

UKRAINE:

Ancient European Nation; Young Democratic State



Kyiv



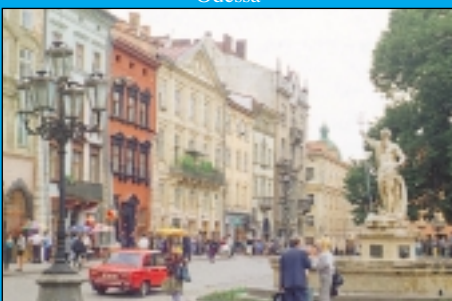
Crimea



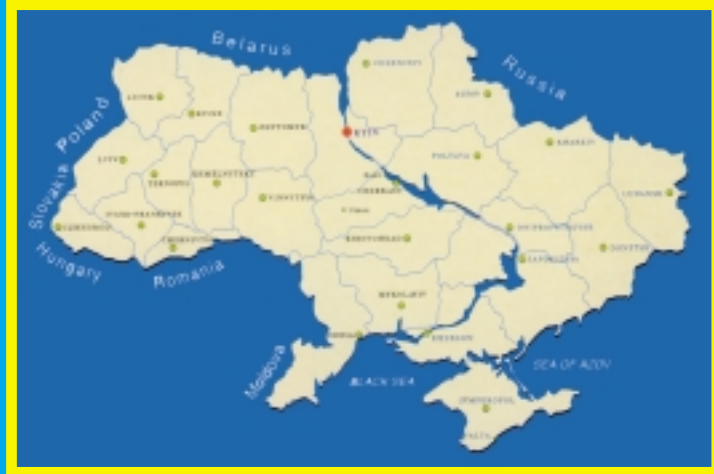
Sebastopol



Odessa



Lviv



Ukraine is the second largest country in Europe with the territory of 603,700 sq km and population of nearly 50 million. Kyiv with its more than 2.5 million inhabitants is the capital and the largest City of Ukraine. The Country borders on Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Moldova in the West and South-West and Russia and Belorus in the South and North-East. In the South, Ukraine is washed by the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov.

Ukraine ranks fifth in Europe in terms of population. Ethnic Ukrainians account for 73 per cent of the total population. There are more than 14 million people of other nationalities in Ukraine: Russians, Jews, Belorussians, Bulgarians, Poles and others.

The earliest state on the territory of Ukraine was formed in the ninth century AD with its capital Kyiv advantageously situated along significant mediaeval trade route in the centre of Europe. The state lasted until Kyiv fell to the Tatar-Mongols in 1240. For the next four centuries Ukraine was invaded and ruled by Poles and Lithuanians. In 1654 Ukraine became a protectorate of Russia which resulted in a long period of domination by the Russian Empire and ultimately the Soviet Union.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union the Ukrainian people realised their aspiration for statehood by adopting the Declaration of Independence on 24 August 1991. The Independence was confirmed by overwhelming majority in the referendum on 1 December 1991. A new Constitution adopted on 28 June 1996 defines Ukraine as sovereign, democratic, unitary state governed by the rule of law and guaranteeing civil rights.

Ukrainian economy features considerable portions of agricultural and industrial sectors. Space and rocket engineering, aircraft and shipbuilding are among the most advanced industries. Ukrainian-made electrical equipment is highly rated in the world. Power station turbines, transformers, high-voltage instruments are used in many countries of South America, Asia and Pacific region. Together with Norway, Russia and the USA, Ukraine takes part in the "Sea Launch" joint venture project supplying rocket carriers.

The main strategic directions of Ukraine's

foreign policy have been determined as integration with the European Union and NATO, development of strategic partnership with the Russian Federation, the United States of America and Poland. Complemented by the development of friendly relations with the neighbouring countries, regional and multilateral diplomacy they form the key elements of Ukrainian foreign policy activity. Ukraine consistently pursues the course towards deepening the European and Euro-Atlantic integration, actively participating in creating the new security architecture in Europe.

Being one of the oldest European nations, Ukraine has deep cultural roots and rich traditions in many fields of art. In the course of its history the Ukrainian people created distinctive, artistically unique national art in which their social and aesthetic ideals, patriotism and humanism were reflected. The fine arts originated on the territory of modern Ukraine as far back as the period of first mediaeval state (Kyiv Rus) and the adoption of Christianity promoted the development of culture and fine arts. Together with architecture, the monumental painting achieved a high level of development (i.e. mosaics and frescoes of cathedrals, monasteries and churches throughout Ukraine). Icon painting became the art of broad generalisation.

For a long period the original Ukrainian culture was hidden or enlisted to other cultures after the decline of Ukrainian statehood in the 13th and 14th centuries, while great damage to the Ukrainian culture was also done over decades of communist rule in the 20th century.

Under conditions of independent Ukraine, special attention of the state and non-governmental bodies and organisations is given to supporting free development of all styles and genres of Ukrainian art. The ideas of national cultural revival have stimulated the process of democratisation of the cultural sphere and the establishment of pluralism in the creative process have made cultural life in various regions more active. The deepening of international cultural relations has become a positive tendency.