

# ICPS newsletter<sup>®</sup>

## How to form a new political leadership in Ukraine

**On 11 February 2008, ICPS held a roundtable called "Who will rule the country in 10 years? The problem of forming political leadership in Ukraine." The goal of this event was to involve a broad base of stakeholders to discuss prospects for changing the upper ranks of Ukraine's political class, ways to promote young leaders to leading positions in Ukrainian politics, and the role that the current political environment and mechanisms play in this process**

Participating in this roundtable were young Ukrainian politicians, members of youth organizations, experts and journalists. The younger generation on Ukraine's political stage was represented by Verkhovna Rada Deputies Andriy Shevchenko, Yevhen Suslov, Andriy Naidyonov, and First Deputy Minister for Family, Youth and Sports Affairs Illya Shevliak. National political youth organizations were represented by Molodiy Narodniy Rukh Ukrayiny President Ivan Krul'ko, Union of Young Socialists President Denys Voloshyn, Executive Committee Chair of the Nasha Ukraina Youth Union Sviatoslav Babilya, and Batkivshchyna Moloda Vice President Oleh Kuyavskiy.

Among representatives of community organizations for young people were Foundation of Regional Initiatives President Oleksandr Solontai, Forum of Young Leaders of Ukraine founder Ihor Shevchenko, Union of Forward-Looking Youth Board of Management Member Vladyslav Puchych, and others. Leading Ukrainian pundits and educational specialists joined representatives of the younger generation in debating the issues raised.

### Young people should take the initiative

ICPS Director Volodymyr Nikitin stated that establishing an elite is a key issue for the independence, security and prospects for a good life for Ukrainians. The country's future depends on what new political leadership it has — whether these people have a clear picture of the future, stable principles to base their actions on, and responsibility for what they are doing.

However, Mr. Nikitin added, a new political leadership will not take shape just like that and, meanwhile, today's top politicians are

doing nothing to help this process along. This means that the younger generation needs to identify itself in its attempt to become the country's future leadership. Today, it is possible to contribute to this process by changing such social systems as education, civil society and the media, but the driving force behind such changes must be determined specialists.

First Deputy Minister for Family, Youth and Sports Affairs Illya Shevliak agreed that the solution of numerous current problems prevents the state from paying sufficient attention to the challenges of the future, such as the question of forming a new generation of leaders. The Ministry is initiating a number of events to support the civic movement among young people in the country. However, these efforts face a number of problems that government policy alone cannot eliminate.

### Young Ukrainians are not consolidated

The first problem is poor consolidation among Ukraine's younger generation. The country has 151 registered All-Ukrainian youth community organizations and more than 4,000 regional and local organizations. But the real share of younger adults that is active in these organizations is quite small. The level of cooperation among youth organizations and between them and government bodies is also low. The main resources are concentrated in Kyiv, which means regional youth movements are not getting the necessary support.

As a result, Ukrainian politicians do not see the younger generation as a serious social force and their election platforms pay much more attention to pensioners' problems than to the problems of young people. The poor

representation of younger adults in party and bloc election lists is especially telling, a problem that was recognized by the majority of the participants in this roundtable.

### No mechanisms for transferring knowledge to the young

Mr. Shevliak said that the second problem is a lack of mechanisms for transferring knowledge, in particular regarding public administration. Ukraine's system of education cannot provide appropriate qualifications and there are no effective mechanisms for teaching practical skills.

Such mechanisms exist in mature democracies, especially in France, whose experience is worth studying and trying out in Ukraine. Knowledge about European practice and European values is very much needed by young leaders and the future political leadership as they continue implementing Ukraine's strategic goal— integration into the European Union.

After recognizing these numerous problems, Mr. Shevliak proposed several areas of cooperation for young leaders and organizations, including actively participating in evaluating and revising policy geared towards the young in Ukraine, supporting the set up and operation of a European Youth Center in Ukraine, and participating in the work of schools for young politicians and young journalists.

### Creating alternatives to existing organizations

Representatives of youth organizations were very critical of the work of the Ukrainian Youth Forum set up in 2005 and supported by Mr. Shevliak as an instrument for consolidating young people. The majority of speakers said this forum was not a truly representative structure and could not adequately represent Ukraine's youth movement at the European Youth Forum.

Participants also offered proposals for re-organizing this entity or setting up an

alternative organization. Forum of Young Leaders of Ukraine Founder Ihor Shevchenko called upon all youth organizations not to be afraid to set up alternatives to those structures that do not meet their needs and to build up their own reputations and gain support for new organizations through their own activism and good example.

This idea was also supported by Volodymyr Lupatsiy, an analyst from the Sofia center for social studies. He suggested that young leaders adopt the concept of a "counter-leadership" that would not simply replace those in power today, but would bring a new quality and approach to government that are different from those currently in use.

## A new leadership with new qualities

VR Deputy Andriy Shevchenko emphasized that the coming of the new leadership cannot be a simple mechanical replacement of older politicians by younger ones. This kind of mechanical replacement can be seen in the City of Kyiv, where the coming of a young team to power became the worst nightmare of those supporting a change of generations in politics. At the moment, the entire country sees how young, ambitious and well-trained individuals can not only replicate but even reinforce the most negative qualities of their older predecessors.

So the point is not simply replacement, but removal of the old leadership, along with its intrinsic qualities, and the coming of a qualitatively new leadership. A list of such qualities can be formulated, using the example of successful western leaders. Among them, publicness, leadership and the ability to personify new, understandable values are at the top. To replace the "flexibility" traditional of Ukrainian politics, a politician of integrity must emerge, in whom is no contradiction in what that person thinks, says or does.

To contribute to the formation of such new leadership, both young people and members of the older generation who are care about this issue need to look for innovative instruments and ways of acting, not limiting themselves to existing youth-oriented entities subordinated to existing political parties. A serious impact can be made by changing the rules for hiring in the civil service, which, provided it offers competitive salaries, will foster the coming of the best representatives of the younger generation to public administration.

According to VR Deputy Yevhen Suslov, the self-identification and self-organization of young people are very important for the formation of a new leadership. It's

not enough to wait for leadership and success. People have to strive for them, to set relevant objectives for themselves and to follow positive examples. By taking on responsibility, for example, through elected office in local government, young leaders have the opportunity to avoid the negative impact of the current traditions of Ukrainian politics and to take the country's future into their hands.

VR Deputy Andriy Naidyonov emphasized the important role of student government as a way of forming young leaders. Mr. Naidyonov also noted the importance of creating and implementing long-term programs in youth policy and cultural exchanges with other countries, including Russia and Belarus.

## Ukraine's political leadership is not changing

Union of Young Socialists President Denys Voloshyn drew attention to the fact that, in over 16 years of independence, there has been almost no change in the political top dogs and the same people continue to hold top offices. The old leadership no longer meets the needs of the present, he said, its approach is driving the country from crisis to crisis, and there is no end in sight.

However, the main political forces feel the lack of human resources that was so obvious in the last Verkhovna Rada election. Certainly, there were great examples of getting journalists, athletes and stars to join political parties. But many of these newcomers failed to show up for work and neglected the duties of their office.

The impression is that there is no one to replace the current leadership. Existing mechanisms for forming young leaders, in particular youth organizations, are not bringing results. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, party leaders do not know how to work with young people and do not understand how important it is to raise future leaders. So they do not pay the necessary attention to setting up, supporting and cooperating with youth organizations.

Secondly, young people do not see any ideologies that appeal to them. Today's political parties are not proposing any ideas that would draw the young to community and political work. It is very difficult to identify a difference among the ideologies of Ukraine's main political forces in the Verkhovna Rada, or among their youth branches. Ideological work would help the younger generation clearly formulate their interests and identify the instruments for achieving these.

The third problem is lack of government support. The state not only does not deal

with the problems facing young Ukrainians, but does not even make it possible for young activists to participate in the formulation and implementation of policy related to them. Mr. Voloshyn call for active young people to unite in the search for common national ideas and come up with interesting joint projects was supported by most participants at the roundtable.

## The education system should contribute to forming leaders

Director of Kyiv Business Lyceum Liudmyla Parashchenko attracted serious attention with her presentation. She said the Ukrainian system of education, starting with public school, contributes little to the formation of leaders and the country's future political leadership, and even less to providing the skills and knowledge needed by young people in today's globalized and highly competitive world.

By tradition, Ukrainian schools focus on graduating a "literate" individual. However, in today's new environment, they need to focus on training a "competent" graduate. Otherwise, the skilled specialists being trained in Ukraine will be hired for the business processes and technologies of foreign corporations and countries, and there will be no one to apply new management technologies.

Such an objective requires significantly restructuring public schools, reforming curricula and organizing a training process and methods. Attempts to institute new approaches to training are being made both at the Kyiv Business Lyceum and other specialized schools across Ukraine. However, for these attempts to succeed, the state must support such initiatives, at least in the form of pilot projects. It must allow more freedom and contribute to the spread of progressive practices.

Among the problems of attracting young people to politics, participants mentioned the practice of closed election lists of political parties. In such an environment, the chances of a young individual to make it to the list are determined by the extent to which that particular individual pleases the party's leader or the leader's entourage. In fact, little depends on professional and personal qualities. The electoral system must be changed so that politicians will work at the local level with real voters, whose support will determine the shape of election lists. ■

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