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Kyiv, We Need To Talk

The capital city is beautiful, green and eclectic. It is also dirty, crumbling and congested.



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A view of one of Kyiv's most recognizable Soviet-era residential buildings on the capital's main Khreshchatyk Street photographed on July 29, 2021. The new construction site behind it irked many Kyivans who complained on social media that it spoiled the landmark panorama. In fact, this is symptomatic for modern Kyiv: The generally much-loved city is overflowing with chaotic construction. Among its other problems are constant traffic jams, bad air quality, strained and outdated infrastructure, and rising real estate prices. Under Mayor Vitali Klitschko, who has ruled the city for seven years, Kyiv hasn't solved any of its chronic problems.



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Klitschko, Zelensky bump their heads over Kyiv, again

By Oleksiy Sorokin
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Despite winning local elections in a landslide in 2020, Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko is still in the hot seat.

Klitschko has been embroiled in an on-again, off-again power struggle with President Volodymyr Zelensky since the latter took office in 2019.

Zelensky's office unsuccessfully tried to deprive Klitschko of his powers in Kyiv only to experience a crushing defeat in the Kyiv mayoral election in October.

Kyiv's constant traffic jams, corruption scandals and deterioration of critical infrastructure did not help the president depose Klitschko. The former heavyweight boxing champion won the election with 50.4% of the vote. Zelensky's candidate Iryna Vereshchuk got 10 times less.

Now, nearly a year after relative peace, the conflict between Zelensky and Klitschko flickered again.

Starting in early May, the State Fiscal Service and the Kyiv prosecutor's office conducted nearly 70 searches alleging corruption, tax evasion, abuse of office, embezzlement and fraud among Kyiv city officials.

A total of 11 people were charged, most of whom are incumbent officials connected to Klitschko.

Klitschko denies wrongdoing and accuses the President's Office of political pressure. Zelensky has made public attacks against the mayor, directly accusing Klitschko and his allies of corruption.

"It seems to me that he forgot that he is a mayor and has begun his presidential campaign," said Zelensky in a June 24 interview with 1+1 channel.

Political analyst Mykola Davydiuk says that it's a longstanding conflict that will continue until the 2024 presidential elections.

"Zelensky obviously sees Klitschko as one of his potential political opponents," Davydiuk told the Kyiv Post.

Capital investigation

The new round of public brawls between Klitschko and Zelensky began in late May when the National Police, together with the Security Service of Ukraine, conducted searches at Kyiv's utility services, the Kyiv City Council building and the home of Klitschko's top ally, Artur Palatnyi.

The Security Service of Ukraine has also searched the building where Klitschko has a flat. The mayor cited pressure, while the authorities said they were searching Klitschko's neighbors.

A total of nearly 70 searches were part of at least nine criminal cases.

Among these cases are embezzlement of state funds during the construction of two metro stations and the illegal sale of licenses to street vendors.

"They shouldn't have stolen money from the budget," said Zelensky when asked about the searches.

Klitschko responded by saying that the President's Office has ordered searches to portray him as a "corrupt official."

"The most valuable thing I have is my reputation," he added.



People pass by the local election campaign board of the Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko on Oct. 21, 2020 in downtown Kyiv.

Volodymyr Petrov

The ongoing investigations came after nearly a year of public peace between the president's office and Klitschko.

In 2019, months after Zelensky took office, the president's office began urging Klitschko to resign. Zelensky's then-chief of staff, Andriy Bohdan, called out Klitschko saying that the mayor is turning a blind eye to corruption in Kyiv.

In September 2019, the Cabinet issued a ruling to fire Klitschko from the position of the Kyiv City Administration. This appointed position, which is similar to a governor, is separate from the elected job of Kyiv's mayor.

Yet, Ukraine's legal limbo gave the mayor an unexpected victory.

According to a 2015 Constitutional Court ruling, the Cabinet had the authority to fire Klitschko from the position of the city administration's head but it can only appoint an elected mayor to that position. This is why Klitschko has effectively kept both jobs.

Meanwhile, Klitschko remains popular in Kyiv. A July Rating Group poll showed Klitschko being supported by 50% of Kyiv's residents, while support for Zelensky stands at 36%.

According to an internal communication obtained by the Kyiv Post, the President's Office instructed lawmakers from Zelensky's 245-member Servant of the People party on how to speak with the press concerning Klitschko.

The messages list Klitschko's shortcomings and ask lawmakers to publicly urge him to step down as the head of the Kyiv City Administration. A lawmaker from the Servant of the People party, who spoke on condition of anonymity, has confirmed the authenticity of those messages.

"They hate each other," says political analyst Volodymyr Fesenko. "One of them must have violated a truce agreement they most likely had over the past year," he adds.

Dying capital

Despite politics being heavily involved in the ongoing confrontation, Klitschko's shortcomings as

mayor are easy to spot.

Klitschko's seven-year reign in Kyiv is marked by impoverished infrastructure, a lack of proper public transport, deteriorating historic buildings, haphazard construction, poor utility services, alleged embezzlement and corruption.

Ex-lawmaker Maksym Mykytas, who became a top-tier construction mogul under Klitschko, is currently under house arrest awaiting trial on embezzlement charges. Klitschko's top ally Palatnyi was charged with embezzlement in May.

Furthermore, Klitschko has been taunted for his inability to meet deadlines in long-term construction projects like the two metro stations connecting the city center with the northernmost Vinogradar neighborhood and the Podilskyi Bridge, which has been under construction since 1994.

Klitschko publicly promised to commission the bridge by the end of 2020 but that did not happen.

In 2018, the city-owned Kyivmetrobud company won a tender to build the two metro stations for Hr 6 billion (\$220 million). The construction was to be completed by the end of 2021.

On July 12, Lesia Ziburanna, a lawmaker from Zelensky's Servant of the People party, held a press conference together with several co-party members to talk about Klitschko's shortcomings.

Ziburanna, who has been vocal about Klitschko's mismanagement, said that Kyivmetrobud has already spent Hr 3 billion, but the project is only 26% complete. The National Police are investigating potential embezzlement.

"It's odd that a city with a budget of over Hr 60 billion (\$2.2 billion) can't even solve problems with traffic, yet continues to permit haphazard construction," Ziburanna told the Kyiv Post.

"But it's not only the mayor but also department heads, local utility services' heads and the city council," she added. "I think that the separation of powers between the head of the Kyiv City Administration and the

mayor will allow for a more transparent spending."

Run-off rehearsal

Despite obvious shortcomings, Klitschko's approval rating hasn't been shaken by corruption scandals and accusations of mismanagement that have followed him since he became mayor in 2014.

Klitschko remains popular in Kyiv and is eyeing a potential return to the national stage.

"I have ambitions," said Klitschko in May after Zelensky's comments about the mayor's potential presidential bid.

After finishing his successful boxing career, Klitschko found himself to be one of Ukraine's most popular politicians.

During the 2012 parliamentary election, Klitschko's UDAR party came in third with 14% of the vote.

In 2014, months before snap presidential elections, Klitschko, who was the second most popular politician in the country, abstained from running.

Klitschko folded his own political project and ran in the 2014 Kyiv mayoral election.

Klitschko's national recognition condensed to Kyiv and Fesenko says that the mayor is trying to use the ongoing animosity between him and the president to elevate himself back onto the national stage.

"Klitschko depicts himself as practically the main opponent of Zelensky and that the president's office is afraid of him," says Fesenko. "I think the president's office has more important issues to worry about," says Fesenko.

According to Rating Group, the mayor's UDAR party is currently supported by a mere 4.3% nationwide.

Davydiuk disagrees.

"If Klitschko, who has a very low disapproval rating, constantly appears on Ukrainian TV, he has a good chance to increase his electoral support," says Davydiuk. "That's why Zelensky has essentially already begun his re-election campaign and is trying to sink his main political opponents." 🗳️

Jet pilots leave Ukraine's Air Force en masse, threatening security

By Illia Ponomarenko
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Captain Vadym Voroshylov used to be a fighter pilot with Ukraine's 204th Tactical Aviation Brigade based in Lutsk, a city of 200,000 450 kilometers northwest from Kyiv.

By his mid-20s, he had already served as the brigade's chief flight security officer.

He had an Instagram page full of breathtaking pictures of him in full gear, cutting through the skies in a Mikoyan MiG-29 jet. His YouTube channel tells a romantic Top Gun-style story of a young daring falcon.

But that was just a beautiful screen disguising the living hell Voroshylov was in most of the time on the ground.

He was swamped with paperwork. Between flights, he had to maintain nearly 50 various logs, registers, folders, and forms. Due to endless tours of duty, he wouldn't see his young wife eight or 10 months out of the year.

The senior pilot was paid less than \$1,000 a month, the amount that a junior-level IT professional can earn in Kyiv.

Yet, he held on to the job he loved.

Until one day in September, when a military Antonov An-26 aircraft crashed near the airfield of Chuhuiv, killing 26 people on board, mostly young cadets. An inquiry revealed an engine failure — but also blamed the pilot responsible.

"They always blame the pilot," Voroshylov said. "No matter if it was the human factor or a technical malfunction."

When he saw the report about the crash blaming the pilot, Voroshylov realized: He'd had enough of this system. As soon as his five-year contract expired in 2021, he left, just two weeks before his scheduled promotion to a major.

He was one of many. More and more military pilots and other personnel leave Ukraine's Air Forces every year. They say they are tired of senseless bureaucracy, low wages, and impossible service conditions.

Recently, even the Air Forces command had to admit it and call for solutions.

Nonetheless, nothing has changed. So jet pilots, who are among the most valuable military personnel, keep leaving for a better life, in bitter regret.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's military air fleet is nearing the end of its lifespan, threatening to leave the Ukrainian skies defenseless to Russia.

Wings losing hope

Combat pilots are the most expensive personnel to train.

In Ukraine, upon various estimates, training a high-class pilot costs anywhere between Hr 150 million and Hr 320 million (\$5.6 — \$12 million) and takes between eight and 10 years.

According to the command, nearly 140 people, among them pilots, have left the Armed Forces over the last two years. More than 40 are going to leave in 2021 alone.

Ukrainian airmen toy aircraft models against the backdrop of a Mikoyan MiG-29 fighter at the airfield of Vasytkiv on Aug. 3, 2016. According to Military Balance 2021, Ukraine currently operates nearly 125 combat-capable aircraft, including 4th generation fighter workhorses Sukhoi Su-27 and Mikoyan MiG-29.



On July 20, the Air Force command admitted the mass resignation of five young highly-skilled fighter pilots, who had graduated from the Kharkiv flight academy in 2016 and had served their first five-year contracts.

One of them was Captain Voroshylov.

"Of course, this is a serious challenge to the Air Force's tactical wing," the command said. "And if this tendency continues, this will quickly lead to a serious decline in the fighter force's combat readiness."

The command admitted a lot of reasons why aviators leave, with the most serious being hard workload, excessive paperwork, low salaries, and social security, as well as an increasingly obsolete aircraft fleet.

The issue is hardly breaking news. In 2019, the Verkhovna Rada passed a law extending the mandatory term of service for Air Force flight school graduates from five to 10 years.

In a bid to keep young pilots, the country's leadership chose the most primitive method of coercion — which didn't help anyway.

Now, the Air Force says it is working to keep its personnel in ranks and announced new "legal initiatives" and amendments in flight mission and training regulations "in the nearest time."

According to a Kyiv Post source, the first emergency measures include bringing the Force pilots salaries (that are currently Hr 19,000 and Hr 24,000) up to the amounts given to their National Guard counterparts getting at least Hr 32,000 a month.

Mayhem and flashiness

Nonetheless, as many pilots told the Kyiv Post, low payments are not the ultimate reason they leave the ranks.

Far more demotivating is the obsolete, often absurd flight regu-

lations engrained in the Air Force around since the Soviet era.

"The system is ineffective," says another high-classed fighter pilot who recently resigned from the Air Force. He asked not to reveal his identity due to concerns over his future career in aviation.

"You just don't feel like doing the right thing and serving the nation. All the flight training, all the air defense missions, they all focused on formalities rather than real, tangible results."

In many ways, this comes from the Authority for Regulation Activities of State Aviation of Ukraine, whose instructions bear a legal status regular pilots and even generals can do nothing to change.

This excessive bureaucratic body dictates its rules to the country's aviation, the pilot said.

"Upon that, the command also makes things worse," he continued.

"We end up having all this paperwork, all those endless logbooks, and so on. It's all about tokenism regarding the condition of our hardware. We say that it's all fine, but in reality, many things simply don't work. The low quality of repairs and modernization works at factories."

Very often, the conservative bureaucracy prevents pilots from introducing new practices learned from their Western colleagues during joint maneuvers like famous Ukrainian-American military exercises Clear Sky.

At the end of the day, smoke screens and the fear of change are killing the Air Force, the pilot said.

Voroshylov agrees. In the military, as a ranking pilot, he had just between 35 and 80 flight hours a year. This feels like nothing compared to the NATO requirement for pilots to have at least 180 hours a year, including 40 hours at a simulator.

Ukrainian jets now have more than enough fuel, he says, but then again — it is the absurd regulations that often prevent pilots from having more hours in the air.

"To meet the standard, we need to fly five days a week," he says. "But our instructions would not let us. We spend a day on flight preparation. In NATO militaries, a pre-flight briefing takes 10 minutes."

Few ways to go

On top of that, Ukraine's military air fleet is rapidly aging.

According to Military Balance 2021, Ukraine currently operates nearly 125 combat-capable aircraft, including 4th generation fighter workhorses Sukhoi Su-27 and Mikoyan MiG-29.

The newest fighter jet in the Ukrainian army was built 30 years ago.

The Air Force command admits that it would have to write off all of its old Soviet aircraft in the next 10 years. And that all fleet must be replaced with new machines through the 2030s. Otherwise Ukraine will lose its airpower.

Despite years of discussions, Ukraine's leadership is not even close to striking any contracts to purchase any new aircraft, except

for three Antonov An-178 transporters that are being built in Kyiv.

As part of its wish list, the Air Force mentioned U.S.-produced General Dynamics F-16 Fighting Falcon jets.

Money is going to be an issue: According to open source data, acquiring just one F-16 plane may cost a total of \$150 million.

The entire Air Force budget for 2021 is just Hr 1.35 billion (\$48 million).

Discharged pilots like Voroshylov would love to master more advanced multirole fighters like the latest F-16s or Northrop Grumman F-35s.

Many of them wish to get back to the Air Force when at least the most critical issues are solved.

But for now, Voroshylov is looking for a job in commercial aviation. He would have to pay some \$20,000 to learn to fly Boeing and Airbus, but will earn this money back within months.

He now lives in Kremenchuk, some 280 kilometers southeast of Kyiv. Sometimes, he sees fighter jets taking off from a nearby airfield.

"One day, I saw them rehearsing their flight for the upcoming Independence Day parade," the pilot says. "I almost cried." 🇺🇦

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EDITORIALS

Neglected capital

Kyiv residents have a longstanding love-hate relationship with the nation's capital.

Kyiv has lovely parks, great restaurants and a vibrant nightlife. The city has numerous historic landmarks, a remarkable coffee culture and all the features of a modern metropolis.

It's also neglected, polluted and has a depressing sequence of mayors that consistently rob the city of its potential.

The seven-year reign of Mayor Vitali Klitschko is the epitome of carelessness.

Klitschko's rule is marked by impoverished infrastructure, a lack of proper public transport, the deterioration of historic buildings, haphazard construction, poor utility services, alleged embezzlement and corruption.

Spending your Saturday night in a traffic jam or finding your favorite historic building demolished to pave way for a new shopping mall built by construction moguls tied to the mayor's office is a constant feature of life in Kyiv.

Klitschko promises, doesn't deliver and promises again.

If Klitschko's words meant anything, Kyiv would have a new bridge over the Dnipro River, two new metro stations, a moratorium on demolition of historic buildings and bike lanes that don't abruptly end.

Instead, the National Police is investigating embezzlement by city-owned Kyivmetrobud, the company unsuccessfully constructing the metro, the bridge is not yet finished, and street protests barely stopped yet another demolition of a historic landmark.

What's surprising is that we don't learn.

Klitschko hasn't been shaken by corruption scandals and accusations of mismanagement that have followed him since he became mayor in 2014.

Ex-lawmaker Maksym Mykytas, who became a top-tier construction mogul under Klitschko, is currently on house arrest awaiting trial on embezzlement and fraud charges. Klitschko's top political ally is charged with embezzlement of the city money.

Meanwhile, Klitschko enjoys strong support.

In October, Klitschko won the local mayoral elections with over 50% of the vote in the first round.

We entrust populists, dishonest officials and people with little experience to govern a complicated city.

An overpopulated city home to over three million people; a city which needs public transport reform, new schools and kindergartens.

A city that needs new pipes and clean water.

A city that needs to inspire its residents to actually care.

The October local elections were attended by only a third of Kyiv's population. The street protests to save the historic Kvity Ukrainy building were attended by several hundred people.

Yet it's all of us who are witnessing our favorite city being wrecked and left without a bright future that it's easily capable of having.

Big reshuffle

The long-lasting bureaucratic war between Ukraine's top military officials – Commander-in-Chief Ruslan Khomchak and Defense Minister Andriy Taran – has finally ended.

On July 27, President Volodymyr Zelensky suddenly sacked Khomchak, explaining it with the "lack of synergy" between the top defense officials.

Indeed, Khomchak and Taran detested each other. They waged endless battles challenging each other's orders and authorities and avoided contact.

In the country suffering from Russia's invasion, two Soviet-style generals – one serving, the other retired – were chest-beating and bumping their heads together. Ukraine's defense and military suffered.

Zelensky also sacked a range of other key figures close to Khomchak: Chief of General Staff Serhiy Korniychuk, the Donbas combat force leader Volodymyr Kravchenko, as well as the Airborne Forces branch leader Yevhen Moisiuk.

The post of Ukraine's top military leader was given to Major General Valeriy Zaluzhnyi, previously in charge of the country's military district North.

The defense community welcomed this appointment. Zaluzhnyi has a reputation as one of the most competent battlefield leaders and is very popular among troops.

But it's not enough. This shameful war of two towers was never just about two people. It was caused by deep systemic flaws that the Zelensky administration needs to remove.

Duties and authorities are still loosely divided between the Armed Forces command and the Defense Ministry. They often contradict and duplicate each other – which leads to mayhem, conflicts and mismanagement.

The defense and security community keeps ringing alarm, but the country's leadership ignores the problem. This needs to change.

But apart from that, Taran also needs to leave. Over more than a year in the office, he has proven his lack of leadership and the sense of teamwork.

As a retired military bureaucrat, the old system's own flesh and blood, minister Taran can't bring change to the army.

His efficacy can be illustrated by the fact that seven months into the year, the annual military production plan for 2021 has not even been launched yet. Although he is not the only one to blame.

Taran says Ukraine's defense sector under his leadership is moving towards NATO bit by bit. But meanwhile, it is a common opinion now that the old Sovietesque spirit is suffocating the Defense Ministry's drive towards any true reforms.

What we need is a modern, truly civilian defense minister separated from the old military establishment. We need a skillful manager who takes charge as a representative of the country's civilian leadership setting goals and tasks for the military.

We need a defense minister our Western-style military reform originally envisaged – not just another Soviet general.

NEWS ITEM:
The British tabloid Daily Mail reported that an American superstar couple, Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck, were spotted spending time in the Mediterranean on a luxurious yacht that allegedly belongs to Rinat Akhmetov, Ukraine's richest man, whose net worth is \$7.4 billion. Akhmetov's spokesperson denied that the yacht belonged to the oligarch.



NEWS ITEM:
Ukraine's police on July 26 arrested two alleged crime lords, citizens of Russia and Georgia, while they were hiding in a sunflower field after crossing the border from Russia into Ukraine illegally.

NEWS ITEM:
Recent polling shows that a mere 13.4% of Ukrainians want to see the former President Petro Poroshenko as president again, compared to the 27.7% received by the current president Volodymyr Zelensky. In the past months, Poroshenko took several trips to the front lines in eastern Ukraine. Surrounded by TV cameras, he brought soldiers gifts like a new video surveillance kit and boxes of fruit and berries.



See these features online at Kyivpost.com

Ukraine's Friend & Foe Of The Week



Kristalina Georgieva, managing director of International Monetary Fund
The IMF's managing director praised Ukraine's economic progress and agreed to visit Kyiv in September to continue talks on providing another tranche under the current \$5 billion stand-by program.



Jake Sullivan, the U.S. national security adviser
The White House official openly lied saying that the U.S. administration lifted sanctions on just two "non-Russian" companies tied to Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project – while in fact, both of them are directly controlled by the Kremlin.

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.

High time for Ukraine to grow domestic gas production

By Dylan Carter
carter@kyivpost.com

With the completion of Nord Stream 2 on the horizon and Europe making no real commitments to Ukraine's energy independence, it's high time for Ukraine to grow domestic gas production.

Around 80% of all Ukraine's gas is imported and Ukraine now only produces around 20 billion cubic meters of gas per year.

Ukraine's production is eclipsed by other nations. It produces nearly 35 times less than Russia and 48 times less than the United States.

This wasn't always the case.

In 1975, Ukraine produced almost 68.1 billion cubic meters per year, representing over a quarter of all gas production within the USSR. Ukraine was a major gas exporter, providing gas to all 15 of the Soviet republics.

However, Ukraine quickly exploited its reserves of shale gas and oil. Gradually, over the 1980s, Ukraine shifted from being a major gas exporter to a major importer as a result of dwindling supply and a Soviet shift to Siberian gas supplies.

This does not mean, however, that Ukraine has nothing left to give.

According to an article published in *The Harvard International Review*, Ukraine has Europe's second-largest known gas reserves in Europe. These reserves, estimated to amount to 1.09 trillion cubic meters of natural gas, are some of the least exploited in the world. Ukraine only uses 2% of this reserve annually.

Ukraine has previously embarked on a series of projects to identify new fields, supplement supply, and improve active wells. Different approaches, however, have met with varying degrees of success.

Synthetic gas failure

In 2012, Ukraine's Naftogaz concluded an agreement with China on the funding and technology of new synthetic natural gas production.

China approved a \$3.65 billion credit agreement to Ukraine for the construction of coal gasification plants across the country.

Over the course of several years, China and Ukraine proposed the construction of several coal gasification plants in the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, and later in Odesa. The outbreak of the war in Donbas made these locations untenable and former Economy Minister Stepan Kubiv failed to keep the loan alive on a last-ditch trip to China in 2017.

Andriy Suprun, managing director of Naftogaz subsidiary Vuglesyntesgas, said that diversifying Ukrainian gas production with synthetic gas was not a good move for Ukraine.

"Under current conditions, I doubt very much that coal gasification is feasible in Ukraine. It's quite expensive and complicated. The investment that would be needed is in excess of \$1 billion just for the



Employees work on a UkrGasVydobuvanna drilling rig at a gas field on June 24, 2020 in Kharkiv Oblast. Ukraine will have to find a way to increase its domestic gas production and tap into its immense gas reserves if it has any chance of becoming energy independent.

Odesa plant. Plus, coal gasification has much waste and is really dirty, it's a "dirty technology" as they call it," Suprun said.

Suprun also noted that the Ukrainian government's lack of political will had hampered efforts to diversify gas production, reducing domestic production, and making Ukraine less attractive for energy investments, especially from China.

"The Ukrainian government didn't really want to use this money and I'm not really sure that there are now too many fields in the energy sector that could be interesting for the Chinese," Suprun said.

Private sector success

The private sector has also made attempts to increase domestic gas production in Ukraine. DTEK, the energy giant owned by Ukraine's richest man, oligarch Rinat Akhmetov, operates 26 gas wells in the Poltava and Kharkiv Oblasts.

In a written comment to the Kyiv Post, DTEK General Director Igor Shchurov claimed that private companies are proving to be more efficient than state enterprises due to their flexibility.

"State-owned enterprises have shown themselves to be more static and very dependent on political changes in the country," Shchurov wrote.

State-run gas companies, on the other hand, possess over 60% of

licenses issued by the government.

According to a 2019 report produced by DTEK, while state-run gas producers had reduced annual production by around 3.9%, private production had increased by 4.5%.

DTEK chalks up their success due to three factors: specialists, investment, and technological development.

According to Shchurov, DTEK has invested over \$372 million in the Ukrainian gas and oil industry since 2013.

Much of DTEK's success has come from major overhauls in its operating technologies, becoming the first in the market to adopt new extraction technologies, including rotary-driven systems, acid-propant fracturing, and Schlumberger Vertical drilling systems.

In 2020, DTEK produced around 1.84 billion cubic meters of gas, more than doubling its extraction levels from 2013.

These increased volumes are a promising sign for Ukraine. Private sector initiative, both in technical and exploratory fields, have set market trends and spurred the public sector to adapt to an increasingly competitive energy market.

"Undoubtedly, ensuring the energy independence of Ukraine requires joint efforts to increase gas production from both the private and public sectors... The gas industry is like a large cruise liner — you

cannot abruptly change its course with a single turn of the steering wheel," Shchurov wrote.

While DTEK may be increasing its domestic gas production, Ukraine's Security Service has accused the company in the past of violating electricity production laws and endangering energy stability in the country when shutting down power plants for alleged repairs.

Black Sea gas

Before 2014, Ukraine's domestic gas production capacities were vastly superior.

A 2012 study showed that gas reservoirs in Ukraine's territorial waters around Crimea amounted to nearly 2 trillion cubic meters of gas.

However, during Russia's invasion of the Crimean Peninsula, the Russian military seized all of the equipment of Naftogaz's subsidiary company — ChornomorNaftogaz, and its offices in Sevastopol.

Now, some of Ukraine's most promising gas resources lie firmly under Russian control.

The illegal territorial claim and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the northern Black Sea near Crimea, which Russia supports through an aggressive naval blockade, means that Ukraine has lost over two-thirds of maritime claims to the gas-rich Black Sea.

And Gazprom, the Russian state-owned multinational energy cor-

poration, recently entered into an international partnership with Israeli company Naphtha Israel Petroleum to begin exploration on the Skifskaia field on the Black Sea shelf.

According to previous data from Exxon Mobil, the field has the potential to produce between three to four billion cubic meters of natural gas.

While the Ukrainian government's issuing of exploration licenses has signaled that Ukraine intends to exploit this resource, legal and geo-political barriers may yet prove too costly.

In June 2020, Russian lawmaker Mikhail Sheremet publicly stated that Russia will stop any attempts to extract hydrocarbons on the Black Sea shelf off the coast of Crimea.

Dwindling demand

While natural gas will always remain an important fuel resource, data shows that demand for natural gas is steadily declining globally.

Ukraine now consumes almost half the natural gas it did 30 years ago. Warmer winters and increased energy efficiency are reducing demand for natural gas in Ukraine and across Europe.

While Ukraine's domestic gas is unlikely to radically alter the international energy market, increased production, paired with reduced demand, may help protect the country from Russia's energy blackmail.

Kyiv's strained water pipes burst, endanger residents

By Max Hunder
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In early July, a video surfaced on social media of a woman falling into a hole full of boiling water that suddenly burst open in the sidewalk in Kyiv.

For several years in a row, giant sinkholes have regularly been opening up outside of Kyiv's Ocean Plaza Mall as pipes under the road exploded.

In January 2020, a hot water pipe burst outside the mall, flooding the basement with boiling water. During the same incident, a minibus partially fell into a sinkhole outside. Nine people were injured, seven of whom had to be hospitalized.

Over the past several years, central Kyiv's streets have become a hotspot for erupting water pipes, injuring people, damaging vehicles and tearing up asphalt.

Kyiv's water supply is run by two municipally-owned entities: Kyivvodokanal, that delivers cold water, and Kyivteploenergo, that is responsible for hot water and central heating.

Both enterprises are chronically underfunded due to low service tariffs that they are not allowed to raise.

The city relies on money from international financial institutions to fix the most urgent infrastructural emergencies. But this is not a sustainable long-term solution to a problem that will surely get much worse as Kyiv's population grows.

Worn-out network

Kyivteploenergo controls over 2,700 kilometers of water pipes, of which only 130 kilometers were repaired in 2019 and 140 kilometers in 2020. The company says that 80% of its pipes are beyond their planned lifespan.

There were over 9,000 recorded emergency incidents on their pipe network in 2020.

Things are just as bad at Kyivvodokanal. The municipality controls 4,318 kilometers of pipes, of which only 7 kilometers were replaced in 2020. And 46.8% of their network is "fully exhausted," the company told the Kyiv Post.

In 2020 they repaired 7,940 leaks, of which 1,881 required pipes to be dug up.

Added together, this means that there are roughly 4,200 kilometers of cold and hot water pipes in critical condition across the capital.



A rescue worker looks over a car stuck in a crater caused by the explosion of a hot water pipe in central Kyiv on Nov. 5, 2019. Sinkholes like these erupt all over the city several times a year due to dilapidated pipes and the lack of funds to properly rehabilitate them.

Oleh Harnyk of the Association of Ukrainian Cities told the Kyiv Post that such a frequency of incidents on the water pipe network is caused by a chronic lack of funds for repairs, a recurring bugbear of Ukrainian infrastructure.

According to Harnyk, the fees charged for water consumption are too low for service providers to reinvest into new pipes.

"If the tariff only just covers the cost of service provision and has a small profit of approximately 3 or 4%, then the operator cannot develop and renew supply networks."

Harnyk says that the norm in European cities is that approximately 40% of income from service tariffs is reinvested by providers into the water network. In Ukrainian cities, this number is either low single digits or zero.

The tariffs are set by the National Energy and Utilities Regulatory Commission (NEURC), which keeps prices low to appease consumers.

Until 2018, the hot water network was operated by Kyivenergo, which is owned by Ukraine's richest man, Rinat Akhmetov.

Kyiv City Council officials have previously blamed Kyivenergo for the dilapidated state of the pipe network which the city inherited in 2018, a claim which the company has rejected.

According to Harnyk, utilities across the entire country are chronically underfunded. The problem is simply more noticeable in Kyiv because of the pressure exerted on networks by the city's vast population.

Quick fixes

A shortage of cash means that when repairs are forced by the rupture of a pipe, they take the form of temporary, Band-Aid solutions rather than meaningful efforts at large-scale reconstruction.

Harnyk highlights the example of the perennially problematic section

of pipes near Ocean Plaza shopping mall at Lybidska metro station.

Harnyk says problems keep occurring at hotspots like Lybidska because pipes are only replaced in emergencies, rather than when they reach the end of their lifespan.

"They pick the most dilapidated section and repair a small part of it, because they have limited resources."

This is backed by the statistics given by Kyivvodokanal: Every time a pipe is dug up for repairs, an average of only 3.7 meters of new pipes are laid.

Harnyk said that one good example of network upgrading happened ten years ago, during preparations for the Euro 2012 football tournament in Lviv, a city of 730,000 people more than 500 kilometers west of Kyiv.

Long sections of the city's 100-year-old pipes were dug up and fully replaced with new pipes. The local authorities had the rare opportunity to spend serious money on infrastructure upgrades thanks to the upcoming tournament.

Limited funding sources

Despite the cause of the problem being obvious, a comprehensive solution is not yet forthcoming.

In Kyiv, most of the money for repairs currently comes from international institutions.

On July 21, the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) approved a 140-million-euro loan to Kyivteploenergo. However, most of this will be spent

on improvements at the enterprise's power stations and boiler-houses rather than the pipes themselves.

In 2015, the Japan International Cooperation Agency loaned \$870 million to the Ukrainian government for the redevelopment of the Bortnychi Sewage Treatment Plant, which serves all of Kyiv.

At present, most of the money for pipe repair has to come from domestic sources, and utilities providers simply aren't getting enough of it.

Low tariffs are not the only problem: non-payment is also rife.

"Our citizens want high-quality water, but at the same time, they want it to be cheap. Some don't feel the need to pay for this service at all," Harnyk says.

High consumer debts are a significant problem for the capital's water suppliers: As of April 2021 Kyivvodokanal was owed Hr 700 million (\$26 million), while this January Kyivteploenergo was owed Hr. 4.6 billion (\$171 million).

Kyivenergo's own figures state that they spent a total of Hr 3 billion (\$112 million) on network repairs in the 17 years they ran Kyiv's hot water and central heating delivery.

Harnyk's proposed solution to the funding problem is a liberalization of the rules around tariff-setting so that providers can charge more, coupled with more powers to crack down on debtors.

"If the government does not liberalize tariffs, the situation won't get any better." ☪

Kyiv's pipe problem in numbers

	KyivVodoKanal	KyivTeploEnergo	Total
Pipe network length	4318km	2700km	7018km
Pipes in critical condition	2004km (46.4%)	2160km (80%)	4164km (59.3%)
Incidents on network in 2020	7940	9000	16940
Length of pipes repaired in 2020	7km	140km	147km
Money owed by end consumers	Hr. 700 mln (\$26 mln)	Hr. 4.6 bln (\$171 mln)	Hr. 5.3 bln (\$197 mln)

Source: KyivVodoKanal, KyivTeploEnergo

Press kiosks disappear in Kyiv as local authorities strangle already dying industry

By Liza Semko
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Kiyv Mayor Vitali Klitschko has been vocal in his intention to limit the number of illegal small street shops, referred to in Kyiv as kiosks.

In Klitschko's battle against illegal street commerce, the press kiosks that have been selling Kyiv its newspapers for almost a hundred years, are getting caught in the crossfire.

And in a world where print media is already dying, these press kiosks are grasping for survival.

Hanna Kulakovska, 62, director of the Soyuzdruk press retail company, is one of the people fighting back against Klitschko's attack on street vendors.

Soyuzdruk is Kyiv's main kiosk chain selling print issues of popular newspapers and magazines. The company has been around for nearly 90 years.

Shortly after Ukraine's independence, Soyuzdruk ended up with nearly 550 retail locations across Kyiv. In 2021, the company held 320 kiosks, only half of which sold press. To make ends meet, 140 kiosks were leased to local entrepreneurs that sell tobacco, food and other goods.

Kulakovska says that Kyiv's utility services demolished two Soyuzdruk kiosks and planned to crush 10 more, despite the com-

pany having all the required permits. The city authorities disagree, claiming that Soyuzdruk has been illegally selling tobacco without proper licenses.

According to Kulakovska, press vendors are done. As demand for print media rapidly decreases, local authorities are killing the last major press retailer.

Dying print

Kulakovska has devoted nearly 40 years of her life to Soyuzdruk, starting with the company back when it was the main distributor of print media in the Soviet Union. She also now owns a stake in Soyuzdruk.

She recalls with nostalgia that it used to be better for print media during the Soviet era. Soyuzdruk was a centralized network of kiosks run by Soviet authorities.

Despite the fact that there was no free, independent press in the Soviet Union, Kulakovska says that the circulation of local newspapers was much higher.

In 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed and Soyuzdruk was divided into multiple private companies. Over the years, many Soyuzdruk companies in oblasts sold off their kiosks.

Kyiv Soyuzdruk is among the last companies still afloat, although it's struggling. In 2020, the company suffered a Hr 3.8 million (\$143,000) net loss.



People pass by a press kiosk located at the intersection of Prorizna St. and Borysa Hrinchenka St. in Kyiv on June 9, 2021. As the demand for print press declines and the local authorities put the squeeze on press kiosks, they are forced to shut down.

Oleg Petrasliuk

"We barely survive because there are no profits," Kulakovska says.

And consistent with the global trend, the demand for print media outlets is indeed plummeting.

According to the GlobalLogic tech company, only around 8% of Ukrainians read print media. As demand for print media declines, print media outlets are shuttering. According to Chatham House, the number of print newspapers decreased from 2,285 in 2010 to 1,666 in 2017.

Attacks from authorities

Kulakovska lays most of the blame for the reduction of press kiosks on Klitschko and his multiple predecessors.

According to her, all of them have been willing to demolish kiosks, allegedly aiming to install other kiosks that would be more profitable for the authorities.

To back up her claim, Kulakovska says that in 2018 the local authorities ordered to demolish 12 Soyuzdruk's press kiosks, despite a 2009 parliament decree that places a moratorium on the eviction of organizations that sell or lease print media such as bookstores, libraries and press kiosks.

Only two Soyuzdruk kiosks were demolished, after the company won a lawsuit against Kyiv authorities.

City authorities, however, have a different story to tell.

According to Kyiv city regulations in 2018, a kiosk selling cigarettes had to pay at least Hr 18,000 (\$660) in fees while Soyuzdruk's press kiosks are only required to pay up to Hr 3,500 (\$130).

Klitschko's advisor, Dmytro Bilotserkovets says that the Soyuzdruk kiosks were to be demolished because Soyuzdruk was illegally selling cigarettes and making a profit from paying lower fees.

"It is very profitable to work like Soyuzdruk: minimal payments to the budget, yet locations with high traffic," Bilotserkovets wrote on Facebook in 2018.

Kulakovska denies the accusations and says that it's the companies that rent out kiosks from Soyuzdruk that sell cigarettes. Kulakovska says the company has all the required permits.

In June, local authorities forced Soyuzdruk to remove four kiosks from downtown Kyiv due to sidewalk repair. However, Kulakovska says that it's just an excuse to get

rid of the company's presence in downtown.

"It often happens that we remove kiosks and then never return," said Kulakovska.

Kulakovska says that soon kiosks will have to shut down because the Kyiv City Council plans to sell the rights of installing kiosks through the ProZorro.Sale auction platform.

The rights will be sold to the company that will make the largest bid at the auction.

"We won't be able to pay big money," Kulakovska says.

Bilotserkovets says that this change would allow small businesses to own their own kiosks instead of leasing them from big networks such as Soyuzdruk.

"Our principle is that all entrepreneurs must have equal rights and conditions. There must be justice for all businesses," Bilotserkovets says. "Who pays more, receives the documents," he adds. "We have a market economy."

Kulakovska says that Soyuzdruk isn't planning on expanding and improving its network of kiosks. She says they are in constant fear of demolition.

"There is no future (for press kiosks)," Kulakovska says. ☹

Advertisement

Staying safe in Ukraine with the Safor app



Exploring new places and going out late doesn't have to be scary anymore. The Safor application for personal safety has you covered.

The history of the Safor safety button began in 2017 in the UK. In 2018, executive partner Vlad Serhieiev bought the franchise and has been focusing on development and closed testing for 2 years with his team. In August 2020, they launched the application in Ukraine.

Safor's goal is to develop a culture of personal safety to ensure that every resident or visitor of any country feels protected – anywhere, anytime. As of today, 50,000 users are under Safor's protection and the application has saved more than 200 lives.

The Safor App

Safor is a safety button on your smartphone that is always with you, helping to protect you from intruders 24/7. The application is easy to use: when you open the app, you will see a large but-

ton that's impossible to miss. One tap – and the security patrol comes to your rescue.

There is no need to call and explain where you are at. The application determines your location by itself, sends a signal to the nearest free security patrol – and an armed guard comes to rescue.

When is the Safor app useful?

1. When walking around the city

Summer is a great time for strolling around the evening city. The app will help you feel protected, even if you don't know the city well. You no longer have to look around worried you might encounter suspicious company.

2. When attending business meetings with strangers

Confidence is the key to meeting success. Our button will help you add to it, because you will feel safe.

3. When you relaxing in bars and other establishments

Unfortunately, we do not know who is sitting at the next table and what intentions they may have. But with a Safor quick response button, you don't have to worry if you find yourself in a difficult situation.

4. When you decide to travel around Ukraine

In addition to Kyiv, there are at least 30 cities in Ukraine that have great places to see. With the Safor app there are more than 900 areas in Ukraine you can safely explore without being afraid.

How the app works

Algorithm of actions: you click on the button in

the application, the Security Police locates the call using geolocation and the nearest patrol leaves for the scene.

In addition, you can notify your loved ones (relatives, friends, etc) about the call. To do this, they must have the application installed, and you need to add them to your contact list.

You can also provide additional information in the app:

- blood type and allergies – in case you need medical attention;
- your place of stay (hotel, apartment);
- vehicle data – in case something threatens your safety on the road.

How much it costs and how to connect

A 1-month subscription costs \$6.99, 3 months – \$18.99, a year – \$71.99. The cost of one call to security is \$7.46.

To connect, download the Safor Security app from the AppStore or PlayMarket. Then go through the registration, select a subscription (monthly, quarterly, or yearly) and pay.

TOP 5 Safor advantages

1. Call with one click

All you have to do is open the app and tap on the big orange button on the home screen. The call will be made instantly.

2. 24/7 security

Security calls and support services are available 24 hours a day.

3. Call without internet connection using SMS

If you don't have Internet connection, you can still count on help. Safor will send an SMS with your coordinates to the patrol.

To do this, there must be funds on your mobile account. SMS rates are standard operator rates.

4. Trained Security Police respond to the call

This is the only security structure in Ukraine that has the right to use weapons and sanctions against offenders. The patrol officers undergo physical training courses and work in accordance with the Law of Ukraine.

It is important not to confuse the Security Police with the police, which can be called by number 102. The Security Police only work under individually concluded contracts and specialize in the protection and safety of facilities and people.

5. iOS shortcut

In order not to launch the application, you can set up a voice command for Siri or a triple tap on the back cover. And also – link to Apple Watch if you carry your phone in a bag or it often runs out of battery.

We can order food, call a taxi, and build relationships on smartphones. With Safor, you can also protect yourself – anytime, anywhere.



Apartment prices in Kyiv surge with no sign of slowing down

By Asami Terajima
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Kyiv's skyline is littered with construction cranes; its residents complain of noisy construction sites. It makes one wonder if the city isn't experiencing a residential real estate boom.

In reality, however, the number of apartment buildings going up around the city is not enough to meet the number of interested buyers looking for newer and bigger apartments. Amid this type of demand, combined with a lack of available apartments, prices are rising rapidly, and with no sign of slowing down.

"There is a chronic shortage of apartments" in Kyiv, according to John Suggitt, founder and managing director at the Kyiv Real Estate Recovery Fund (KREER), an investment fund.

In real estate markets in more developed parts of the world, the average available apartment space per resident is about 30 to 40 square meters. In Germany, that number is closer to 45 square meters; in Ukraine, it's 20 square meters per person, according to Kyiv city official statistics.

And despite the economic downturn caused by the pandemic, people are looking to buy.

Yuri Pita, president of the Association of Real Estate Experts of Ukraine, says the number of people wanting to buy an apartment in Kyiv has increased by more than 20% during the last six months, and the trend is likely to continue.

It is no surprise then that Kyiv's apartment prices have surged by 23% in the last year, according to Lun.ua, an online marketplace for real estate. If the average cost of an apartment in Kyiv was \$922 per square meter in 2020, it's now already \$1,131 a year later.

And prices are likely to keep rising. Banks are giving out more mortgages, providing buyers more opportunities to borrow; a planned increase in real estate taxes will push the prices up too.

The real estate market in Kyiv is also very sensitive, Suggitt said. "A slight increase in either the demand or supply would have a massive impact on the price."

Rising wages, prices

In Ukraine, where currency fluctuations are known to occur, real estate is a safe place to store savings, according to Nataliya Romanyuk, CEO of real estate agency NR

Oleg Petrasliuk



KAN Development's Tetris Hall residential complex located in central Kyiv. Apartment prices in buildings like this have been rapidly rising in Ukraine's capital, with no sign of slowing down.

Property.

According to Oleksiy Kushch, director of First Dnipro Investment Company, most apartments in Kyiv today are bought as an investment tool. That's nothing new, but Kushch says that more Ukrainians living abroad have begun investing in Kyiv real estate.

Apartments in Kyiv provide a rental yield of 10% while some are even higher, Romanyuk said. Investors can generally expect a faster return on their investment than in countries like Germany where the average yield is 3%.

Romanyuk explained that good investment options are limited in Ukraine, but that real estate can easily be a reliable source of passive income when turned into a rental property. "It's like insurance for your family" if all else fails, she said.

Growth in average salary is also "an excellent measure of predicting demand," Suggitt said. Ukraine's average wage grew by 28% from Hr 10,542 (around \$388) in May 2020 to Hr 13,499 (around \$496) in 2021, according to the Finance Ministry.

Along with the increased demand, the rising price of construction materials like steel and lumber is also impacting the market.

Anna Popruga, marketing director at KAN Development, says that wages demanded by workers have

also risen "significantly," making it more difficult to remain profitable.

More mortgages

The recent rise in Kyiv's apartment prices is nothing compared to the amount it could increase with an effective mortgage lending system, according to Suggitt.

Without a loan, investors need to save \$60,000 to \$80,000 to buy real estate, he said. But reasonable credit would make investing in real estate affordable for more Ukrainians regardless of their income.

The government is attempting to make housing cheaper under the presidential "Affordable Mortgage 7%" program introduced in March,

but it's mainly targeted towards young families and not readily available.

Kushch said 7% is still "too expensive" for a mortgage. The cost of borrowing money would eventually add up to a substantial amount and be enough to purchase another property, he explained.

An annual mortgage rate shouldn't exceed salary and needs to be between one to three percent, according to Kushch. This is "a normal credit for real estate," he added. In the U.S., for example, mortgage rates are 2-3%.

In 2020, the mortgage rates in Ukraine had an average of 18% and many people didn't even qualify for it, according to Tetyana Markova,

director of sales and marketing at Kyivmiskbud, a major construction holding company of Ukraine.

But during the first quarter of 2021, banks issued a total of 1,811 mortgage loans that added up to Hr 1.4 billion (\$51.4 million), according to the National Bank of Ukraine. Both the number of agreements signed and the monetary value have doubled from the same period last year.

Tax hike underway

Along with the rising demand, there is a plan to increase the tax on the sale of real estate in the upcoming months. Lev Partskhaladze, president of the Confederation of Builders of Ukraine, predicts that the new taxes would increase the housing prices by up to 40%.

The parliament has already adopted the first reading of the new bill on July 1, which includes raising taxes on the real estate market.

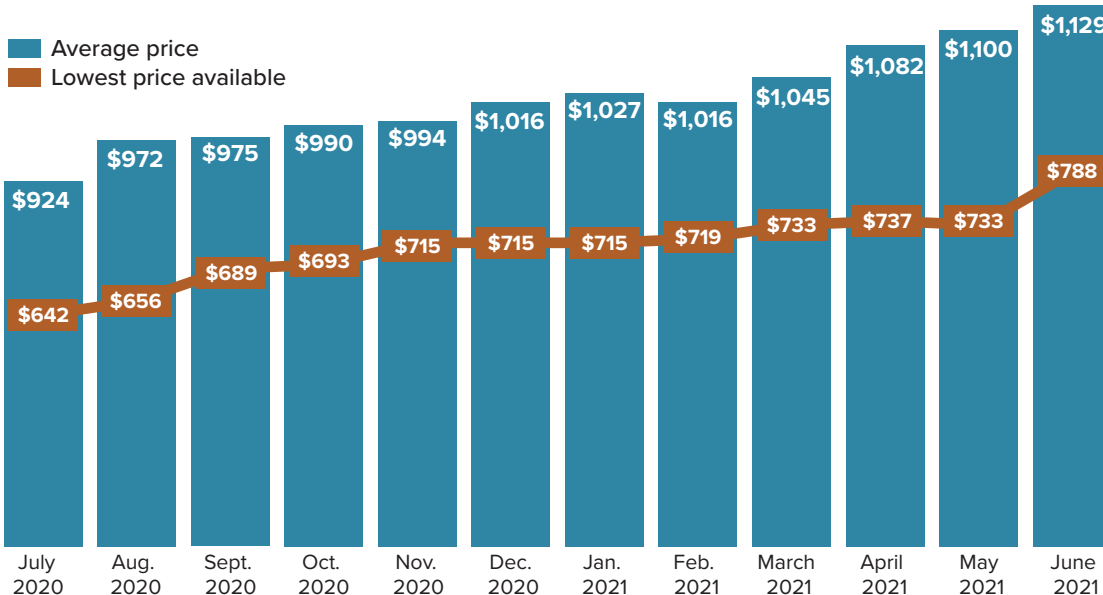
As of now, the 20% value-added tax is only charged during the first sale of a property. The VAT exemption on apartments that have already been purchased once will be gone when the new tax legislation is introduced.

The controversial bill puts an additional burden on those involved in buying and selling apartments as investments. Under the new bill, selling three or more properties in a year will be subject to 18% income tax instead of the current 5%.

Finance Minister Sergii Marchenko said this is to combat the use of VAT exemption in secondary residential sales market to minimize the taxes paid. He promised that it would not have a significant impact on real estate prices but experts in the field disagree.

"Very small effects in Kyiv's market can have very large impacts on the price and that's exactly why I invest here," Suggitt said.

The price of apartments in new buildings in Kyiv \$, per square meter



Source: Lun.ua

With growing number of people interested in Kyiv's real estate and rising construction costs, the apartment prices in the capital rose by 23% in just a year. Experts say the boom will continue especially if a new tax bill increasing the tax on real estate sales is passed.



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Poll misleadingly shows 41% of Ukrainians agree with Putin's fake 'one nation' claim

By Kvitka Perehinets
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A striking 41% of Ukrainian respondents to a poll agreed with Russian President Vladimir Putin's recent claim that "Russians and Ukrainians are one nation and belong to the same historical and spiritual space," according to the latest Rating Group poll published on July 27.

The majority of respondents, or 55%, disagreed with the statement.

Blending two disparate ideas into one question, that Russians and Ukrainians are one nation, and that they have a shared history, may explain why so many respondents agreed with the statement.

According to Oleksiy Haran, pro-

fessor at the Kyiv Mohyla Academy, it's not as simple as concluding Ukrainians "agree with Putin." The result was likely influenced by the way the question was phrased, merging the "one nation" and "shared history" claims, Haran says.

As part of Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine, Putin published an article on July 12, telling his readers an alternate history of Ukraine, from the times of the Kyivan Rus, the federation of Slavic states, to the contemporary Ukrainian government, which he accuses of being "radical" and "anti-Russian."

For centuries Russia has promoted the myth that the Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians are one nation, with Moscow at its heart. The theory has been used to entrench Russian imperialism



Oleg Petrasjuk

Believers of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate celebrate the anniversary of the Christianization of Kyivan Rus in Kyiv on July 27, 2021. The Ukrainian branch of Moscow's Orthodox Church has been one of the channels for the Kremlin to influence Ukrainians. Ukraine started breaking that connection in 2018, when an independent Ukrainian Church was founded.

and undermine the Ukrainian and Belarusian national identities.

"The way the (Rating Group) question is phrased is simply manipulative," Haran told the Kyiv Post. "In the original article, Putin mentions the two components of the question separately – first, he claims that Russians and Ukrainians are one people, then later he brings up the notion of Ukraine and Russia being part of a united historical and spiritual space."

"While the 'one people' claim is utter nonsense, it's different in the case of 'Ukraine and Russia share

the same history' because they do," he added.

He said that if the question explicitly focused on the "one people" claim, the percentage of respondents disagreeing with the statement would be significantly higher, in his opinion.

An article titled "On the historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians" written by Putin appeared on the Kremlin's website. The article, published in Ukrainian and Russian, outlined the alleged closeness of Ukrainians and Russians, denied Ukrainians of statehood and justi-

fied Russia's military intervention in Ukraine.

President Volodymyr Zelensky responded to the article, saying that Russia is not acting in the spirit of brotherhood the existence of which it keeps insisting upon.

Alexey Venediktov, editor-in-chief of the Russian Echo of Moscow radio station, called Putin's article "the essence of Russian imperialism."

Russia invaded Ukraine in 2014, occupying Crimea and the eastern part of Donbas. Over 13,000 people have been killed due to Russia's ongoing intervention. ❁

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Sex workers suffer from increased violence in front-line Donbas towns

By Anastasiia Lapatina

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SLOVIANSK — It's an especially hot day in early July, and four women are hiding from the sun in a ruined building by the highway just outside Sloviansk. Their clients know where to find them.

The women are sex workers, four among the hundreds working in the front-line towns of eastern Ukraine.

While sex work is risky and illegal anywhere in Ukraine, it is especially dangerous in the areas marked by war, where violence and poverty are abundant.

Each woman has a personal tragedy. Many began providing sex services to sustain drug addiction, some had no other means to financially support their children, others came from abusive families.

Russia's war in Donbas, which has killed over 13,000 people since 2014, deepened their hardships, leading to an increase in physical violence and a decrease in well-paying clientele, as thousands fled the region amidst fighting.

They are sometimes paid as little as Hr 200 (\$8) for a sexual act and regularly suffer from violent clients, including from the military.

Police are not only reluctant to protect the women; they often step into the shoes of the perpetrators.

Marked by war

"When Sloviansk was occupied, it was terrifying. You'd leave for work and wouldn't know if you were coming back," says Dasha, 32, as she stands near the ruined steps of what used to be Metelitsa, a large restaurant by the highway, destroyed by shelling in 2014.

The women in this story spoke under the condition of partial anonymity due to the illegality of their work.

Sloviansk, a city of 111,000 people 665 kilometers east of Kyiv, was occupied by Russia-led forces for almost three months, from April to June 2014. Dasha says it wasn't the shelling that she feared most, but rather the mayhem that ensued "because of the idiots that were in town," referring to the Russia-controlled occupation authorities.

"They recruited everyone — drug addicts, former convicts... No one



Kostyantyn Chernichkin

Dasha, a 32-year-old sex worker, stands in a ruined building on the outskirts of Sloviansk, a city only 100 kilometres from the frontlines of Russia's war against Ukraine. Since the war began, sex workers in Donbas saw an increase in physical violence, including from the police and military personnel.

was ever sober," she says.

All four women say sex work was safer and more profitable before the war.

Now that the occupied territories are isolated, there's little movement along the highways, where they usually fish for clients.

As sex work remains an administrative offense in Ukraine, punishable by a fine of Hr 85–170 (\$3–\$6), women who've been assaulted by the clients are reluctant to involve the police. They say most abusers are military personnel.

A local police official told the Kyiv Post that sometimes sex workers report physical abuse as rape and avoid mentioning being paid for sex, as it could lead to fines.

As she stands in the debris, Tanya, 35, quickly pulls up her T-shirt to show a large purple bruise on her left hip left by a client.

"He did his thing and didn't want to pay," she says.

Her ex-husband forced her into sex work. Tanya says that her only options were "to go to the highway or die."

Tanya is not alone — 21 out of 36 sex workers interviewed by the Donbas-based non-profit Club Svitanok reported being coerced into providing sex services. Seventeen women said they've been physically abused while working.

Amnesty International, a human rights non-profit, rang the alarms that growing poverty in war-torn Donbas increases the risks of women providing sex services as the only means to provide for their families.

"I don't need a lot of money, just for food," Tanya tells the Kyiv Post. Taking only one or two clients a day, she makes anywhere from Hr 200 (\$8) to Hr 1,000 (\$35) a day.

Health risks

"They're scared," says Anastasia Pshenychna, a social worker, about sex workers who come to her daily, seeking help.

Just four years ago, Pshenychna was in the same profession. Then, a friend offered her to join a non-profit that provides health services for sex workers and people who struggle with drug addiction, as these vulnerable groups often overlap.

Pshenychna talks to the Kyiv Post

inside a white van used as a mobile clinic for infectious disease testing. At her table are rapid tests for hepatitis B and C. On the walls — pamphlets about infectious diseases and treatments.

She works for the Alliance for Public Health — a non-profit that has been preventing and treating infectious diseases for over 20 years.

Alliance's mobile health clinics go around the cities of Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts, providing quick, free, and confidential testing for HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B and C, and tuberculosis. They also provide free condoms, lubricants, and other hygiene products.

Sex workers are at a higher risk of contracting infections, while also being exposed to stigma within the healthcare industry. Poverty and stigmatization of sex work force women to rely on local volunteers for health services and free contraceptives.

Police violence

Sex workers are often victims of physical violence, yet receive little protection from local law enforcement. On the contrary, dozens of women have reported to volunteers being assaulted. Several said they were raped by the police.

"According to the law, they can't do anything (to sex workers) other than issue a fine. But they do nasty things," says Pshenychna. "They pour zelenka (staining green antiseptic) on them so no guy will take them."

A study done by Legalife, an orga-

nization that advocates for the rights of sex workers, showed that law enforcement often doesn't respond to such calls of abuse. Researchers also said the level of stigmatization is relatively higher among female police officers, and in settlements remote from the capital and large cities.

At a press briefing, tucked away in a room at the local hospital, the head of communications of the patrol police department for Sloviansk and Kramatorsk Natalia Bokova boasts about her department's commitment to having a tolerant, progressive task force.

She says they already organized training sessions so the officers are better-equipped to deal with vulnerable groups such as sex workers, or people struggling with some form of addiction.

Yet when confronted about the cases of violence, Bokova becomes hesitant.

"I've been informed about this... I can't say that these incidents no longer happen, but they've been quite prevalent before the police reform," Bokova told the Kyiv Post, referring to a sweeping effort to reform the police shortly after the EuroMaidan Revolution in 2014, when over 100 protesters were killed, many of them by riot police.

But when asked how the police deal with reports of misconduct, she quickly changes the tune — "these cases are old, and they happened before the police were reformed," Bokova says. ☹



A sex worker who asked to remain anonymous gets tested for infectious diseases by a social worker Anastasia Pshenychna (R) in a mobile health clinic in Sloviansk. Because of rampant poverty, sex workers in Donbas rely on health services provided by non-profits.

Kostyantyn Chernichkin

IMF praises Ukraine for reforms, agrees to visit in September

BY Anna Myroniuk
myroniuk@kyivpost.com

Managing Director at International Monetary Fund, Kristalina Georgieva, praised Ukraine's economic progress and agreed to visit Kyiv in September to continue talks on giving another tranche to Ukraine during a phone call with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky on July 28.

Georgieva called the conversation with Zelensky "very constructive" on Twitter. Her Ukrainian counterpart responded calling the IMF an important partner.

In July, Ukraine passed a host of crucial bills from the IMF's list of conditions necessary to receive the second tranche under the current \$5 billion stand-by program which ends in December.

Yet, Ukraine has only gotten one tranche so far – \$2.1 billion, and over a year ago. Since then, Kyiv has been unable to convince the IMF that it is working hard on the reforms necessary to get the next tranche.

Talking about Ukraine's efforts to meet conditions of the IMF for receiving the next tranche, Zelensky and Georgieva discussed the new law on the National Bank of Ukraine and the bill on the National Anti-Corruption Bureau, according to the President's Office.

The first one was passed by the parliament back on June 30. This law increases the responsibility of the National Bank's management board and supervisory council for the decisions they make. However, as it appears from the phone call, the IMF wants it to be amended.

The National Anti-Corruption Bureau bill to regulate the procedure of the appointment and dis-



Oleg Petrasjuk

A woman walks past headquarters of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) building in Washington, DC on April 5, 2021.

missal of the head of the NABU, has been voted on in the first reading. After passing the bill, lawmakers went on recess. They will return to work in early September.

Zelensky's office hoped to convince the IMF to release the money before the lawmakers pass the NABU bill in the second reading. They

wanted the second tranche, \$700 million, by September, because that is when Ukraine must pay start to pay back its \$3.8 billion in public debt. With the IMF mission coming to Ukraine only in September, this plan is failing.

Moreover, it is still unclear whether or not Ukraine will be able to

receive money from the IMF by the end of the year before the program expires in December.

"Does the visit of the mission mean that we will receive the next tranche? No," Serhiy Fursa, investment banker at Dragon Capital said on Facebook.

"Is there any theoretical possibility

for Ukraine to receive money under the IMF program? In theory, yes. But very theoretical. In September, the issue of the budget arises which will delay the negotiations even further," he added.

According to Fursa, there is also the chance that the IMF extends the current program for Ukraine. 🇺🇦

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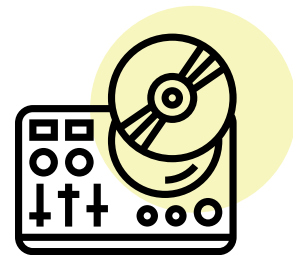
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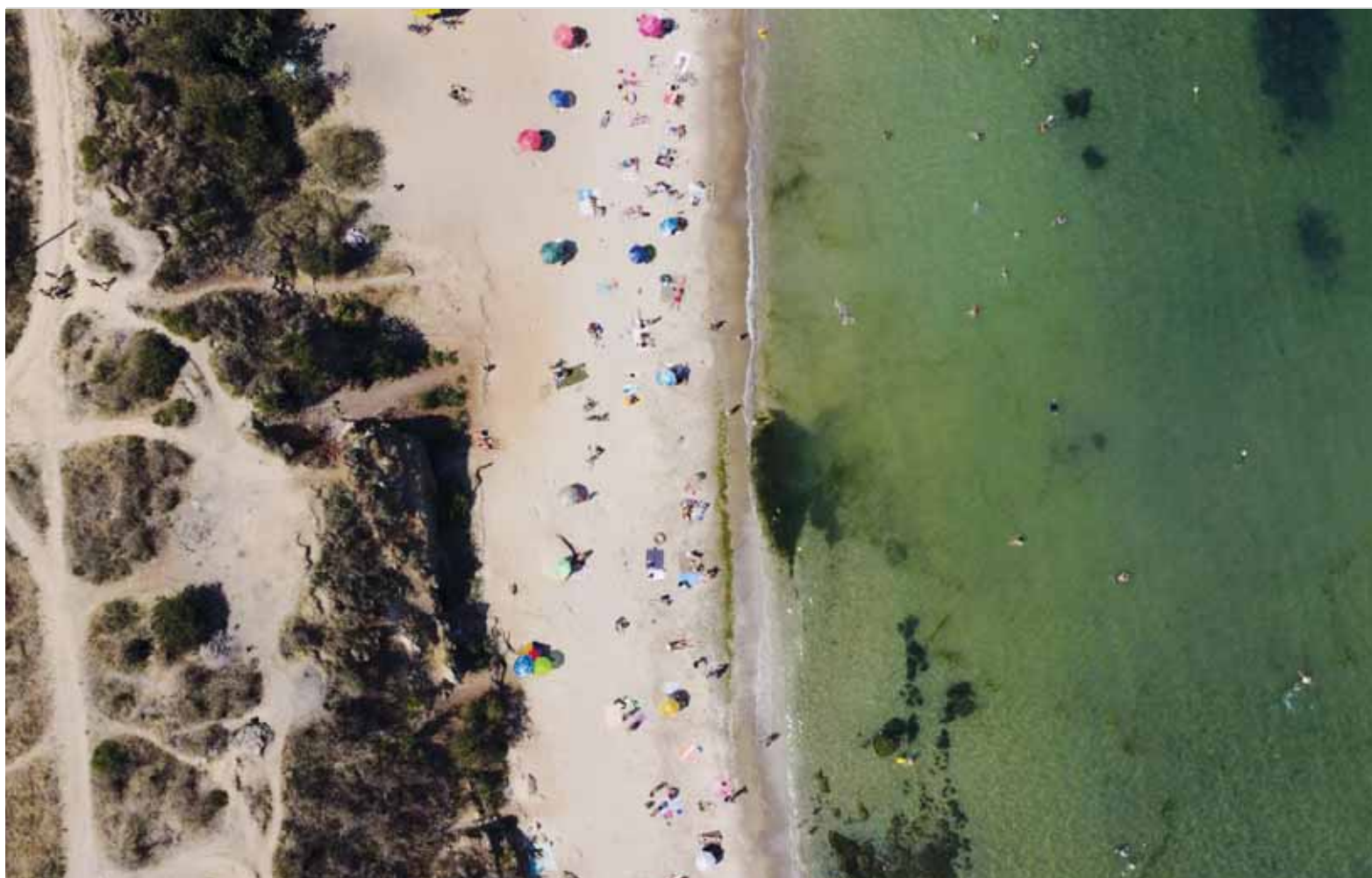
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Protest for LGBTQ rights by dancing at the Rave Pride near the President's Office (11 Bankova St.) starting at 4 p.m. on July 30



River pollution endangers health, local environment

Austin Malloy



An aerial view of the Sobachyi Beach in Ukraine's southern port city Odesa shows the Black Sea and the coastline polluted with blooming algae and marine litter. Numerous chemicals, plastic and drugs pollute Ukrainian rivers and seas, making the waters toxic and dangerous for marine and human life.

By **Daria Shulzhenko**
shulzhenko@kyivpost.com

Kyiv resident Natalia Vakulenko planned to take her two children to the beach to escape the heat on a summer day in July.

The family was about to leave home when Vakulenko came across a Facebook post that made her change her mind.

"It contained pictures of the Dnipro River being so dirty, I couldn't even look at it," Vakulenko told the Kyiv Post.

They never made it to the beach that day and don't plan to go any time soon.

"Although my kids love to swim and there are not so many options in Kyiv, we would rather not swim at all than swim in these polluted waters," she said.

The issue is deeper than simple aesthetics.

This year, over 160 pollutants including chemicals and metals have been found in Dnipro, Ukraine's longest river, according to Ukraine's

Accounting Chamber's report published on June 29. The situation is a threat to human health and can cause ecological disaster, the report says.

The water pollution issue has been lingering for years and is nothing new to Kyivans. Every summer, locals face the dilemma of swimming in the dirty Dnipro or waiting for a vacation by the sea, if they can afford it.

But even traveling south to Ukraine's Black and Azov seas is not a solution. The litter, chemicals and other industrial waste in Ukrainian rivers eventually end up in both of the country's seas, says Ruslan Havryliuk, the head of the National Ecological Center of Ukraine.

Poor water management, industrial pollution and global climate change, which aggravates the situation, are to blame, experts say. But while the causes are known, authorities do nearly nothing to remove them.

Industrial burden

Climate change appears to be

among the world's biggest threats nowadays, and it has a drastic effect on water pollution.

The rising temperatures cause rivers to dry out. The year 2013 was the last high-water year for Ukrainian rivers, according to Havryliuk, while 2020 appeared to be among the driest. The country's second-longest river, Pivdennyi Buh (Southern Bug), for instance, has seen a decrease of its runoff by two-three times in the last 10 years, according to Havryliuk.

The less water there is in a river, the dirtier it becomes — in high-water rivers chemicals get diluted with clean water.

According to Ukraine's State Environmental Inspectorate, the current concentration of toxic compounds in Ukrainian rivers is 30–40 times higher than the maximum allowable norms.

Overusing water resources by big production is another problem that leaves Ukrainian rivers low and, as a result, more polluted. The energy sector and agriculture are among the

leading industries that overuse water resources in Ukraine.

Although the official statistics show the agricultural industry consuming only around 20% of Ukraine's water resources, the actual numbers are unknown as many of the farms and households are not required to report on the amount of water they use, the local NGO Ecodia reports.

Experts say that agriculture is also one of the main pollutants, contaminating waters with agrochemicals such as pesticides, fertilizers and herbicides.

Sebastien Truffaut, the manager of the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene program (WASH) at UNICEF Ukraine, says that most water samples contain not only industrial chemical compounds, but also chemicals coming from the agricultural sector.

In February, the State Agency of Water Resources found pesticides, industrial chemicals, and even drugs in the waters of Dnipro, Don and

City Life

With **Yana Mokhonchuk**
mokhonchuk@kyivpost.com

6 Kyiv pools to keep you cool this summer

Swimming has been banned on Kyiv beaches for nearly two weeks due to healthcare concerns. But luckily, there are other ways to enjoy one of the summer's beloved pleasures.

Kyivans still have a chance to dip into chill waters and sunbathe at private pools all across and outside the city.

Some also top the experience off with offering food, drinks and even music shows.

The Kyiv Post has picked out some of the best outdoor pools in and right outside the capital.

Sungrilla Secret Beach

There is no need to go far to take a dip in a crystal blue pool. Kyivans can stop by the Sungrilla Secret Beach located right in the middle of Podil district on their way to or from work or in between any other daily activities.

Overlooking the Dnipro River, the complex has two pools: one is kept cool and the other one is slightly heated up to make the transition from hot air temperature to water smoother. Sungrilla's bar helps visitors to cool down with alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, while its restaurant treats them to a variety of dishes on a terrace. On weekends, the venue throws pool parties at night, inviting Kyivans to enjoy "the hottest summer rhythms" together.

Sungrilla Secret Beach's lounge chairs run on a first-come, first-served basis. A lounge chair costs Hr 300 on Mon-Thu and Hr 400 on the weekend per day. A pool bed for two people costs Hr 700–1,000, for four people the price is Hr 1,000–1,600.

10 Naberezhno-Khreshchatytska St. Sun-Thu. 10 a.m.–10 p.m. Fri-Sat. 10 a.m.–6 a.m. +380931877479. www.sungrilla.com

Pirs 39

The huge VDNH exhibition complex is well known as a beloved winter entertainment spot. But it has lots of fun to offer in summer too.

Its Pirs 39 beach combines a 25-meter-long pool for adults, a pool for kids, a volleyball playground and a bar with icy drinks. Aside from tanning and relaxing in the water, this city beach encourages visitors to join their sports activities such as aqua fitness and aqua yoga held right inside the pool.

Entering Pirs 39 for one hour

City Life

When Dnipro isn't an option, pools still are

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costs Hr 100 for adults and Hr 50 for children on Mon-Fri. The weekend price for adults is Hr 150 and Hr 75 for children. Training sessions cost Hr 150–400 and require an upfront registration.

VDNH (1 Akademika Hlushkova Ave.) Mon-Fri. 7 a.m.–9 p.m. Sat-Sun. 9 a.m.–9 p.m. +380683526455. www.pirs39.com

Wish Aqua & Spa Resort

Far from the city buzz, this resort is perfect for some quiet recreation. Wish Aqua & Spa is located in the Vyshenky village, about 10 kilometers south of Kyiv.

The resort offers a big crystal-blue pool inside, as well as an outdoor pool divided into two zones for newbies and experienced swimmers. There are also jacuzzi baths for further relaxation. The complex's Wish Grill restaurant offers a wide selection of snacks, entrées and drinks.

One-day visit is Hr 1,500 for adults and Hr 500 for children on Mon-Fri and Hr 2,000 for adults and

Hr 750 for children on weekends. **Vyshenky village.** 29 Naberezhna St. Mon-Sun. 7 a.m.–11 p.m. +380445858777. www.wishaqua.com

Sobi club

Sobi Club is an oasis hidden deep in the pine woods outside of Kyiv.

The resort has a 25-meter-long pool, part of which is set inside, with hydro-massage and a waterfall, while the rest of which opens up to a terrace. There's also a pool for children and a playground to keep them busy outside of the water.

Aside from that, the complex provides tennis courts and a team sports field for active recreation. Drinks and food are served by a built-in grill restaurant. The guests can stay overnight at the resort's hotel rooms and houses available to book online.

A one-day visit with access to the outdoor pools for adults is Hr 600–650 for one day and Hr 400–450 for children.

Vyshhorod region, 1,000 meters from the Kyiv Hydroelectric Power



A woman enjoys swimming in the pool of the Pirs 39 city resort located on the territory of the VDNH exhibition complex in Kyiv on July 28, 2021. As the authorities banned swimming at all public beaches in Kyiv, the city offers many pool alternatives.

Kostyantyn Chernichkin

Plant in the direction of the Khotianivka village. Mon-Sun. 9 a.m.–8 p.m. +380683638524. www.sobiclub.com

Fifty Beach Club

Fifty Beach Club is one of Kyiv's largest beach complexes with an area of 5,000 square meters. The place offers all the essentials of beach recreation to keep visitors busy all day long. There's a 25-meter-long pool, four volleyball fields, three bars and a restaurant. The venue also occasionally throws music shows and parties to entertain its guests.

Renting a lounge chair, an umbrella and a towel for one day costs Hr 200 on Mon-Fri and Hr 500 on weekends. A bed for four people is Hr 1,500–Hr 2,000.

5 Brovarskyi Ave. Sun-Thu. 10 a.m.–11 p.m. Fri-Sat. 10 a.m.–6 a.m. +380631115050. www.instagram.com/fifty.beach

Grand Admiral Resort & Spa

Another peaceful getaway, Grand Admiral Resort & Spa, is just a 15-minute car ride away from Kyiv. The complex is also surrounded by a pine forest and offers a variety

of outdoor activities. Aside from swimming in its four outdoor pools with different depths and enjoying Jacuzzi bubbles, the visitors will have an opportunity to dip into the crystal clear water of a lake located right nearby. The resort provides hotel rooms, restaurant service and everything needed for a comfortable weekend stay.

A one-day visit with access to the pools is Hr 1,200 on Mon-Thu and Hr 1,450 on Fri-Sun.

Irpine, 116 Varshavska St. Water access: Wed-Mon, 9 a.m.–11 p.m. Tue, 3 p.m.–11 p.m. +380672145117. www.admiralclub.com

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Industrial chemicals, litter & drugs found in waters

page 12 →

Dniester rivers.

Havryliuk says that pharmaceutical companies are also among severe polluters. In some studies, around half of contaminants found in Dnipro come from pharmaceuticals.

The pollution is caused not only by medicine production but also by its consumption. In Ukraine, where most of the medicine can be bought without recipes, many people treat themselves without a doctor's recommendation and overuse drugs. Some of them aren't broken down by people's bodies, ending up in rivers through sewage waters.

"And then we have analgesics and antibiotics and other pollutants that don't degrade in the Dnipro River," Havryliuk says.

What aggravates the situation even more is the illegal hazardous waste that is regularly found in Ukraine's rivers. In winter, about 3,000 canisters full of unknown toxic chemicals were dumped into a tributary of the Irpin River in Kyiv Oblast that flows into Dnipro.

Those toxic chemicals have been poisoning the local environment in the water for months before being removed in April.

Poor wastewater treatment

Chemicals and other waste wouldn't affect Ukraine's environment that much if only the country's wastewater treatment plants would have worked effectively, experts say.

In Ukraine, such plants fail to protect people and the ecosystem from harmful and toxic elements found in wastewater due to their poor condition. KyivVodokanal, a city-owned company that manages water supply and drainage in the capital, and is supposed to filtrate dirty waters, was actually the biggest water polluter in Ukraine in 2018.

Ukrainian ecology expert Oksana Volosko-Demkiv, who is also the head of the Center for Environmental Consulting and Auditing (CECA), says that around 80% of the country's old wastewater treatment plants



A man walks into the Dnipro River on the right bank of Kyiv on July 28, 2021. Ukraine's longest river, Dnipro, is now on the verge of ecological disaster with over 160 pollutants including chemicals and metals found in its waters this year.

are unable to purify water efficiently due to obsolescence.

Another issue is that many factories update their production after getting legal permission to dump waste of a certain composition. Later they start using new chemicals without giving a notice, while the outdated wastewater treatment plants fail to detect them on their own, Volosko-Demkiv says.

Havryliuk says that Ukraine's wastewater treatment plants can't keep up with new technologies.

"We didn't even know about some

pollutants that are found in the rivers now," he says. "Ukraine needs modernization."

From rivers to seas

Everything that contaminates Ukrainian rivers ends up in the country's seas eventually.

Recent studies conducted by the European Union, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Ukraine's Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, show that the Black Sea pollution poses risks for both marine life and people.

"The concentrations of some priority hazardous chemical substances dangerous for marine and human life exceed their toxicity threshold values," the report reads.

The studies identified 124 dangerous chemicals in the sea that hadn't been monitored before.

The report also highlighted the growing litter issue, concluding that the Black Sea is twice as polluted by marine litter as the Mediterranean Sea. Most of it, or 83%, is plastic, namely bottles, packaging and bags. The large rivers such as Danube and Dniester bring to the sea 6–50 items of trash every hour, the report says.

Viktor Komorin, the director of the Ukrainian Scientific Center for Marine Ecology, told Hromadske online media that estimates show that there will be more plastic than fish in the Black Sea by 2050.

Aside from litter and chemicals,

the Black Sea water near southern port city Odesa suffers from urine pollution, Volosko-Demkiv says. Though it's one of the country's main travel destinations, Odesa lacks proper infrastructure on its public beaches. With few toilets, travelers are forced to use the sea for such purposes.

"It adds to the whole situation with water pollution and only makes it worse," Volosko-Demkiv says.

Gastroenteritis is the most common illness that can be acquired after swimming in water polluted by sewage. One can also get a staph infection and various skin diseases. Truffaut says that swimming in the chemical-contaminated waters can have some "effects on the skin or even lead to cancer."

Who's responsible?

Ukraine has been slowly moving towards a more sustainable treatment of water resources.

In June, the government agreed to gradually limit the number of phosphates in detergents. When dumped into waters, these chemical compounds can cause increased growth of algae and large aquatic plants, causing toxic algal blooming, which is harmful to human health and the environment.

The country is following the footsteps of the EU in the regulation of single-use plastics. The parliament passed a law that bans thin plastic bags.

But this is far from enough to mitigate water pollution in Ukraine.

In order to reduce the number of toxic chemicals and other dangerous waste in the rivers, Ukraine needs to upgrade its wastewater treatment plants, Havryliuk says.

There is a critical need to improve the infrastructure of the beaches and ensure the safe and clean territories around rivers by the authorities.

But the general responsibility for water management should be shared by private companies and the public, experts say.

Volosko-Demkiv says that the industrial enterprises should start the transition to a "circulating water supply system" to stop the overuse of water resources already drained by the climate change. They also should shift to a sustainable approach to waste management.

The population, meanwhile, should practice conscious consumption of resources and products and sort garbage.

"We can't constantly demand something from our government if we don't do it ourselves," Volosko-Demkiv says.

And while Ukraine needs urgent actions to save the local waters, steps to avert future pollution – sometimes as simple as everyday habits – are just as important.

"It's much easier to prevent pollution than to fix it," Havryliuk says. ☘

Kostyantyn Chernichkin

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