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PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY IN UKRAINE:

TWO YEARS AFTER MAIDAN, UKRAINIANS STILL COMMITTED TO DEMOCRACY AND INTEGRATION WITH EUROPE

Ukrainians Disappointed with Unmet Aspirations and Current Environment

WASHINGTON/KYIV — October 13, 2015 — While a majority of Ukrainians is disappointed with the current state of affairs in the country and does not have much confidence in their political leaders, a significant block remains committed to democratic ideals and the rule of law, and prefers that Ukraine look toward Europe and the West for its geo-political orientation, according to a new survey conducted by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES).

IFES' 25th public opinion survey in Ukraine polled respondents throughout the country – excluding Crimea and Donbas – on attitudes and opinions regarding government institutions and leaders, current affairs, democracy, foreign policy, and the upcoming October 25 local elections. IFES has conducted regular public opinion surveys in Ukraine since 1994.

The survey finds that the *Maidan* revolution is closely associated by the public with aspirations for a liberal political order that values closer relations with Europe, public affairs conducted with integrity, and democracy and rule of law. Consistent with these beliefs, the survey data reveals that a plurality of Ukrainians can be characterized as strong democrats who are strongly supportive of democracy and the maintenance of democratic rights in Ukraine. Close to half of all Ukrainians (49%) believe that democracy is preferable to any other form of government while 21 percent believe that in certain situations, a non-democratic form of government can be preferable. Sixteen percent are apathetic and do not think that the form of government matters to people like them.

In addition to continued support for democracy, the IFES survey also finds that half of Ukrainians believe that the country would better off with closer political and economic relations with Europe than with Russia. Overall, 49 percent believe that Ukraine would be better off with closer relations with Europe, while 8 percent prefer closer relations with Russia. Nineteen percent think Ukraine should have close relations with both, while 14 percent think Ukraine should not have close relations with either Europe or Russia.

However, Ukrainians do not believe aspirations of the *Maidan* have been adequately addressed by the country's political leaders, with only 5 percent providing positive evaluations of these efforts. Ukrainians also doubt the ability or commitment of their current political leadership to meet the aspirations of *Maidan*. Forty-seven percent disagree that 'current leadership in the country understand the reforms that are needed to address' the aspirations, while 38 percent agree. There is even greater skepticism about the reforms actually taking place, with 51 percent disagreeing that the current political leaders will ensure that needed reforms are introduced. Twenty-eight percent agree with this statement. Finally, a significant majority (72%) agrees that



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‘the only way the objectives of the Maidan can be achieved is through a new generation of leaders not tied to the status quo.’

The survey data indicates that the lack of reforms as well as the economic situation in the country contribute to a consistent, slow erosion in the initial positive momentum that was seen in Ukrainian public opinion on heightened hopes for political and social reform after *Maidan*.

More than half of all Ukrainians (56%) believe the country is headed in the wrong direction while only 20 percent believe it is headed in the right direction. The view that the country is headed in the wrong direction is widely shared across the country with a majority in each region voicing this opinion, and in no region do more than 28 percent believe the country is headed in the right direction.

The war in Donbas, corruption in the country, and economic challenges are the primary issues listed by Ukrainians as problems the country faces. Seventy percent mention the war in Donbas, and a significant percentage also mention related issues including relations with Russia (19%) and the issue of energy independence for Ukraine (11%). Corruption is mentioned as a critical issue by 53 percent, while various economic issues were also mentioned (inflation 56 percent, poverty 42 percent, unemployment 35 percent, external debt 11 percent, and general economic problems 30 percent).

When asked if they will vote in local elections on October 25, 2015, 41 percent say they are very likely to vote, 30 percent say they are somewhat likely to vote, and 23 percent say they are either unlikely to vote or will not vote. Based on the relationship between data on previous surveys and actual turnout in elections in Ukraine, IFES estimates that actual turnout will be below 50 percent.

A plurality of Ukrainians expects the local elections to be reasonably free and fair. When asked about the integrity of the upcoming elections, 44 percent say that they will be either completely or reasonable free and fair, while 21 percent say they will be flawed enough to doubt the accuracy of results and 12 percent say they will not be free and fair at all. Positive expectations for the integrity of election process are highest in the Center (54%) and West (50%).

The 2015 survey was sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and includes responses from 1,558 Ukrainians polled between September 12 and 26, 2015. The opinions expressed in this survey do not necessarily reflect the opinions of USAID or the U.S. Government

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As the global leader in democracy promotion, IFES advances good governance and democratic rights by providing technical assistance to election officials; empowering the underrepresented to participate in the political process; and applying field-based research to improve the electoral cycle. Since 1987, IFES has worked in over 145 countries, from developing democracies, to mature democracies. For more information, visit

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