptocracy and Ukraine's aspiring democracy are fundamentally incompatible.

"As was true of the Soviet Union, the logic of Kremlin defensiveness pushes it to try to keep successful democratic models of development away from Russia," the report notes. "Such models cannot be permitted to take root in Ukraine or Belarus, core brother nations in the Russian nationalist view, since this would set a dangerous precedent for Russia itself."

Putin's fixation on controlling Ukraine even triggered the EuroMaidan Revolution that in 2014 toppled the presidency of Kremlin-backed Viktor Yanukovich.

"The proximate cause of Yanukovich's fall was his decision to suddenly walk back, at Putin's insistence, his public commitment to seek an association agreement with the European Union," the authors note. "Putin blamed the United States. But the cause was Putin's own Ukraine policy, which seeks to keep Ukraine corrupt, pliable, and, therefore, poor. What Putin wants in Ukraine is not good for Ukraine. The logic of empire and the logic of Putinism keep Russia and Ukraine at odds."

Biden 'uniquely qualified'

"The big objectives of US policy have been the same since 2014: to help Ukraine defend its territorial integrity and sovereignty in the face of Kremlin aggression and to help Ukraine undertake the reforms needed to become a nation of laws with a growing and prosperous economy," the report notes. "The Biden team is uniquely qualified to pursue these objectives successfully ... As vice president, Biden was a hands-on policymaker for Ukraine. Now, as president, he will not have the time for that, but he should reach out to Zelensky, first by phone and then in an early meeting. Establishing a president-to-president understanding will facilitate policy dealings at lower levels and increase U.S. clout in Kyiv, which will prove important as it works with Ukraine on difficult reform issues." ❖

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EDITORIALS

Lingua franca

Ukrainians must speak English. Period.

There's no way for Ukraine to develop as a global country if its citizens don't speak the lingua franca of today's world. While almost everything — from movies to scientific journals — comes out in English, Ukrainians are still surrounded by secondhand Russian ideas.

Oleksiy Danilov, the National Security and Defense Council secretary, has recently said that English can reinforce Ukraine's national security at a time when Russian propaganda spins just about any news about Ukraine, waging a war of ideas along with an actual war.

Surfing the web today, a Ukrainian who doesn't know English — most of the population — faces a simple choice: to get news in Ukrainian or in Russian, the two languages spoken here. And while there's nothing bad about knowing two languages, there are reasons to doubt the veracity of the information in Russian.

Russian is a beautiful language. But this century, it turned into the language of anti-Ukrainian propaganda. Googling news about Ukraine in Russian means you'll probably read nonsense that discredits Ukraine.

And Russian sources outnumber Ukrainian ones, generating loads of biased and distorted anti-Ukrainian ideas that locals are exposed to. The Ukrainian language, spoken by at least six times fewer people, can hardly win this battle without a strong ally.

English opens doors to impartial information, education and career.

Where can a person find a job if she knows Ukrainian and Russian? She can work in Ukraine, Russia, Belarus and a number of Central Asian countries. Where can one work knowing English? Anywhere.

As a side effect, it can also improve diplomatic relations with Western countries. The Baltic and Scandinavian countries seem to prove that there is correlation between speaking good English and running a developed country.

But there are also more hedonistic reasons to know English. It is simply much more enjoyable to live when you can read books, watch films and play video games in their original language. It also helps you make new friends.

Today it's hard even to watch a movie in Ukrainian. Google Play sells and rents movies only in English, while Netflix has only one feature film with Ukrainian dubbing. Most of Netflix's content in Ukraine is dubbed in Russian; only a handful have Ukrainian subtitles.

Having limited themselves to their two native languages, most Ukrainians pirate movies through torrent trackers — from Russian enthusiasts who translate them to Russian.

Russian, Russian, Russian. Ukrainians are inundated with this language. While there's not enough Ukrainian content to offer an alternative, learning English offers a way out.

Ukraine should acknowledge this fact on the government level and start building its policy around it, bringing more English to schools and universities. Once the youth speak it, Ukraine's future is safe.

And the Kyiv Post, now in its 26th year, will be with Ukraine every step of the way as it moves to more widespread use of English — a sure-fire way to improve education and the economy. We already have a program to send gift subscriptions to schools, supported by readers, to encourage the young generation. We would love to be a newspaper that all Ukrainians can read.

Get that shot

Bad news: Ukraine is paddling into a third COVID-19 wave, which will be bigger and deadlier than the last. And then there will be another wave and another one after that. And at least tens of thousands more people will die.

This will force lockdowns of increasing severity, which will continue destroying any hopes of economic recovery, followed by the economy itself.

That could be prevented if enough Ukrainians get vaccinated, fast. But people's ignorance and selfishness, combined with the government's failures, ensure that it won't happen.

Ukraine's health officials botched the procurement of vaccines. The country's vaccination drive is already far behind many others. Now that we finally got the first batch, we should be trying to make up for lost time as best we can to save as many lives as possible if the Health Ministry could ever get its act together.

What doesn't help is when people, public officials and especially doctors turn around and not only refuse their shots, but dissuade the public and their patients from getting the vaccine. What are they doing?

It's a fact that the different vaccines, including the batch of CoviShield that Ukraine has received, may cause some side effects in a fraction of the population.

But in most cases, the local refusal has little to do with science or medicine. From myths that the vaccine can somehow alter human DNA (which it can't), to hostility against something made in India (which is misplaced), to a bullheaded rejection of vaccines in general, Ukraine has no shortage of misguided reasons to avoid vaccination. And rather than try to dispel them, some public officials and doctors are encouraging them.

In one of the hospitals in the quarantine red zone of western Ukraine's Chernivtsi, every doctor refused to be vaccinated, according to local officials, who added that locals have always been reluctant to take vaccines, even for other illnesses.

According to the World Health Organization and Ukrainian scientists, anywhere between 60% and 80% of the population must be vaccinated to achieve herd immunity from the disease. According to one study, more than half of Ukrainians don't want to take a vaccine, even if it's free.

For every skeptical doctor, there are scores of patients that may take their example, slowing down the inoculation drive even more and making the prospect of herd immunity a distant dream.

As for public figures who may know better but are bashing the vaccine to score popularity points, we don't even have to tell you how terrible it is what you're doing. You know who you are.



See these features online at kyivpost.com

Ukraine's Friend & Foe Of The Week



Friend

Brendan F. Boyle, a member of U.S. House of Representatives
The congressman gets this week's not on behalf of over 70 American and Ukrainian officials and others who have signed a 12-point letter calling on the U.S. to continue support for Ukraine in defense and reforms.



Foe

Ivan Tertel, head of the State Security Committee of Belarus
As opposition to dictator Aleksandr Lukashenko continues, the search is on for foreign enemies to blame. Belarus goes as far as accusing Ukraine of sending armed terrorists and weapons to sow the public rebellion in Belarus, an obvious lie. Protests erupted over Lukashenko's stolen election.

Feel strongly about an issue? Agree or disagree with editorial positions in this newspaper?

The Kyiv Post welcomes letters to the editors and opinion pieces, usually 800 to 1,000 words in length. Please email all correspondence to chief editor Brian Bonner, at bonner@kyivpost.com. All correspondence must include an email address and contact phone number for verification.

Akhmetov keeps sucking Ukraine's enterprises dry



Sergii Leshchenko
mail.pravda@gmail.com

In December 2020, a new resident appeared in Vésenaz, a respectable suburb in Geneva.

He paid an astronomical price of 60 million francs, or Hr 2 billion, to become part of the community and settle on the shores of Lake Geneva.

This young man isn't a successful businessman. Rather, he is an heir to an oligarchic empire created by his father, the richest man in Ukraine.

The man who bought the house in Geneva is Damir Akhmetov, a 32-year-old son of Rinat Akhmetov, the biggest oligarch of the poorest country in Europe, Ukraine.

According to the records in the public land register, the house is located at Chemin de Botterel 5, 1222 Vésenaz, Switzerland. This is a private street. Here, Damir Akhmetov bought two houses — a luxurious villa and a smaller house next door, as well as 7,600 square meters of land. The seller of the palatial one was Mansour Akram Ojeh, a French business-man born in Saudi Arabia. He is the co-owner of the TAG empire and the McLaren Formula One team, and is on the list of the world's 100 most influential Arabs.

Damir Akhmetov's Swiss nest is located in the immediate vicinity of Lake Geneva. At the entrance to this lane, there's a sign indicating the area is private. This means that it is not desirable to walk here without the permission of those who live on this street. At the turn to Akhmetov's house, there is a car with security staff inside. The house is equipped with CCTV cameras.

Damir is Akhmetov's eldest son. He left Ukraine at the age of 10, studied in Switzerland and the UK, and is a member of the supervisory boards of his father's energy and metallurgy companies, DTEK and Metinvest. His story has nothing to do with the success of a self-made man, he never ran a business independently, and was involved only in the management of his father's companies.

It is a depressing reminder of how Ukraine has become a resource base for a select few while leaving 40 million people impoverished. After all, outside of Ukraine, Akhmetov Sr. has no significant business, and the fusion of politics and oligarchic influence has allowed him to amass billions. Forbes Akhmetov's net worth to be \$7.6 billion.

Akhmetov's previous acquisitions also impressed with their price tags.

In 2007, the Ukrainian billionaire bought then the most expensive apartment in the world, taking up three floors of the residential complex One Hyde Park in London. He paid \$220 million for it, which was followed by at least another \$60 million for its furnishing.

Akhmetov also bought the pal-

ace of Belgium's infamous King Leopold II on the French Riviera in Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat in 2019. He paid €200 million for Villa Les Cedres to the alcoholic beverage producer Campari Group.

This is just one of the many examples of the ultra-wealthy ploughing money into real estate.

It isn't widely known that Akhmetov has a house in the French ski resort of Courchevel, shrouded in luxury, at the most prestigious area, on the altitude of 1,850 meters.

Now this collection of real estate has been supplemented by a villa in Switzerland for 60 million francs, or \$64 million.

Ukraine pays for it

Akhmetov's business model is the basic principle of Ukrainian oligarchic clans — privatization of profits and nationalization of losses.

As a member of the supervisory board of Ukrzaliznytsia, I see how this model leads to the deg-radation of the national railway carrier. Akhmetov is the company's main customer, using it to transport its main source of wealth, iron ore, to Ukrainian ports, from where it is shipped abroad.

Akhmetov's profits are formed not only by ridiculous rents for iron ore mining. To sell ore on world markets, it has to be transported to Ukrainian seaports on the tracks of Ukrzaliznytsia, national railway company. Tariffs for transportation of iron ore don't cover the cost — each ton is transported with a 19% loss for Ukrzaliznytsia.

From the territory of Ukraine to the territory of the neighboring Slovakia and Poland the trains follow exactly the same tracks in the same



The house in Vésenaz, a suburb of Geneva, that oligarch Rinat Akhmetov's son Damir Akhmetov purchased in December for 60 million Swiss francs, viewed from satellite. The Lake Geneva area is among the most expensive residential areas in Europe. Damir Akhmetov also bought a smaller house next door.

width that lead to the metallurgical plants in Katowice and Kosice. But as soon as the train cars cross the border, the tariff for ore transportation increases. In Poland, it increases 2.5 times. In Slovakia — more than four times.

The reason for this injustice is the Soviet legacy of calculating tariffs, which is beneficial to Akhmetov. And any attempt by the Infrastructure Ministry to increase them for iron ore exporters has been blocked by the metallurgical lobby, led by Akhmetov's people, that includes the choir of lawmakers and loyal experts.

The nonsense of the rules reaches its peak when it comes to the transportation of empty cars. In Ukraine, there are different tariffs for them

and the car that have delivered the iron ore is cheaper than the one that carried grain. This tariff also doesn't cover the cost.

In total, Ukrzaliznytsia loses Hr 8 billion (approximately \$288 million) annually due to unfairly low tariffs for iron ore transportation. On the scale of a state-owned company, this is an astronomical figure, which is equivalent to the amount sufficient to purchase 250 passenger cars — or four houses for Damir Akhmetov.

In other words, the surplus profits of the Akhmetov family, which then pay for Swiss, English and French luxury real estate, originate from cash-strapped Ukrainian enterprises. And not only in the field of metallurgy, but also energy. Here, during the presidency of his ally Viktor Yanukovich, Akhmetov bought thermal power plants for nothing. And during the time of President Petro Poroshenko, he profited from the Rotterdam Plus formula, a coal pricing formula that has allegedly cost Ukrainian energy consumers billions of hryvnias. Ukraine's National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU) estimates losses in the amount of Hr 40 billion.

Vicious cycle

Any attempts to change the rules of the game are sabotaged by officials.

The criminal case on Rotterdam Plus is intentionally sabotaged. The first step to raising tariffs for rail transportation was blocked. It was not possible to implement the initiative to increase the tariff even for empty cars that return after transporting iron ore. Officials sided with Akhmetov, left the state-owned Ukrzaliznytsia in poverty, and explained their decision by a desire to protect business during the crisis.

Similar arguments were made by Akhmetov's "friends" from Yulia Tymoshenko's Batkivshchyna party last week at a meeting of

the Verkhovna Rada's commission of inquiry into Ukrzaliznytsia. Their concern for Akhmetov's private business at the expense of Ukrzaliznytsia looks ridiculous given Metinvest's earnings: In 2020, the company's EBITDA amounted to \$2.2 billion, almost twice as much as in 2019.

Moreover, Ukrzaliznytsia doesn't even have the right to vote in the logistics committee of the European Business Association, which acts as a regular lobbyist against tariff increases. Do you know the reason why Ukrzaliznytsia, which is a member of the European Business Association, is not allowed on the committee? Because other members of the committee are against it. Among them are several Akhmetov's structures, which, unlike Ukrzaliznytsia, have the right to vote.

Ukrzaliznytsia is also Akhmetov's donor not only in terms of cheap transportation, but also the transfer of cars to his private company Lemtrans. This happened during Viktor Yanukovich's first term. Another example of the surrender of state interests in oligarch's favor.

This vicious circle must be broken if Ukraine wants to preserve its national railway carrier. So, last year the company suffered losses of 12 billion hryvnias (\$432 million) when Akhmetov's family bought a house for the equivalent of 2 billion hryvnias (\$72 million) in Switzerland. As a member of the supervisory board of Ukrzaliznytsia, I insisted on a separate instruction to the board to initiate an increase in tariffs for the transportation of iron ore. And any arguing about the impropriety of this step looks pathetic.

Akhmetov's new acquisition on the shores of Lake Geneva is proving that.

Sergii Leshchenko is a Kyiv Post columnist, investigative journalist, and former member of Ukraine's parliament.



Damir Akhmetov, 32, a son of Rinat Akhmetov, has recently bought a house on Lake Geneva for 60 million Swiss francs. It's the latest addition to Akhmetov's collection of luxurious real estate in Ukraine and abroad.

Biden shows no willingness to stop Nord Stream 2 completion

By Alexander Query
query@kyivpost.com

As the Biden administration dawdles in imposing new sanctions on Nord Stream 2, the Russian-Germany pipeline heads towards its completion this year.

Republicans in the U.S. Congress, in what is turning out to be a last-minute bid to stop the project, are ramping up pressure on U.S. President Joe Biden — but it seems the U.S. leader has sided with Germany, which wants the pipeline operational, over Ukraine, which doesn't.

Republican lawmakers asked Biden to apply recently authorized sanctions against companies building the pipeline from Russia to Germany under the Baltic Sea, bringing transit capacity to 110 billion cubic meters annually when combined with Nord Stream 1, completed in 2011.

The U.S. State Department sent a report to Congress on Feb. 19, detailing its latest sanctions on companies involved in the pipeline, but failing to deliver the punitive measures expected by Congress.

The report didn't name any new companies as targets for sanctions. It also did not mention any German or other European entities involved in the project, allowing work to continue on the pipeline, according to the Wall Street Journal.

A group of five U.S. Republican lawmakers led by Representative Michael McCaul sent a letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken on March 8, urging the Biden administration to act against Russia's controversial Nord Stream 2 pipeline.



The Malta-registered pipe laying vessel Solitaire working on Russia's Nord Stream 2 pipeline. Republican lawmakers put pressure on U.S. President Joe Biden to apply recently authorized sanctions against companies building the pipeline from Russia to Germany under the Baltic Sea, while the new administration tries to ease strains with Germany at the expense of Ukraine

"We are deeply concerned that the administration's strong statements in opposition to the pipeline are not being matched by equally strong actions," the letter reads.

Blinken tried to assure members of Congress that the Biden administration opposes the pipeline and is looking at more sanctions.

"We continue to review other possibilities for sanctions going for-



Alexei Miller, Gazprom CEO

Gerhard Schroeder, the ex-German chancellor

Matthias Warnig, the CEO of Nord Stream 2

ward," he told the House Foreign Affairs Committee on March 10.

Toothless sanctions

Russia and Ukraine have a five-year agreement through 2024 that guarantees Russia will transport no less than 40 billion cubic meters through Ukraine each year and must pay Ukraine at least \$7.2 billion over the course of the contract.

However, if completed, Nord Stream 2 would allow Russia to bypass Ukraine when transporting an annual 110 billion cubic meters to European countries through Germany, depriving Ukraine of at least \$1.5 billion in transit fees per year.

Biden, who publicly called the pipeline a "bad deal for Europe," has so far resisted imposing new sanctions on entities involved in the construction of Nord Stream 2, even though U.S. lawmakers argued it would be the most effective way to stop the project.

The State Department report named 18 companies, mostly insurers, that have already left the project. American insurer Baker Hughes Co, French AXA Group and 16 other

companies already quit work on the pipeline to avoid U.S. sanctions.

Russia's state-owned gas company Gazprom owns the Switzerland-based company that operates the project and faces U.S. sanctions under the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) passed on Jan. 1.

But around half of the initial financing for the 9.5 billion euro (\$11 billion) project has been pledged by five European energy companies that have been spared by the sanctions, including Uniper and Wintershall in Germany, the British-Dutch giant Royal Dutch Shell, OMV in Austria and Engie in France.

So far, the U.S. only sanctioned Russian company KVT-RUS, which operates the 'Fortuna' pipelaying ship. Former U.S. President Donald Trump already announced this sanction shortly before the end of his term in January.

In an act of defiance against Biden, Republican Senator Ted Cruz on March 5 put a hold on the final confirmation of Biden's Central Intelligence Agency director nominee William Burns.

"I'll release my hold when the

Biden admin meets its legal obligation to report and sanction the ships and companies building Putin's pipeline," Cruz wrote on Twitter the same day.

The official letter sent by Republicans on March 8 also inquires about the lack of sanctions against entities reportedly engaged in the project under the Protecting Europe's Energy Security Act that came into force in January 2021. The act calls on Russia to "cease using its energy resources for coercive purposes."

Divided Europe

Transatlantic tensions around the project run high.

Josep Borrell, now the EU's foreign minister, complained about "growing use of sanctions, or the threat of sanctions, by the United States against European companies and interests" in July 2020 when he was vice-president of the European Commission.

"European policies should be determined here in Europe, not by third countries," he said then.

The unfinished project, launched in 2015, has become one of the most hotly disputed issues between the United States and Germany since the U.S. started implementing sanctions against companies involved in its construction in December 2019.

The U.S. and several EU members argue that the project will increase Europe's dependence on Russian gas.

After a video conference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Feb. 5, France's President Emmanuel Macron appeared to agree with Berlin about the project. Many German officials support Nord Stream 2, saying it is just a commercial project that has nothing to do with Russia's human rights violations.

"Business relationships and business projects that have existed for decades are one thing and serious human rights violations and our reactions to them are another," Germany's Economy Minister Peter Altmaier told German daily Bild Am Sonntag on Feb. 7.

The Biden administration wants to improve relations with Berlin, which have been hurt by Trump's threats of tariffs on German goods. Trump publicly opposed the pipeline.

Germany wants to make a deal with the new U.S. administration to complete the project and a potential proposal could include regulatory limits on Russia's power over energy in Europe.

Time is running out for the Biden administration, as the pipeline is 94 percent complete and proceeding quickly.

Around 120 kilometers of the pipeline remain to be laid in Danish waters, work that resumed on Feb. 6, as well as 30 kilometers in German waters according to Gazprom.

On March 4, the Danish Maritime Authority revealed that a new Russian pipelaying vessel would soon join the project. While it has been delayed since 2019, the pipeline could be operational by September. 🇺🇸

People and entities that could be sanctioned, but aren't, to stop Nord Stream 2

Gazprom owns the Switzerland-based operating company project operator leading the project, but five European energy companies that pledged 4.75 billion euros for the project have been spared sanctions.

Gazprom: The company's CEO Alexei Miller is already in the sanctions list since 2018, but so far, Gazprom is only restricted to work in the field of oil exploration and production.

Gerhard Schroeder: The ex-German chancellor became chairman of the Nord Stream shareholders' committee in 2017, spearheading the project on behalf of the Kremlin.

Matthias Warnig: The CEO of Nord Stream 2 is a friend of Russian President Vladimir Putin and a former East German Stasi agent who has sat on the supervisory boards of numerous German-Russian banks and companies.

Uniper: German energy company Uniper pledged 950 million euros to the project but is unsanctioned. The company owns 15.5% of stakes in Nord Stream through its subsidiary, E.ON-PEG Infrastruktur.

Fährhafen Sassnitz GmbH: Operator of the German Murkan Port, where Russian vessels are helping build the Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline.

Wintershall: The German gas and oil company pledged 950 million euros to the project, alongside four other European companies spared by the sanctions. The company owns 15.5% of the Nord Stream project.

Royal Dutch Shell: The British-Dutch oil and gas giant also pledged 950 million euros to the Russian pipeline.

Gasunie: Dutch gas company Gasunie owns 9% of Nord Stream's stakes, providing financing to the project.

OMV: Austrian OMV is part of Nord Stream 2 shareholders, with 950 million euros invested in the project.

Engie: French energy company Engie also pledged 950 million euros in Nord Stream 2 and was spared by the sanctions despite owning 9% of shares in Nord Stream.

Scientists: Spring COVID-19 wave could be 'catastrophic'

By Anna Myroniuk
myroniuk@kyivpost.com

The third wave of COVID-19 that is currently gaining momentum in Ukraine will have a devastating impact on public health, with more infections, more severe cases and higher mortality than the autumn wave, according to the National Academy of Science.

The spring wave will last until mid-May with the biggest spike expected in early April, said Volodymyr Halytskiy, a senior researcher at the molecular immunology department of the Palladin Biochemistry Institute.

In April, Ukraine will see 40,000 infections and over 1,000 deaths each day, Halytskiy predicts. The number of new coronavirus cases per day has already risen from around 4,000 in early February to 10,000 at the beginning of March.

The reason for the projected increase is that one of the main viral receptors in the human body, angiotensin converting enzyme 2 (ACE2), becomes more active with increasing daylight hours.

Coronavirus does not infect random cells, only ones that have viral receptors or protein molecules like ACE2 attached. Such cells are located in the lungs, arteries, heart, kidney, and intestines.



A patient receives a dose of the Oxford University/AstraZeneca vaccine against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which is produced in India and marketed as Covishield, at a private hospital in Kyiv, on March 5, 2021.

However, as COVID-19 mainly spreads through the air in microdroplets, the lungs are especially susceptible.

"A large amount of these receptors is expressed in the lung epithelium," Halytskiy said. "Accordingly, there

is a sharp (several hundredfold) increase in susceptibility and lung tissue becomes the main object of viral attack."

"Our findings are based on studying the epidemic during the spring-summer period of last year in the Northern Hemisphere and the summer-autumn period of last year in the Southern Hemisphere," he added.

Fast vaccination might have prevented this, Halytskiy said. However, the government failed to bring the vaccine to Ukraine on time. The first batch arrived in Kyiv on Feb. 23 and patients started getting their

first shots the following day. People in many countries around the globe started being vaccinated a full two and a half months earlier.

As of March 11, only 30,000 people, 0.07% of Ukraine's population of 42 million, have been vaccinated. At the current pace, Ukraine will be able to vaccinate every citizen in 58 years.

The opportunity is gone and nothing can prevent the spring wave now, according to Halytskiy's colleague Semen Yesylevskyy, a biophysicist and leading researcher at the Institute of Physics.

"With a very high probability, we

can say that we have an epidemic of, so to speak, the second generation coronavirus variants, including the British variant," Yesylevskyy said.

"Such variants of coronavirus cause a sharp, stormy wave (of infection). But then it quickly subsides. At least that was the case in several countries – not every single one though. We can hope that maybe at least some relief will take place," Yesylevskyy told the Kyiv Post.

"When this happens, there will be a time gap to vaccinate the population before the next wave," he added.

Halytskiy urged Ukrainian officials to accelerate the vaccination drive and increase capacity for laboratory diagnostics.

The Halytskiy-led team of biochemists predicted the dangers of the spring wave in the fall of last year. The Ministry of Health, however, did not listen, according to Halytskiy.

"No one was interested," he said, adding that the so-called adaptive quarantine introduced on May 22 cannot prevent the spread of infection.

Under adaptive quarantine, restrictions vary from region to region, depending on the seriousness of the COVID-19 situation there.

"All possible anti-epidemic measures should be taken immediately. Is that expensive? Unfortunately, this is the price of procrastination and inaction," Halytskiy said.

The scientist called on the government to impose a new lockdown and stop public transport. He also believes it is time to deploy temporary hospitals, as local officials did in Wuhan, China, from where the coronavirus spread around the world.



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DTEK fined Hr 5.1 million for cutting coal supplies in winter

By Liliane Bivings
bivings@kyivpost.com

Ukraine's state energy regulator on March 10 fined Ukraine's largest energy firm DTEK as hard as it could.

The regulatory body, formally known as the National Energy and Utilities Regulatory Commission (NEURC), has claimed that DTEK failed to supply enough coal to three of its thermal power plants in December–January and neglected to notify authorities about the critical fuel situation.

For that, NEURC has imposed the maximum possible fines on three subsidiaries of DTEK, the giant owned by Ukraine's richest man, oligarch Rinat Akhmetov. Now they must collectively pay Hr 5.1 million, or \$180,000.

If the charges against DTEK are true, this could mean that the company, which runs 17 mines and is responsible for a quarter of Ukraine's electricity, deliberately cut coal supplies in the middle of winter's coldest months and posed a threat to Ukraine's national energy security by risking power outages.

DTEK has called the charges against it "baseless" and, in turn, blamed the regulatory body for incompetence, "market manipulations, selective application of European norms and direct administrative interference in the operation of the market." These are the reasons for the current crisis, DTEK stated.

DTEK's explanation

In its public statement published on March 10, DTEK claims that an unpredictable increase in electricity consumption and a decrease in electricity production from nuclear power plants made it impossible to quickly increase its coal reserves.

Five thermal power plants of DTEK Energy – the part of DTEK responsible for coal production, electricity generation and distribution – burned 1 million more tons of coal in November–December than they forecast. This led to a significant decrease in coal storage at the company's thermal power plants in January, according to its statement.

DTEK says that it did all it could to solve the crisis. This includes supplying needed coal to Ukraine's state-owned energy producer Centrenergo to prevent it from shutting down, extracting coal at full capacity, and importing coal from Kazakhstan and Poland to ensure the stable operation of the energy system.

The chairman of NEURC, Valery Tarasyuk, isn't buying it. In his statement on March 10, he said DTEK committed "such glaring violations that have led to a situation where the whole country is at risk of disconnection from the power supply and are deserving of the most severe penalties."

In fact, NEURC, constrained by legal maximums of fines, is hoping to significantly increase the fines in court.



An aerial view of the Darnytska thermal power plant on Feb. 17, 2021. Ukraine's state energy regulator has fined three subsidiaries of Ukraine's largest energy firm DTEK \$180,000 for their failure to provide guaranteed coal reserves to thermal power plants in winter, potentially posing a threat to Ukraine's national energy security. DTEK has called the charges against it "baseless" and is going to appeal.

Oleg Petrasjuk

Andriy Gerus, President Volodymyr Zelensky's representative to the Cabinet of Ministers, told the Kyiv Post he believes the likelihood that DTEK simply miscalculated how much coal they would need to burn is low.

Instead, Gerus believes that DTEK may have wanted to flex its muscles a bit.

"They wanted to create pressure to show that without them, we can't get through a cold winter and to show that without coal burning heat generation, the country can't have a stable energy market," he said.

'Strange behavior'

Thermal power plants in Ukraine create electricity primarily through burning coal. Coal-fired generation currently makes up 40% of electricity production in the country.

In 2020, Ukraine, one of the world's most carbon-intensive economies, set a target for net-zero emissions by 2070, as interest grows to align with the European Union's energy market and emissions targets. The EU's deadline is in 2050.

European countries have introduced carbon taxes to curb emissions, but those taxes still remain low in Ukraine. Gerus thinks that DTEK may have wanted to scare the Ukrainian government away from increasing carbon taxes if it felt that DTEK's survival was necessary to get through a cold winter.

But in December 2020, DTEK adopted a 2040 target for car-

bon neutrality and claimed that it planned to align itself with the EU's energy market by 2023.

Gerus referred to DTEK's actions as "strange behavior," especially when their balance sheets for December 2020 showed Hr 1.6 billion (\$57 million) in extra cash that could have easily been used to purchase 1 million tons of coal.

At the same time DTEK and its loyalists heavily lobbied for closing coal imports from Belarus and Russia. But during a cold winter, these imports were crucial for Ukraine.

"Why would they want to do that in January?" Gerus said. "It looks really strange. Close imports and put the country at risk? Why? Those imports would help us get through the winter and this difficult period."

Centrenergo has been sounding the alarms about DTEK's "strange behavior" ever since entering into an agreement for DTEK to supply coal to Centrenergo's combined-cycle power plants in central Ukraine last year.

Centrenergo's reserves

According to state-run power company Ukrenergo, electricity production at Centrenergo exceeded the forecast balance by 29% in November and by 56% in December. The company was forced to expend an additional 128,000 tons and 233,000 tons of coal, respectively, leading to a critical reduction in Centrenergo's reserves.

DTEK's director of corporate communications, Olga Zakharova, said by email that Centrenergo used the record coal reserves for electricity generation solely due to errors in the regulation of the power system.

The company's thermal power plants were operating at maximum load in November through December 2020, while many other thermal and nuclear power units were idle due to repairs.

In its statement yesterday, DTEK also blamed these repairs for the shortage in electricity generation.

Centrenergo's press service said that DTEK stopped shipments of coal to Centrenergo, violating the terms of its contract, despite receiving a prepayment of \$3.7 million. On Jan. 13, DTEK sent a warning to Centrenergo to increase the price of coal from \$59 to \$75 per ton.

Centrenergo accused DTEK of disrupting coal supplies and raising fuel prices ahead of the projected temperature drop, after which Ukrenergo announced the coal shortage. This prompted NEURC to launch audits of five energy companies.

Regulation problems?

Zakharova wrote that NEURC is trying to "hide obvious failures in regulation by the industry, including the failure to prepare for the autumn-winter period."

"The mistakes made by the regulator resulted in the accumulation of multibillion-dollar debts on the

market to electricity producers, the most difficult situation in generation and the threat of power outages in winter," Zakharova said.

DTEK is planning to appeal the decision of NEURC. It will also apply to the anti-corruption committee with a statement on the need to eliminate distortions of market mechanisms created by the regulator; it will also apply to the National Security and Defense Council to assess the threat to national energy security due to the incompetent actions of the NEURC.

Dmytro Sydorov, journalist at EXPRO Electricity, says it's too soon to make any final judgment calls.

"Now that both the regulator and DTEK have sent their claims to the Security Council and anti-monopoly committee, we should wait until their decisions before choosing sides and determining who's right here," Sydorov told the Kyiv Post.

Both Gerus and Sydorov noted that fortunately this crisis did not affect the average person in Ukraine.

Sydorov noted that this crisis mostly posed a risk for the market without altering consumer prices. And even if the prices went up, it was only in February and it was only for the industries involved, he added.

Now that winter is ending, the crisis is over, but "if a situation like this happens next winter, it is seriously a question of national security. In winter you can't have this," Gerus said. "You can't close your eyes to something like this." ❄️

Corruption costs Ukraine at least \$37 billion per year



Mikheil Saakashvili

Corruption lies at the core of Ukraine's poverty, lack of transparency, and dormant economic potential. Ukrainian state budget annually loses over \$37 billion due to this curse of inefficiency. Although the numbers are shocking, the actual damage done is significantly greater in scope.

Tackling corruption is challenging not only because of the lack of political will, but primarily because it is deeply rooted across many fields. Identifying the policy areas that can be reformed and targeting them in a smart way by cutting the red tape is the first step towards making every substantial change a success.

Here are some of the key fields that generate most losses:

State-Owned Enterprises: \$6 billion lost

According to the State Property Fund, in 2019, the losses from state-owned enterprises amounted to more than 170 billion hryvnias, which is about 6 billion dollars at current exchange rates.

The head of the Foundation, Dmitry Sennichenko, brought this up at a meeting of the National Council of Reforms, where privatisation reform was presented, and also a slightly bigger figure was confirmed by the report done by the State Secret Service of Ukraine.

There are many inefficient enterprises in Ukraine, and in each case, there is some kind of corruption interest behind.

For the funds that the state fails to receive due to corruption in this field alone, it would be possible to build 1,700 new schools, 4,500 new kindergartens or 170 hospitals. This could be built in just one year of no corruption.

Salaries in envelopes: \$6 billion lost

According to the Centre for Economic Studies, about 23% of Ukrainians receive a salary unofficially while another 30% receive a "gray" salary: partly in envelopes and partly "white". A major reason why we ended up in this situation is because Ukraine's labour legislation is over regulated, as well as it is crippling with exorbitant taxes. Reducing the tax burden leads to business growth and, consequently, to the de-shadowing of the economy. We need a reform now.

Offshores: \$6 billion lost

According to a study by CASE Ukraine and ICET, the total outflow of capital is about 10% of GDP (in 2019 it is 397.5 billion UAH or 15.3 billion US dollars). Given that exports account for about half of official GDP, and some outflows are also related to imports, the figure seems quite realistic.

According to a study conducted at the request of the European

Parliament, the offshore income abroad costs Ukraine about three billion euros. Thus, the shortfall of taxes in the budget of Ukraine annually reaches 750 million euros.

According to the cryptocurrency market rating, compiled by the American company Chainalysis, Ukraine ranks as the first in the volume of operations with cryptocurrencies. That is direct evidence of the over-regulation again, and there is an urgent need to cut the red tape. If we do not do this now, the offshore market will only continue to expand.

Subsoil use: \$5 billion lost

The Ministry of Economic Development has concluded that 48% of subsoil production is "gray". This industry costs \$9 billion in GDP, which means that the losses can be estimated at \$4.5 billion.

In addition, Ukraine is one of the world leaders in the extraction of amber, sand and other minerals. The failure to uphold comprehensive economic liberalisation costs another \$0.5–1 billion.

Corruption in public procurement: \$3 billion lost

In total, public procurement in Ukraine is about \$19 billion. According to Transparency International, about 20% of procurement in developing countries have a corruption component. With investigations in this field, we see bribery from 7 to 30%.

Customs: \$3 billion lost

We have studied in detail the comprehensive research by the Ukrainian Institute of the Future that confirms that the budget loss from customs exceeds \$3 billion. If those schemes were eliminated, Ukraine would not need to borrow money from the International Monetary Fund.

VAT fraud: \$6 billion lost

According to the head of the State Tax Service, over UAH 40 billion in value added tax is lost every year. The losses from VAT are actually twice higher, because the VAT losses from the fraud reflect the amount of illegally circulated smuggled goods, i.e. \$15 billion in value, of which \$3 billion is internal VAT losses. Additional \$3 billion are lost from not accounting for other taxes because of this fraud, i.e. CIT, PIT, natural resource taxation. Thus, overall losses from VAT fraud are \$6 billion annually.

Excisable goods: \$1 billion lost

The Chairman of the Accounting Chamber personally stated that due to the "shadow market" of gasoline and diesel fuel, the state budget did not receive excise tax in the amount



A truck enters a scanning box at the Chop-Zahony international checkpoint on the Ukrainian-Hungarian border on Feb. 25, 2020, in the Transcarpathian region.

of UAH 25 billion which is approximately \$890 million.

In addition, the illicit trade in cigarettes is booming. According to the SBU, the volume of the illegal tobacco market is about 7 percent of the total. As a result, in 2019 the state budget received about UAH 5 billion due to unpaid taxes, not counting losses from alcohol.

Shadow lease of land: \$500 million lost

According to the explanatory note to the draft bill #3131 the losses of budgets at all levels from taxes and other payments not paid in this field range from 6 to 22 billion UAH. On average, we are talking about \$500 million.

Sleeping licenses: \$500 million lost

30% of all special permits issued for the use of oil and gas subsoil are so-called "sleeping" licences, otherwise not utilised, according to the data provided to us by the State Service of Geology and Mineral Resources of Ukraine.

Due to the inactivity, and as a consequence of paying taxes in this practice, there is a parallel practice of underestimating the price of deposits.

These are only some of the few examples of areas where corruption schemes have been poisoning the whole economic system in Ukraine. The longer we continue to ignore these dark holes, the farther

we get from economic prosperity. Corruption should end.

The Office of Simple Solutions & Results have put together very specific concept reforms and draft laws for each of these problem areas. I hope that President Volodymyr Zelensky will show great political will to tackle the said problems in the same way he has done it he did in other fields in the past. From my side, I will do my best to help and to push.

Mikheil Saakashvili has been the chair of the executive committee of the National Reform Council since May 7, 2020. He served as governor of Odesa Oblast from May 30, 2015, to Nov. 9, 2016. He was president of Georgia from Jan. 25, 2004, to Nov. 17, 2013.

Kyiv Post in its March 19 issue will focus on

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Ukraine to nationalize Motor Sich, compensate investors

By Alexander Query
query@kyivpost.com

The National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine announced a major setback to Chinese investors who have been trying to acquire Motor Sich, the major Zaporizhia-based aircraft engine manufacturer.

Oleksiy Danilov, the secretary of the security council, announced the company would be nationalized in the “near future” during a briefing in Kyiv on March 11.

“It will be returned to the ownership of the Ukrainian state in a legal, constitutional way in the near future,” Danilov said, adding that the investors will be compensated fairly.

Danilov said that the decision was based on the security council’s 2018 ruling to protect Ukraine’s aviation industry.

This is the latest chapter in the four-year standoff with Skyrizon Aircraft Holdings, a Chinese company which has sought to acquire a controlling stake in Motor Sich amid fierce opposition from the United States.

If Skyrizon acquired Motor Sich, it would gain access to state patents for advanced helicopter engines. The U.S. fears that China would use this technology to try to dominate the South China Sea region.

Some of that technology may also

Volodymyr Petrov



Mi-8 helicopters, used by Ukraine and Russia, are built with Motor Sich’s engines. Ukraine’s National Security and Defense Council has announced on March 11 that the company will be nationalized soon.

end up in the hands of Russia, with which China has joint defense projects.

Wang Jing, the owner of Skyrizon, released a public statement on March 6, threatening to sue Ukrainian authorities and pledging to “resolutely protect and safeguard the legiti-

mate rights of Chinese investors.”

“We have already filed and are preparing to file a number of additional lawsuits in Ukraine, in China, and at the international level,” Wang stated. In December, Skyrizon launched a \$3.5 billion international arbitration case against Ukraine,

aided by Ukrainian company DCH Group and its owner, Kharkiv businessman Oleksandr Yaroslavsky.

The nationalization announcement follows a March 4 statement by David Arakhamia, the head of the Verkhovna Rada’s ruling 248-seat Servant of the People party that a

draft bill on Motor Sich nationalization would be submitted to parliament “this week.”

“This is a matter of national defense capability,” the lawmaker said.

On Jan. 29, the president’s office and the security council had announced three-year sanctions against Wang, Skyrizon, and its parent company, Beijing Xinwei Technology Group.

The sanctions block Wang’s and Skyrizon’s assets in Ukraine, ban the movement of capital out of Ukraine and prohibit buying or selling Motor Sich securities to the sanctioned parties.

Skyrizon, with Yaroslavsky’s help, has tried to unfreeze the sale of Motor Sich. Yaroslavsky, who would own 25% of the company if the deal went through, strove to be the Ukrainian face of the sale.

Ukraine’s recent moves to shut down the acquisition should please the U.S. but anger China. The U.S. is Ukraine’s biggest ally against Russia but China is its biggest trading partner.

The Chinese investors tried to buy a majority stake in Motor Sich in 2016. Ukraine’s security services froze the company’s shares in 2017 after the U.S. and Japan got wind of the deal. ❏

US sanctions Kolomoisky for ‘significant corruption’

By Brian Bonner
bonner@kyivpost.com

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken called out billionaire Ukrainian oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky on March 5, accusing him of “involvement in significant corruption.”

Blinken made the public designation as the U.S. imposed a ban making Kolomoisky and his immediate family ineligible to travel in the United States.

Kolomoisky faces a U.S. criminal investigation into laundering money from the \$5.5 billion he allegedly stole while owning Ukraine’s largest bank, PrivatBank, which had to be nationalized in December 2016 and receive a taxpayer bailout. He also faces numerous civil lawsuits in jurisdictions, including the U.S., for alleged money laundering in real estate purchases from PrivatBank money.

Blinken also accused Kolomoisky of corruption while he served as governor of Ukraine’s Dnipropetrovsk Oblast in 2014–2015, during the earlier stages of Russia’s war against Ukraine.

In a March 5 statement, Blinken wrote: “Today, I am announcing the public designation of oligarch and former Ukrainian public official Ihor Kolomoisky due to his involvement in significant corruption. In his official capacity as a governor of Ukraine’s Dnipropetrovsk Oblast from 2014 to 2015, Kolomoisky was involved in corrupt acts that undermined rule of law and the Ukrainian

AFP



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken testifies before the House Committee On Foreign Affairs March 10, 2021 on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. Blinken is expected to take questions about the Biden administration’s priorities for U.S. foreign policy.

public’s faith in their government’s democratic institutions and public processes, including using his political influence and official power for his personal benefit.

“While this designation is based on acts during his time in office, I also want to express concern about Kolomoisky’s current and ongoing efforts to undermine Ukraine’s democratic processes and institutions, which pose a serious threat to its future.”

Kolomoisky and his family have been designated under Section 7031(c) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2020, which bans U.S. entry for “officials of

foreign governments (that) have been involved in a gross violation of human rights or significant corruption.”

In addition to Ihor Kolomoisky, Blinken publicly designating the oligarch’s wife Iryna Kolomoiska, his daughter, Angelika Kolomoyska, and his son, Israel Zvi Kolomoisky.

“This designation reaffirms the U.S. commitment to supporting political, economic, and justice sector reforms that are key to Ukraine’s Euro-Atlantic path,” the secretary of state said. “The United States continues to stand with all Ukrainians whose work drives reforms forward. The department will continue to use authorities like this to promote

accountability for corrupt actors in this region and globally.”

The designation will, at least, encourage Ukraine’s ongoing efforts to recover for taxpayers as much of the \$5.5 billion allegedly stolen from PrivatBank during Kolomoisky’s ownership of the financial institution. Despite the large-scale bank fraud, prosecutors have not filed any criminal case against him.

Following the designation, President Volodymyr Zelensky’s administration released a statement thanking the U.S. for helping de-oligarchization in Ukraine. It didn’t mention Kolomoisky by name.

“To achieve economic prosperity and Euro-Atlantic integration, Ukraine has to overcome the system where oligarchs dominate,” the statement reads. “Ukraine is thankful to every partner for the support on this path. Fighting oligarchs isn’t only about criminal responsibility. It is also about creating a transparent, competitive environment for business, where big financial groups can’t dominate the market, influence media and politics.”

Reaction from Timothy Ash, a London-based emerging-markets strategist: “Zelensky realized the threat imposed by Kolomoisky, albeit late; Kolomoisky backed his election campaign but struggled to take him on until quite recently as he was unsure about his support at home and abroad. The U.S. backing for Zelensky in this battle is now clear

with the U.S. actions. It will I think give Zelensky strength to go after other oligarchs at home and push on with the reform agenda.”

Olena Shcherban, a lawyer with the Anti-Corruption Action Center, told the Kyiv Post that Kolomoisky may have seen the sanctions coming.

“His son was also in the states, studied there, and is now also in Ukraine,” Shcherban said. “This indicates that he still takes certain security measures regarding his family and his assets in one way or another.”

According to state-owned PrivatBank, about \$747 million of the \$5.5 billion allegedly stolen from PrivatBank was invested in real estate, metallurgical plants and other property in the U.S. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, these businesses “often failed to turn a profit.”

Kolomoisky told Ukrainian media that he invested in the U.S. using money he acquired legitimately from selling his Evraz metallurgical business in Ukraine.

In August 2020, the Department of Justice filed two civil forfeiture complaints against the oligarch’s properties in Louisville and Dallas, days after federal agents raided his offices in Cleveland and Miami.

While criminal charges against Kolomoisky have not been publicly announced in the U.S., legal experts believe that it’s only a matter of time until they are.

Kyiv Post staff writer Anna Myroniuk contributed to this report. ❏

Danilov: Ukraine must become an English-speaking nation

By Brian Bonner
bonner@kyivpost.com

Oleksiy Danilov, secretary of the National Security and Defense Council, told a March 9 “Ukraine 30” forum on culture, media, and tourism that nationwide fluency in the English language needs to be achieved for Ukraine’s national security and to displace centuries of Russification in which the Russian language dominated.

“Unfortunately, the heritage of the Soviet past which we received came in the form of the Russian language because of Russification,” according to an English-language translation of the live-streamed event. “We have not yet identified the Ukrainian language as the primary and fundamental language of our independence. We have not yet identified the importance of the English language, which should become the second language of our country so that we will stay safe from the threats of the Russian Federation.”

Danilov blamed politicians during Ukraine’s nearly 30 years of national



Oleksiy Danilov, secretary of the National Security and Defense Council



Oleg Petrasjuk

A drone picture shows an aerial view of Ukraine’s largest national flag in downtown Kyiv on Jan. 22, 2020.

independence for “playing games with the Russian language,” forcing Ukraine to keep “digging a hole for ourselves” when it came to de-Russification and connecting to the larger, English-speaking world.

“Now we have found ourselves deep in that hole and it’s being used 100 percent by the Russian Federation,” which has even justified its military invasion of Ukraine

as defending Russian-language speakers.

“When the youth is fluent in English, that’s the precondition for the independence of this country,” Danilov said. “The English language should be used from kindergarten to the end of secondary schools.” He lamented that the nation has so few fluent English speakers.

The linguistic war will be won when Ukrainian is the main language of the country followed by English, he said. “We have been closing our eyes and have been blind to that,” he said.

As “classical TV” gets replaced by the internet, which is happening at “crazy breakneck speed,” Ukrainians will find there is not much Ukrainian-language content in

cyberspace and will have to choose languages.

“So we should make ourselves safe in the future. We should recognize that the English language is the fundamental precondition for the safety of the nation,” he said, noting that the nation’s upcoming information security strategy will address the importance of the Ukrainian and English languages. ☺

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Europeans favor Kyiv to escape their lockdowns

Volodymyr Petrov



People enjoy meals and drinks at Kyiv's ZigZag bar on March 10, 2021. ZigZag is one of the popular local venues packed with European visitors since November. Many foreign travelers now escape COVID-19 lockdowns in their home countries by vacationing in Kyiv, which has few quarantine restrictions in force.

By Toma Istomina
istomina@kyivpost.com

After arriving in Kyiv on March 12, Dutchman Jelle Kyoso is planning to enjoy his favorite dilemma — what party to go to.

The last time he let his hair down was in August, when he danced for an hour at an illegal rave in Amsterdam until it was shut down by the police. The one before that was on March 19, 2020, a date he still remembers.

"I'm very excited," Kyoso told the Kyiv Post. "But it will take a minute to enjoy that freedom again."

Kyoso is no exception. Kyiv has been gaining a reputation abroad as a "quarantine-free" zone. Many foreigners, mostly Europeans, flock to the Ukrainian capital to escape strict lockdowns in their countries. Some come for a short fun weekend. Others stay for months, enjoying the normality they missed.

Ukraine has only had a real nationwide lockdown for two months in

spring 2020 and less than a month in January. The country shut down public transport, banned mass events, closed schools and non-essential businesses. Still, those restrictions can't compare to some of the harshest measures in Europe, like curfews and limitations on how many people can visit your home.

Today, Ukraine is divided into quarantine zones that have different restrictions, but Kyiv offers a pretty much pre-pandemic experience with open restaurants, bars and cinemas, and regular concerts and parties. The only difference that reminds people of the new reality is the omnipresence of face masks.

Though struggling with the moral dilemma of traveling in the time of the pandemic, some Europeans choose to get away after reaching a critical level of quarantine fatigue, which only intensified after the second wave of the disease made the governments reintroduce lockdowns in late 2020.

Ukraine had 3.3 million foreigners crossing its borders in 2020. While

it's considerably lower than the 13.7 million that arrived in 2019, it's still a lot for a pandemic year.

With almost no restrictions, quick flights and low prices, Kyiv may become Europe's main getaway destination for the time of the pandemic.

No obstacle

Despite the global travel limitations, there are few, if any obstacles Europeans face in reaching Ukraine.

It welcomes the residents of most European countries, which have a better epidemiological situation than Ukraine, under one condition: having medical insurance that covers COVID-19 treatment.

Those coming from countries where the situation is worse than in Ukraine have to self-isolate for 14 days or take a test — if it's negative, they're free. Tests in private laboratories cost around \$30, while results usually take a day or two, not confining visitors to hotels for too long.

Kyiv is just a few hours away from most of the European capitals by plane. Flights are now scheduled

at least several times a week for the regular connections. Low-cost airlines like Wizz Air and Ryanair offer one-way tickets for \$50 from London and Amsterdam, \$30 from Berlin and Vienna and as little as \$12 from Milan.

Some countries require travelers to have credible grounds to travel.

France, for instance, started limiting the reasons for travel outside the European Union to health emergencies, urgent personal or family matters or work trips starting February.

United Kingdom residents, meanwhile, are permitted to leave the country for work, volunteering, education, medical or compassionate grounds, weddings, funerals or similar events. But many U.K. travelers say that getting around these restrictions is no bother.

Many other states, like the Netherlands, don't recommend leaving the country unless it's urgent and can't be postponed but still don't regulate travel.

City Life

With Elina Kent
kent@kyivpost.com

The Vernadsky Library protected Ukrainian history for years, but the iconic institution now needs help

The main building of the Vernadsky National Library is one of Kyiv's most recognizable modernist structures.

It's been standing tall since 1989 and has experienced a revival in recent years as a popular location for music video production.

But the architectural heritage has always been secondary to this institution, which has the biggest collection of items in Ukraine and serves as its main academic library and main scientific information center.

"The primary purpose is protecting our books," Lyubov Dubrovina, the director of the Vernadsky Library, told the Kyiv Post.

Since its original founding in 1918, the library has been through a lot. It has been censored during the Soviet Union and closed to the public during the pandemic.

"We've lived through revolutions, wars and famines," Dubrovina says. "The library has seen it all."

Though there's no external threat now, the state institution is on the verge of crumbling, with decaying buildings and no funds for renovation.

Protecting archives

The library has been promoting scientific inquiry and protecting culture since its foundation more than a century ago by Ukraine's Hetman Pavlo Skoropadskyi. Scientist Volodymyr Vernadsky, whom the library was named after when the newest building opened in 1989, created the library's first provisional committee shortly after its founding.

As the largest library in Ukraine, and the 20th largest library in the world, it contains more than 15 million items.

The earliest collection, ancient Slavic scripture, dates as far back as the 11th century, although it also houses some cuneiform texts from 3000 B.C. This heritage is much older than the items usually found in European libraries that store archives from the 17–18th century.

The rare collection also includes incunabula texts; items from the 15th century with the library's oldest "Treatise" by Matthew Krakowsky published in Germany around 1460; over 2,500 types of paleotypes (from the first half of the 16th century); publications from the most famous European publishing firms of the

Ukraine's no-rules reputation makes it a tourist attraction

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And what is not regulated, turned out to be easily disregarded.

Bars and techno scene

Kyiv has been gaining momentum on the world map before the pandemic.

Located in the historical center on the buzzing with creative businesses Reitarska Street, cafe and bar ZigZag sees about a third of its visitors come from abroad, according to bartender Serhii Tymchuk.

While the pandemic first left ZigZag with a mostly local audience, starting in November it has experienced a revival with foreigners flooding its halls. The trend has persisted.

When Europe eased restrictions in summer, pubs and restaurants were packed with customers, happy to be able to socialize again. After a glimpse of normality, the news about reintroducing lockdowns amid the surge in the number of cases in the fall was all the more crushing. So many decided to get away.

Tymchuk says he mostly meets customers from Germany, Austria and the U.K.

Though bars and restaurants in Kyiv are now required to close by midnight, many continue to welcome clients past the allowed time.

"You don't need to get out of your way to bend the rules here," Tymchuk told the Kyiv Post, clarifying that ZigZag abides by official measures.

The capital's now-famous techno scene, especially the capital's best club on Kyrylivska Street, is another big attraction for foreigners.

That's how Kyoso found out about people traveling to Kyiv. A DJ and techno fan, he was told by six Berlin friends that they celebrated New Year's in the Ukrainian capital.

"I was shocked so many of my friends went to Kyiv," Kyoso says.

Like most of Europe, his home, the Netherlands, hasn't had legal parties for nearly a year now. And house parties are often raided by the police amid noise complaints.

Kyoso says that not being able to go to a club alone is not big of a deal. But combined with losing a job, not being able to hit a gym or meet with a friend for coffee, the lack of nightlife had a huge toll on him and his circle. "People get depressed," he says.

Kyoso is responsibly planning to take a test upon arrival to make sure he's not spreading the disease. Soon after that, however, he will head to the obscure club on Kyrylivska Street.

"It's a unique moment where it's probably the only techno club open in Europe," he says.

Making use of pandemic

The pandemic's effect is more far-reaching than simply limiting public leisure.

Many people shifted to working or studying remotely. Others lost jobs or had their business put on hold.

In the EU, the labor market suffered a record loss in the second



Courtesy

French Nicolas Blanchet (L) and Welsh Casimir Kiendl spent more than six months in Kyiv during the COVID-19 pandemic, exploring the Ukrainian capital and enjoying the benefits of eased quarantine restrictions. Kyiv has become a popular tourist destination among Europeans escaping strict lockdowns in their home countries starting in late 2020.

quarter of 2020 and unemployment climbed to 7.4% by August, leaving millions of residents without a job.

While many European governments introduced relief programs, many people found themselves facing looming uncertainty.

French citizen Nicolas Blanchet, 28, is one of them. He normally works as a private chef in Switzerland and provides catering on boats in France during summer. The pandemic cost him dozens of bookings.

Blanchet spent a total of six months in Ukraine last year. Having initially come here to stay with his Ukrainian girlfriend, he found many other benefits including socializing and eating out. Another bonus came on the financial side: Staying in France or Switzerland would have cost him twice as much, if not more, he says.

"You can afford way more stuff for way less money," he told the Kyiv Post.

Welshman Casimir Kiendl, 29, wasn't trying to escape the lockdown when he moved to Kyiv in July.

As an international sales manager for a perfume company based in France, Kiendl has been roaming the world for the past six years. When the pandemic put his company on pause, he decided to use the opportunity to learn Russian, which he has wanted to do for a while.

Diving deep into studying with three hours of classes a day, five days a week, Kiendl planned to go back to France by October. As his company's estimates of when it would resume operations proved wrong, he stayed. But that wasn't big of a blow.

By that time, Kiendl had grown quite an affection for Ukraine — its welcoming and sincere people, the restaurant scene he considers to be the "best in Europe" and what he calls the culture of excellence that shows up in little things like hair-dressing service.

"We have a stereotype of Slavic people in Europe that they are cold

and reserved, but really I have never found that here," Kiendl told the Kyiv Post. "I found it very easy to make friends here, much more than in Paris."

More than half a year later since stepping off a plane, Kiendl is still in Kyiv, now with advanced Russian, and he is seriously considering staying for good.

As he looks for a job in the civil sector, his future is still uncertain. But in the middle of an overarching crisis, he may have found a new home. ☺

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City Life

Ukraine's biggest Vernadsky Library reinvents itself as cultural center

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16–18th centuries; and antique Latin script.

There are rare and valuable editions from the 19–20th centuries as well, including classics of Ukrainian literature by Ivan Kotlyarevsky, Taras Shevchenko, Marko Vovchok, Nikolai Gogol, Borys Hrinchenko, Olha Kobylianska and many more.

"I am proud of the library and what we protect," says Dubrovina, who has been working at the institution for nearly 40 years and heading it since 2018.

The oldest and most delicate collections are stored in the older building located on Volodymyrska Street in downtown Kyiv. The building is kept at 18 degrees Celsius and below 50% humidity to maintain a perfect environment for its artifacts.

High humidity would risk inviting mold, damaging the ancient texts. The library has an entire rapid response department, the Center of Conservation and Restoration, dedicated to preventing such crises.

A much bigger threat than mold was the Soviet censorship. Back in the days of totalitarianism, certain cultural artifacts not aligning with the state's narrative were ordered to be destroyed. But the Vernadsky Library had always followed a greater purpose than blindly serving the authorities.

"They saved everything throughout the years," Dubrovina says. "When Ukraine became independent, we were able to show what cultural history we had been protecting secretly."

In fact, one of the library's priorities is to specifically promote the history and literature of repressed people throughout time.

"It's important to preserve all history, no matter what bias whichever governing power may have," Dubrovina says. "Learning your nation's history grounds you. To fully know oneself you must gain knowledge in life, your history, your people's and country's history."



The Vernadsky National Library's "green" reading room has been empty since it closed to the public in March 2020 due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. The reading room's retro design has been popular with promotional and music videos in recent years.

Serving people

One of the other main reasons the library is so vital to Ukraine is its research support.

As the main scientific information center in Ukraine, the library is a place for all academics and scientists to study and research. All academic institutions of Ukraine have archives in the library.

The books and resources used to only be loaned to doctorate candidates and fellow academics but that has changed and anyone is now able to rent the items.

The library normally receives around 260,000 visitors a year. The peak number of visitors using the reading room was around 2,000

people a day in 1989. Since 2010, the amount of visitors in the reading room has dropped significantly because of the increased use of resources online.

The age of the internet has not harmed the library's functions. In fact, its website and online catalogue receive 90,000 visits a day, with an average of 20,000 downloads.

Though primary, providing resources isn't the only service the library offers. The institution has been shifting to become a cultural attraction. It gives tours focused on architecture or its scientific or cultural capabilities. It also holds art events and exhibitions.

It is now preparing an internation-

al art exhibition about the Danube River that is set to open after the pandemic restrictions are lifted.

"There are so many things we provide when there isn't quarantine," Antonina Sheremeta, the head of the department of socio-cultural activities, told the Kyiv Post.

However, the library managed to remind the public of itself during quarantine by promoting Ukrainian culture. Its building was one of the settings for the Zmova live music series that has informed thousands of viewers about historical locations in need of funding by filming sessions in them. Kharkiv rapper Kurgan performed in one of the library's reading rooms.

The library has enjoyed attention from foreign musicians and was promoted through a number of music videos shot inside its main building by U.K. Paloma Faith, Paolo Nutini, Zayn and Korean boy band NCT.

But the institution is now planning to release a promotional video to reach the local audience and showcase what it offers.

Empty crumbling halls

Revolutions, wars, famines — now a global pandemic has been added to the list of what the library has seen.

The institution was forced to close its reading rooms to the public during the quarantine. Its huge halls feel especially empty now.

"After all, it's the intellect humans bring that enriches this place," Sheremeta says.

The library hopes to reopen by March 31 but in the meantime, the pandemic is a huge burden.

With 27 floors and an area of 35,700 square meters, the main building has many bathrooms that need to be sanitized every 3 hours, adding expenses to its tight budget.

And while the library's manage-



The director of the Vernadsky National Library, Lyubov Dubrovina, talks to the Kyiv Post in her office on March 2, 2021.

ment is optimistic about surviving the pandemic, its further future may not be as certain. The building desperately needs a renovation that is estimated at more than \$40 million — a sum it has no means to raise.

Though the rooms with books and ancient maps have been preserved as best they can, some other parts of the building are falling apart. Some of the thin old wooden floor and ceiling haven't been renovated in decades. The roof is in poor shape. The bathrooms on the basement floor have a bit of a reputation, having not been renovated since 1989.

Several presidents and administrations gave empty promises of supporting the library, but they never came through in the end. Incumbent President Volodymyr Zelensky promised to allocate funding for the library after touring the building and even provided that promise in writing.

"The library is in dire need of financial support," Dubrovina says. "So we are now waiting." ❦



The Vernadsky National Library's spiral has the sculptures of famous writers and poets between the windows. The architecture and design of the library are aesthetically pleasing but need upkeep and renovations. The spiral leads into the infamous basement cafe and bathrooms that have not been renovated since 1989.

Volodymyr Petrov

Volodymyr Petrov



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