

### 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 elections. The revolution brought Victor Yushchenko to power, who sought to institutionalize pillars of democracy, such as free press and greater protection of human rights. However constant political in-fighting thwarted any significant economic and political reforms. It was in this context that Victor Yanukovich was elected president in 2010. In contrast to his predecessors, he quickly consolidated power and with a majority in the parliament, changed the constitution and enacted numerous reforms. However, Yanukovich's government has been widely criticized for a regression in democracy. The 2010 Freedom House report on nations in transit downgraded Ukraine to partly free from free as it had been in previous years.

The objectives of the International Republican Institute's (IRI) program are: to support the development of national democratic political parties, promote democratic governance and strengthen civil society.

### Political Party Development

To ensure Ukraine has vibrant parties which are democratic and reflective of the needs of citizens, IRI trains parties on how to improve their structures and organization, coalition building and membership recruitment. Recently, IRI launched an unprecedented program to enhance communication between political parties and local and national civil society.

### Democratic Governance

In order to ensure Ukraine's elected officials have the technical expertise to allow them to better represent the citizens of Ukraine, IRI provides substantive training to local elected officials on communications, constituent services, management and other skills necessary for effective and transparent governance.

In order to encourage government accountability, IRI's public hearing program enables 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 selecting a problem and training citizens on how to address that problem through the mechanism of public hearings.

### Youth Leadership Development

IRI supports local and national youth-oriented civil society groups through the Youth Political Leadership Schools (YPLS) which teach political activism, particularly in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea. More than 920 students have graduated from YPLS and more than 70 percent of whom have entered into some form of public service.

### 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.