

Ukraine

OVERVIEW

Ukraine Program Summary

Post-Soviet countries often struggle to build democratic institutions and free and open societies, and Ukraine is no exception. In its first decade of independence, Ukraine evolved into a highly centralized and corrupt managed democracy. The seemingly inevitable progression toward autocracy was abruptly halted by the 2004 Orange Revolution, a public protest against fraudulent presidential election. However, constant political in-fighting thwarted any significant economic and political reforms and Victor Yanukovych, whose government has been widely criticized for a regression in democracy, was elected president in 2010.

This trend continued in the 2012 parliamentary elections which international organizations, including the [International Republican Institute](#) (IRI) and the [Organization for the Security and Cooperation](#), determined were a step backward in Ukraine's democratic development.

This democratic regression contributed to the November 2013 spontaneous protests against President Yanukovych's decision not to sign an Association Agreement with the European Union and several months of protests, referred to as the EuroMaidan movement, followed. After the deaths of approximately one hundred Ukrainians, President Yanukovych fled the country, ultimately to Russia. In his absence, Parliament, which was elected in 2012, appointed an interim president and government, and set the presidential election for May 25, 2014.

The objective of IRI's work is to support the development of national democratic political parties, promote democratic governance and strengthen civil society.

Political Party Development

IRI has a long history of working with political parties to strengthen their structures and organization in Ukraine. To further this work and help parties establish and improve communications with civil society IRI launched a program in Chernihiv in 2011 that brought the two groups together to solve local issues. Based on the success of this model, IRI has expanded the program to Ivano-Frankivsk and Chernivtsi and is looking to further expand it nation-wide.

Democratic Governance

To ensure Ukraine's local elected officials are able to better represent the citizens of Ukraine, IRI works with local elected officials to improve their communications, constituent services, management and other skills necessary for effective and transparent governance. IRI's public hearing program empowers Ukrainian civil society, particularly in Crimea, to bridge the gap between citizens and elected officials. The project increases citizen participation in the decision-making process by working with citizens to raise local problems at public hearings, which then must be addressed and voted on by local councils.



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Elections Support

IRI has extensive experience conducting international election observation missions in Ukraine, having deployed delegations to observe every parliamentary and presidential election since Ukraine became independent in 1991.

Starting on April 28, 2014 IRI Ukraine began its project for strengthening multi-party democracy in Ukraine with funding from the Canadian government.



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