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KEY FINDINGS: PUBLIC OPINION IN UKRAINE

KEY FINDINGS FROM AN IFES SEPTEMBER 2012 SURVEY

October 2012

Funding for this survey was provided by the
United States Agency for International Development

INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR ELECTORAL SYSTEMS
IFES
25 YEARS

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International Foundation for Electoral Systems
1850 K Street, NW, Fifth Floor
Washington, DC 20006
Email: editor@ifes.org
Fax: 202.350.6701

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Key Findings: Public Opinion in Ukraine

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

This report details the findings from the latest International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) survey in Ukraine. This is the 20th public opinion poll conducted in Ukraine by IFES and some of the findings from earlier surveys will be referenced. The fieldwork was conducted between September 15 and 27, 2012, with 1,512 respondents throughout Ukraine. This sample comprised a national sample of 1,265 respondents and an over-sample of 125 respondents in Kyiv and 125 respondents in Crimea. The data has been weighted by region, age and gender to be nationally representative for the adult (18+) population of Ukraine. The margin of error for a sample of this size is plus/minus 2.53%. The fieldwork and data processing for the survey were conducted by the Kiev International Institute of Sociology (KIIS), based in Kyiv. Funding for the survey was provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Opinions on Current Situation in the Country

- There has been a slightly positive shift in sentiments on the direction of the country since the 2011 survey, but 53% of Ukrainians still believe Ukraine is on a path toward instability (down from 62% in 2011) while 22% believe it is on a path toward stability (up from 12% in 2011). The primary reason for the rise in perceptions of stability is a significant increase in positive assessments in eastern and southern Ukraine compared to the 2011 survey. In eastern Ukraine, the percentage offering a positive assessment of this question has increased from 12% in 2011 to 32% in this year's survey, while in southern Ukraine this percentage increased from 18% to 28%.

- While a large majority of Ukrainians continue to be dissatisfied with the economic and political situation in the country, the percentage of dissatisfied Ukrainians has dropped since the 2011 survey. This year, 76% say they are very or somewhat dissatisfied with the economic situation in the country (compared to 87% in 2011), and 63% are dissatisfied with the political situation (compared to 70% in 2011). Fifty-three percent also say they are dissatisfied with Ukraine's foreign policy (compared to 26% satisfied), an increase in dissatisfaction from 46% in 2011. In this year's survey, respondents were also asked about satisfaction with the cultural situation in Ukraine. A slight majority (51%) say they are dissatisfied with the cultural situation in the country while 35% are satisfied. In eastern Ukraine, a roughly equal percentage of respondents say they are satisfied with the cultural situation as those who say they are dissatisfied (43% versus 42%, respectively). In all other regions, significantly more respondents say they are dissatisfied than satisfied.

- Negative sentiments on the direction of the country continue to be animated by economic concerns. Thirty-one percent of Ukrainians describe their quality of life as bad or very bad, while 50% describe it as neither good nor bad. Seventeen percent describe their quality of life as either good or very good. Many more Ukrainians say their family's economic situation has gotten worse rather than better over the past year (34% versus 12%). A majority (52%) say their family's economic situation is the same as one year ago.

- Economic issues top the list of most serious issues that respondents believe Ukraine faces: inflation (57%), poverty (52%), corruption (47%), unemployment (45%), political

bickering/political instability (26%), general economic problems (34%), external debt (9%) and problems with Russia (8%).

- In terms of economic relations with external partners, Ukrainians have mixed opinion on whether it is better if Ukraine had better economic relations with Russia or Europe. Thirty–seven percent pick Russia, 27% pick Europe and 26% say Ukraine should have good relations with both. There are large differences across regions of the country. A majority of respondents in Kyiv (51%) and the West (57%) pick Europe, while a majority in Crimea (71%) and the East (53%) pick Russia. In the Center, 37% pick Russia and 23% pick Europe.

- In the lead-up to the 2012 Rada elections, the Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform (UDAR) Head Vitali Klitschko is the only leader who inspires the more confidence than not among Ukrainians (42% great deal or fair amount of confidence, 40% not very much or no confidence at all). In the case of all other political leaders, a majority of Ukrainians in each case say they have little or no confidence in these leaders: President Yanukovych (32% have confidence, 59% do not), Prime Minister Azarov (30%, 61%), Head of United Opposition 'Batkivshchyna' Yatsenyuk (24%, 64%), Communist Party Head Simonenko (24%, 63%), former Prime Minister Tymoshenko (21%, 66%), Speaker of Parliament Lytvyn (19%, 70%), Svoboda Head Tyanybok (18%, 63%) and Ukraine Forward Head Korolevska (12%, 69%). The percentage saying they have confidence in President Yanukovych rose slightly from 29% in 2011 to 32% in this survey.

- There are higher levels of confidence in the media and local institutions. A majority of Ukrainians (63%) have confidence in the media, while 28% do not. More respondents have confidence than do not in several of their local-level institutions: Mayor of city/village local self-government (49% confidence, 39% no confidence), city/village council (47%, 41%) and Oblast governor (39%, 36%). Forty-three percent express confidence in the military and 37% do not. There are low levels of confidence in the Cabinet of Ministers (28%, 63%) and in the *Verkhovna Rada* (23%, 68%).

- President Yanukovych's low confidence ratings point to low levels of satisfaction with his handling of several important issues over the past year, especially economic issues. Eight in 10 Ukrainians are dissatisfied with his efforts on inflation and job creation. A significant majority is also dissatisfied with his efforts to address corruption (76%) and to limit the influence of oligarchs (64%).

- Yanukovych also receives low marks for his handling of several reform issues. Eighty percent are dissatisfied with his handling of pension reform, 72% with how he has addressed medical reform, 63% with land reform and 54% with his advocacy for constitutional reform. Significantly more Ukrainians are also dissatisfied than satisfied with the changes introduced to the tax code (48% dissatisfied, 13% satisfied).

- Satisfaction with Yanukovych's handling of relations with Russia has continued to fall (from 66% in 2010, to 44% in 2011, to 28% in this 2012 survey). A majority (58%) are dissatisfied with his handling of the relations with Russia. Ukrainians are also much more likely to be dissatisfied than satisfied with Yanukovych's handling of the status of Ukraine and the EU (48% dissatisfied, 21% satisfied).

- Corruption continues to be perceived as a serious issue in most official and social institutions in Ukraine. Eighty percent think corruption is very or somewhat serious in hospitals; 79% in the courts; 78% in the police; 71% in universities and schools; 63% in the customs authorities; 61% in the tax authorities; 60% in the Rada; 54% in the cabinet of ministers; 52% in national government ministries; and 50% in the presidential administration. By contrast, only 20% think corruption is a serious issue in nongovernmental organizations.

2012 Rada Elections

- Despite the low levels of satisfaction with the policies and performance of President Yanukovych, his Party of Regions is still most often mentioned as the party that represents respondents' views and interests. In the overall sample, the Party of Regions is mentioned by 23% of respondents. Among those who are very or somewhat likely to vote in the *Verkhovna Rada* elections, 27% mention Party of Regions. The percentage of responses for each of the major parties for the both the overall sample and among those likely to vote (in brackets) is listed below:

    - Party of Regions 23% (27%)
    - United Opposition *Batkivshchyna* 13% (15%)
    - UDAR 9% (11%)
    - Communist Party 7% (8%)
    - Svoboda 3% (4%)
    - Ukraine Forward 2% (2%)
    - Others 2% (3%)
    - Do not know 24% (22%)
    - None 11% (5%)

- It should be noted that the previous question does not ask respondents what party they will support in the Oct. 28 Rada elections; it only asks them for parties that represent the respondents' views and interests. Still, the relationship between a party representing views and interests and voting for this party is strong. In a follow-up question, close to or more than nine in 10 of the respondents who list each of the major parties say that they intend to vote for this party in the election.

- It should also be noted that more than a quarter of those likely to vote say they do not know what party best represents their views and interests or say that none of these parties do. This indicates that many Ukrainians who are likely to vote in the Oct. 28 elections will make their voting choice during the campaign period and this may impact party support significantly.

- When asked for likelihood of voting in the Oct. 28 elections, 51% say they are very likely to vote and 30% say they are somewhat likely to vote. The percentage saying they are very likely to vote is significantly lower than in IFES surveys before the 2006 and 2007 parliamentary elections (60% and 58%, respectively). There is little difference by gender in likelihood to vote. Likelihood to

vote increases by age, with those 18-24 least likely to say they will be very or somewhat likely to vote (72%) and those 55+ being most likely (87%).

- It is noteworthy that most Ukrainians say they are likely to vote even though a majority of Ukrainians (54%) disagree that voting gives them influence over decision making in the country. Only 37% agree that voting gives them influence. This in an increase from 29% agreement in the 2011 IFES survey, but a typical pattern for IFES surveys conducted before an election. Still, agreement with the statement is uniformly low across the country.

- There is not much faith among Ukrainians that the Rada elections will be a completely free and fair election. Only 14% of Ukrainians say that the elections will be completely free and fair. Sixteen percent say that they election will not be free and fair at all, 23% say they will not be very free and fair and 26% say that they will only be somewhat free and fair. Pessimism about the integrity of the election is acute in all areas except the South and East.

- Those who do not think the elections will be completely free and fair were next given a list of reasons commonly cited for lapses in electoral integrity in Ukraine and asked which of these reasons they thought would lead the elections not to be completely free and fair. Of those asked 54% thought the elections would not be completely free and fair because election results would be falsified. The percentages citing other reasons were: voter will be given money/rewards for vote (37%), falsified ballots will be stuffed in ballot boxes (25%), some voters will be stopped from voting (21%), authorities will pressure parties/candidates from campaigning (18%), voters will be intimidated to vote a certain way (17%), some voters will be allowed to vote multiple times (16%) and media coverage will unfairly favor the ruling party (10%).

- Concerns about the validity of election results are also echoed in another question on the survey. Respondents were given a series of statements about the election process and asked to agree or disagree with these statements. A majority (53%) disagrees that the results of elections in Ukraine accurately reflect the way people voted in the election. Only 34% agree with this statement. There are more positive perceptions in other areas. A majority (73%) agrees that they feel safe in voting however they wish, 64% agrees that elections in Ukraine are competently administered, and a similar percentage (63%) agrees that international election observers have a positive effect on the fairness of the elections. Forty-five percent agree that national media provides objective coverage of parties and candidates up for election (38% disagree).

- A majority (60%) agrees they are informed about the electoral process in Ukraine. However, other data on the survey suggests that there might be areas in which information is still lacking. In this election, voters will receive two ballot papers: one for the national party list and one for their district representative. This is a change from the past few *Verkhovna Rada* elections in which voters only voted for a party on the national list and the survey data indicates that most voters are not aware of the change. When asked how many ballots voters would receive on election-day, nearly four in 10 (39%) said voters will receive two ballots, but a majority (51%) said they do not know. Eight percent think voters will receive one ballot and 2% mentioned other numbers. This survey was conducted nearly one month after the list of parties and

candidates was finalized for both the national list and single-member districts. At the time of the survey, only 24% of respondents knew who the candidates were for their district.

- Nearly one year after a package of changes to the electoral system in Ukraine was passed into law, Ukrainians have mixed opinions on two of the provisions of the electoral law. A slight majority approves of the mixed system of voting where they vote for both a party list and for Deputies representing their district (57%), but a majority also disapproves of the provision to discontinue voters being allowed to vote against all in Rada elections (59%). Fifty-four percent strongly or somewhat agree that this provision will make Rada deputies more accountable to the public while 19% disagree.

- In this year's election, the Central Election Commission is installing one to two video cameras in polling stations across the country. The electoral authorities cite this step as a measure to increase transparency and provide oversight for the work of polling station commissioners. Critics, however, argue that placement of cameras in polling stations is a way for authorities to intimidate or influence voters. The survey data indicates that the majority of Ukrainians generally do not share the concerns about intimidation of voters. Fifty-four percent say they see the placement of cameras primarily as a means to increase transparency, while 20% see the cameras as a way to intimidate voters. Twenty-two percent do not know enough to respond. Eighty percent of Ukrainians also say the cameras will have no impact on their likelihood to vote. Seven percent say they are less likely to vote, and an additional 3% say they will still vote but will reconsider their voting choices. There are no significant differences between geographic regions or supporters of different political parties in their reactions to the cameras.

Political Parties and Campaign Finance Issues

- More Ukrainians than in the 2011 survey believe that most or some political parties have clear proposals to address the issues facing the country. Twenty-one percent believe that most political parties have clear proposals to address current issues (up from 9% in 2011 and 15% in 2010). Thirty-seven percent believe only some of the parties have clear proposals. When these respondents are asked to name the parties that provide proposals, they name Party of Regions (11%), UDAR (10%), '*Batkivshchyna'* (8%), Communists (7%) and Svoboda (3%). Eighteen percent believe that none of the parties offer any proposal and 22% do not know.

- There has also been a positive increase in perceptions of how Ukrainians view the interests political parties serve. Thirty-four percent believe political parties serve their own interests, down from 51% in 2011. Seventeen percent think political parties serve the interests of the Ukrainian people, a substantial increase from 4% in 2011. A large portion of Ukrainians also believe political parties serve the interests of elites in society, either through business interests (12%) or those in power (12%).

- In terms of success in political campaigns, Ukrainians tend to give relatively equal weight to political personalities, party platforms and available resources as contributors to electoral success. Thirty-five percent of Ukrainians cite election platforms of parties or candidates as one of the greatest contributors to electoral success. Thirty percent also list the personality of

candidates as important. Ukrainians also place emphasis on financial and other resources as contributors to success: 28% list financial resource specifically, and 18% cite access to state resources and the power of incumbency. Twenty-two percent also think media outreach is a primary contributor to electoral success and 14% cite political party affiliation.

- Given the importance given to financial and state resources, this survey contained several questions related to campaign finance in Ukraine. At the most basic level, the majority of Ukrainians believe political parties and campaigns should publicly disclose the amounts of money donated to campaigns, and at the same time, many more Ukrainians disagree rather than agree that parties are accurate in reporting their spending. A slight majority (51%) believe it is important for campaigns to disclose the amount of money donated to them, while 35% do not think this is important. Forty-six percent disagree that parties are accurate in reporting their spending, while only 18% agree with this statement. The lack of information on campaign finance reporting in Ukraine is indicated by the fact that more than a third (36%) do not know enough about this issue to respond.

- A strong majority of Ukrainians are supportive of several regulatory initiatives to address campaign financing. Eighty-five percent agree that there should be a ban on the use of state resources for campaigning. Seventy-two percent agree that there should be limits on how much parties and candidates can spend on election campaigns. Seventy-one percent agree that the state should provide a minimum level of funding to all parties and candidates. Finally, sixty-two percent agree there should be limits on how much any one person can contribute to parties and candidates during a campaign.

- While the majority of Ukrainians want regulatory control of the official campaign finance system, they recognize there is illicit activity during election campaigns. Close to seven in 10 Ukrainians (69%) say parties and candidates frequently or sometimes offer money or gifts to voters in exchange for votes. Ukrainians are far less likely to implicate themselves in this activity, as only 9% say they have been offered money or rewards for their vote in the past. When given a list of possible options and asked what they think the majority of people in Ukraine would do if offered money or rewards, 48% think most people would take the money/reward but still vote as they wished because their vote is secret; 21% think most people would take the money/reward and honor their commitment to the party/candidate giving them the money; and 9% think most people would refuse the offer. Twenty-two percent do not give a specific response.

- The survey also sought to ascertain whether Ukrainians think that access to funding is one of the reasons women do not take part as candidates in Ukrainian elections to the extent that men do. When respondents are asked why the proportion of female candidates is lower than men, respondents cite family obligations of women as a primary reason why they are less likely to be candidates (37%). However, nearly a quarter of Ukrainians (24%) also cite the fact that women candidates do not receive as much financial support from parties as male candidates. Fourteen percent think there is a societal bias against women; a similar percentage does not think women have the qualifications and skills as men for political office (reinforcing the perception of bias).

- Respondents were also asked about whether they agree or disagree with that statement that lack of access to funding prevents more female candidates from competing in elections. Nearly half (48%) agree with this statement while 21% disagree. Thirty-one percent do not provide a response.

Democracy and Rights

- This year's survey sees a large jump in the percentage of Ukrainians who think that democracy is preferable to other systems of government. Forty-six percent of Ukrainians hold this opinion (up from 35% in 2011). By contrast, apathy toward the system of government has dropped significantly, as 20% say to people like them it doesn't matter what system of government they have (down from 33% in 2011). Twenty-three percent of Ukrainians say in certain situations a non-democratic government can be preferable (compared to 18% in 2011). The greater preference for democracy and lesser apathy may reflect greater political engagement in the country due to the Rada elections.

- By region, the preference for democracy is highest in Kyiv (59%), western Ukraine (56%) and the North (50%). Apathy toward the system of government is the highest in the Center (35%) and much lower in other regions.

- When asked to pick up to five statements they associate most with democracy, protecting human rights (59%) and fair, consistent enforcement of the law (43%) top the list. As in previous year, economic issues are also cited: everyone has work (48%) and state support of those unable to work (28%). Other mentions include no official corruption (37%) and state support of pensioners (28%). Freedoms are also given emphasis: freedom of speech (38%) and freedom to vote (28%).

- There has been little movement on perceptions of whether Ukraine is a democracy. In this survey, 45% of Ukrainians do not view Ukraine as a democracy; 25% view Ukraine as a democracy; 15% volunteer that Ukraine has both democratic and undemocratic tendencies; and 14% do not know. These responses are fairly similar to those in the 2011 survey. Regionally, residents of the West (36%), the East (28%) and the South (24%) are most likely to say Ukraine is a democracy, while residents of Kyiv (71%), the Center (55%) and the North (53%) are most likely to say Ukraine is not a democracy.

- There has also been little change in perceptions of the Yanukovych administration's respect for rights and freedoms. When asked whether they are pleased, concerned or alarmed with the Yanukovych administration's respect for rights and freedoms, over half of Ukrainians say they are either concerned by some reversals of rights and freedoms (37%) or alarmed at a sign of deterioration in respect for rights and freedoms (21%). Twenty-three percent say they are pleased the Yanukovych Administration maintained respect for rights and freedoms.

- While the majority of Ukrainians think it is important for citizens to be able to access information about the activities and decisions of public authorities, the survey indicates that few Ukrainians

have taken advantage of a law passed in 2011 that obligates government authorities to provide the public with access to information about their actions and decisions. Sixty-eight percent of Ukrainians think it is very or somewhat important for the public to be able to access this type of information while 22% think it is not important. However, only 3% report asking a government authority for this type of information in the past year. In about a quarter of these cases, the request was partially or fully fulfilled but in the other cases either no information was provided or no action has been taken.

Civil Society Organizations

- There is little awareness of specific nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Ukraine. While 13% say they are aware of NGOs active in the country now, 50% of Ukrainians say they are not aware of any NGOs active in the country and 30% say they don't know what an NGO is. Among the NGOs named by respondents were the Red Cross (9% of those who could name an NGO), Union of Veterans of Great Patriotic War (5%), and Society of Afghan War Veterans (4%). Nevertheless, a majority of Ukrainians aware of NGOs say they are necessary for Ukraine (52%) or essential (25%). Only 9% believe they are not necessary for the country and 14% do not know.

- Ukrainians familiar with NGOs support these organizations working in various socio-political sectors such as health (88%), humanitarian/charitable aid (87%), education (85%), women's rights (83%), judicial/legal (82%) and democracy and governance (70%). Support for NGO engagement in these sectors has not changed significantly since the 2011 survey.

- Ukrainians who are familiar with NGOs have generally positive views of these types of organizations. Two-thirds of Ukrainians (66%) agree that NGOs address areas the government is unable or unwilling to address, 61% (up from 55% in 2011) agree that NGOs contribute to the betterment of Ukraine, and 52% agree that NGOs represent all of Ukrainian society. Ukrainians are more likely to disagree than agree (37% versus 22%, respectively) that NGOs represent foreign interests. This is also the case when respondents are asked whether NGOs only do work that benefits themselves (40% disagree and 25% agree).