



CITIES

THE DESTINATION IDENTITY



The Communication Group plc

Contributors

The Communication Group plc would like to thank the following organisations who have contributed to this report:



In addition the following cities also provided access to research and public and private sector leaders:

London – Westminster
 Sydney
 Edinburgh
 Dubai

Hong Kong
 Philadelphia
 Stratford-upon-Avon
 Vancouver

Cardiff
 Washington DC
 Kyiv

We would also like to thank:

DR PHILIPP RODE
 Executive Director of Urban Age,
 London School of Economics
 and Political Science

DAMIAN BARR
 Writer and journalist

DR MICHAEL REFALO
 United Nations World Tourism
 Organisation Strategic
 Committee member

WASHINGTON DC & KIEV A CAPITAL APPROACH

Nadia McConnell President of U.S. – Ukraine Foundation



States don't just happen – they are built. Ukraine was just one of the countries to emerge from the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991. In 2004 the fledgling democracy faced a vote-rigging scandal that threatened to destabilise it. Though there were widespread fears that violence could break out when existing power structures were challenged, Ukraine's Orange Revolution was peaceful. The run-off between leading candidates Viktor Yushchenko and Viktor Yanukovich was decided and government resumed. Democracy was the victor. The stage for this historic victory was Kiev.

“Civil society in cities can take on its own diplomacy, because cities can react more swiftly to make changes and promote their specific local economies and interests,” says Nadia McConnell, US-Ukraine Foundation President. McConnell is an American of Ukrainian descent. She wanted to take lessons from the US back to her ancestral home: “Basically, they needed to know how to build a new society.”

U.S. – Ukraine Foundation in context

“Civil society is absolutely, totally essential to Ukraine's future,” says McConnell. “The [2004 democratic] Orange Revolution succeeded because individual cities and city councils began voting and supporting the democratic process. That was a sea change in Ukraine.”

McConnell founded the US-Ukraine Foundation (USUF) as the Soviet Union began to crumble in 1990, leaving Ukraine on the cusp of its long-sought independence. Indeed, opening its first office in Ukraine before the fall of the USSR, the Foundation

is the oldest American presence in Ukraine. “Winning cities develop partnerships with other winning cities,” she says. “I wanted to link cities throughout Ukraine with cities across the United States to exchange best-practices and information. This included Washington as the capital of a developed democracy with Kiev, the capital of an emerging democracy.”

“One of the main motivations for the Foundation was to help bring information to Ukraine about democracy and state-building,” says McConnell, a former government official with expertise in both politics and governance. “They needed information and access to expanded resources to make informed choices on how they wished to build a new society.”

Today, the Foundation's goals remain unchanged. Based in Washington DC and five cities across Ukraine including Kiev, USUF aims to promote democracy, a free market economy and human rights in Ukraine by facilitating a so-called ‘Marshall Plan of the mind,’ the exchange of ideas and training between the West and Ukraine. “As local

government in Ukraine takes on more political responsibility, there is a greater need for education and training,” says McConnell. “There is a greater need to be aware of different options regarding how to work with their communities and their societies to get maximum results in local economic development and civil society modernisation.”

Grassroots

In *‘The World is Flat’*, best-selling author Thomas Friedman argues that, in the context of today's globalisation, the best development efforts are at the local level. USUF shares his view.

USUF works with Ukrainian citizens to identify their needs and involve them. “Our real strength is our long-term, regional presence with talented and indigenous staff who are sensitive to the needs of different Ukrainian constituencies,” says McConnell. The exact opposite of so-called technical assistance consultants who fly around the world scattering the same ‘cookie cutter’ recommendations as they go. Importantly, >>

“In *‘The World is Flat’*, best-selling author Thomas Friedman argues that, in the context of today's globalisation, the best development efforts are at the local level. USUF shares his view.”



“Civil society is not just a democratic ideal – it has very practical benefits. It can help you run your city, your country, better.”



USUF is completely non-partisan in the US and Ukraine. “People have come to understand that we are honest brokers of information.”

USUF improves bilateral relations between two countries by working at the grassroots in their cities. “National governments are just one component of the power structure,” says McConnell. “They’re involved in their issues, their own struggles, and their own debate which is sometimes far removed from the needs of the man on the street.”

“Civil society is not just a democratic ideal – it has very practical benefits. It can help you run your city, your country, better.” USUF’s long-term street-level engagement is getting results.

Leading civil society

USUF has established a leadership Mayors Club of over 80 reform-minded Ukrainian mayors and trained over 40,000 Ukrainian local government officials. As part of its US State Department-sponsored Work & Travel Programme, USUF brings 1,600 students to the U.S. every summer to gain work experience. It recently coordinated Ukrainian participants in a Black Sea Youth Forum looking at economic development, security, and ethnic relations issues. In a two-year policy dialogue programme funded by the US State Department, USUF brought together American and Ukrainian leaders by pairing Washington institutions and Kiev institutions

to exchange expertise on issues like business, politics and government, national security and foreign policy, and the media.

Perhaps most importantly, USUF improved trade relations between the US and Ukraine by spearheading a successful campaign to remove outdated US legislation that stopped normal trading.

Turning challenges into opportunity: Tourism

Despite its success, USUF faces challenges. “There’s a thriving civil society in Ukraine but you sense a lid is being kept on it,” says McConnell. “There’s a growing sense of frustration that it isn’t able to develop more rapidly and effectively.”

Ukraine’s archaic, Soviet-style tax system is just one barrier. It stops a greater level of fundraising from local businesses. “Civil society today is more vibrant yet the rules and laws governing civil society have not kept pace with the robust growth of civil society,” says McConnell.

Ever-hungry for new destinations, tourists are now arriving in Ukraine. In 2005 USUF created an online Ukraine tourism portal. Today, www.traveltoulkraine.org is the number-one Ukrainian travel site on Yahoo and Google. The site includes detailed maps, visitor guides, and cultural event information as well as travel tips. Inspirational and educational, it guides users from the Stone Age to the Orange Revolution. If that whets your appetite there’s a section on the country’s famous cuisine: beet-based borscht, and varenyky, dumplings filled with potatoes, sweet cheese or meat, all of which should be warmly toasted by home-brewed samohon, or vodka!

Travel to Ukraine is a best-in-class example of USUF’s wide remit: two countries have come together to build democracy and helped build a bridge between one country and many others. “There’s something about Ukraine that people fall in love with,” says McConnell. 🇺🇸

www.usukraine.org