



# Western Education – a Tool for Europeanization of Ukraine?

*Kyiv – 2014*

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*Dedicated to Kakha Bendukidze,  
inspirer of reforms*

*He remains inside each of us.*

*He fought and took risks. He was distinguished for his boldness and fearlessness, his sense of humor and sometimes harsh criticism. He made people think and aim high. He invested in those whose eyes were shining and advised those whose eyes showed uncertainty. Some feared him, others were enthralled and learned from him.*



*The walls of his reception area in the Free University in Tbilisi were hung with awards and photographs, while a long table in his office displays a mass of small details, inventions, books. This is where our first interview with Kakha Bendukidze for this project took place. In contrast to many politicians and opinion-makers, Kakha was always open and direct in how he spoke.*

*Almost at the first question he challenged the purpose of this study. He said that a foreign education has nothing to do with carrying out reforms. Then he went on to explain that experience of one's own country, about the common work of a team, about timely reforms and human capital. And he added, "When Ukrainians decide that they cannot live like this any more, that's when reforms will kick in." During our hour and a half-long conversation, he was very serious, even severe, but when we said our good-byes, he gave us a big, warm smile and promised to meet with us in Kyiv.*

*And he kept his promise, meeting not only with us but also with those who make policy decisions at the top level, decisions he could also have put under doubt. He was invited to meet with people, although they knew he was not a man to flatter presidents or ministers. People listened to him and quoted him. And he kept emphasizing that agents of change have to want change, not business cards. "You have to believe in the changes you are undertaking like an article of faith. You have to be willing to fight for them. If you're ready for that, you may have a chance to change the situation."*

*Today, Kakha is no longer beside us, but he remains inside each of us – in our faith and in our battle.*

*Thank you, Kakha.*

*Project Team*

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## Foreword

The idea for this project, “Western Education – a Tool for Europeanization of Ukraine,” that results among others in this paper, emerged in April 2013. The question of how seriously graduates of western universities might influence change in Ukraine was in the air. Georgia’s reforms, a topic that only the most slothful of Ukrainians had not talked about in recent years, were spurred by professionals with western educations. Lithuania and Moldova also actively drew such graduates into their Governments.

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Ukraine’s labor market has been slowly changing: whereas in at the beginning of the 2000s, a western diploma qualitatively differentiated a job seeker from his competitors with a Ukrainian education, employers are not that much impressed by a western diploma today. Associations of graduates from western post-secondary institutions began to be organized and actively work, establishing an effective dialog with foreign diplomats, yet their Ukrainian counterparts showed little interest in them. It became clear that a critical mass of those who are ready to make the change happen is reached. Still, most graduates were avoiding the civil service while the state apparatus, in its turn, did little to offer conditions that might engage them.

During the period that this project was underway, the political situation in Ukraine changed radically. After the Euromaidan, the politicians who came to office were forced to respond to the demand of Ukrainian voters for new faces, illustrative of which were the party lists at the snap Verkhovna Rada election. In March 2014, the “Professional Government” initiative was launched, under which graduates from some of the top universities in the world were able to put their own knowledge and experience for reforming the state. “Professional Government” and the “Western Education – a Tool for Europeani-

zation of Ukraine” are two independent yet complimentary initiatives, as the former proposes tactical steps while the latter looks at strategic solutions.

The purpose of this project was to evaluate the potential impact of graduates from foreign university on qualitative changes in Ukraine and to develop recommendations on how to effectively capitalize on their skills, knowledge and experience. Without idealizing western experience or placing graduates of western universities on a pedestal, we nevertheless consider that it would be wrong to underestimate such individuals as a resource for europeanizing Ukraine and promoting high-quality reforms in the country.

The project has deliberately focused on the public sector, which is where western degree-holders are least represented yet while it is directly responsible for implementing reforms. We tried to assess what the goals and opportunities individuals with a global education represent. For the first time in Ukraine, UIPP polled graduates of western universities, asking them to evaluate their own actual and potential role as agents of change and reformers. More than 200 graduates of some of the most prestigious western universities took part in this survey.

The UIPP team also carried out a series of expert interviews with politicians, experts and representatives of civil society in Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and Lithuania. With the support of the Fulbright Program in Ukraine, UIPP also held thematic discussions with representatives of western scholarship programs and the donor community over June and July 2014, as well as focus groups involving politicians and members of western university alumni associations in October 2014 that considered the role of young professionals and global education in social transformations.

This aspect of our analysis was also underpinned with the experience of Visegrad countries, which themselves traveled the path to EU membership not that long ago. Four case studies were delivered by the project co-executors, the Center for EU Enlargement Studies at the Central European University (Hungary), the Institute of International Relations (Czechia), the European Academy of Diplomacy (Poland), and the Pontis Foundation (Slovakia).

This project would have been impossible to carry out without the financial support of the International Visegrad Fund and the assistance of the Fulbright Program in Ukraine. Both organizations have consistently supported democratization in Ukraine and the education of Ukrainian students in the West, meaning that they are working for the substantive renewal of the Ukrainian state.

The project team hopes that this study will launch broad public debate about the transformation of Ukraine's public sector, a change of elites and the role of agents of change in Ukraine, and, in this way, foster the reformation and europeanization of the Ukrainian state.

## The FACEBOOK Generation: A test of the will to reform

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Ukrainian society is experiencing high demand for change, as demonstrated by two revolutions, the Orange Revolution and the Euromaidan Revolution of Dignity that have taken place in the last 10 years. Still, in 23 years of independence, Ukraine remains an unreformed state that is rated one of the poorest in global security<sup>1</sup> and quality of life polls. What is going on? Does Ukraine have any agents for change? Who are they and how might they influence quality transformations in the country?

In contrast to many other post-communist states both to the west and the east of Ukraine, this country failed to change its elites. Historian Yaroslav Hrytsak has categorized Ukraine's leadership since independence into two generations: the Kravchuk-Kuchma generation and the generation of the Heroes and Villains of the Orange Revolution, meaning Yushchenko, Tymoshenko and Yanukovich. The first group came from the old soviet nomenclature, which largely lacked a desire to push for qualitative change in the country. The second group, of course, was raised and promoted by the first one.<sup>2</sup>

Until the Euromaidan, Ukraine was run by people who were shaped by the period of “decomposing socialism,” that is, they were heirs to soviet practices and models of behavior.<sup>3</sup> In particular, a kind of provincialism based on low educational standards and no knowledge of foreign languages could be

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1 According to data from the Legatum Institute, Ukraine's rating for personal security puts it at 107<sup>th</sup> out of 142 countries.

2 Yaroslav Hrytsak, “20 Years of Independence: Three generations of Ukrainian politicians.” <http://www.istpravda.com.ua/articles/2011/07/27/47982/>

3 “How to Get Rid of Post-Sovietness?,” Institute of World Policy, 2012, p. 13.



seen in both generations. The dilatory and inconsistent reforms carried out in the early years of reform only ended up complicating the “rules of play,” while actually enabling highly placed officials to enrich themselves thanks to the “grey zone” between a planned and market economy.<sup>4</sup> In this way, the people responsible for bringing about qualitative change in the country were actually interested only in maintaining the status quo.

Many in Ukraine have put their hopes for agents of change to appear in the younger generation that replaces the post-communist cohort. Nor are such hopes unreasonable: the events experienced by a particular political generation in its youth tend to color its attitudes for many years, and this is manifested in the political process.<sup>5</sup>

Those Ukrainians who were teenagers in the 1990s or just reached majority watched three dimensions of state transformations going on: from central control to a multi-party political system, and from being part of the Soviet Union to being a sovereign state.<sup>6</sup> Subsequently, as the results of a Pew Global Attitudes Survey, those born between 1980 and 1991 have shown far more positive attitudes towards the transition to democracy and a market economy than their parents: democratic government is supported by 37% of the younger generation vs 26% of the older one; market economics got 47% support as opposed to 28%.<sup>7</sup> Support for European integration is up at 54% among younger Ukrainians, according to the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Fund.<sup>8</sup>

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4 Mykola Riabchuk, “The Dubious Strength of a ‘Weak State:’ The Post-Soviet Ukraine in the Nineties”, in Jerzy Macków (Hrsg.), *Autoritarismus in Mittel-und Osteuropa* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2009), p. 266.

5 Kent Jennings, “Residues of a Movement: The aging of the American protest generation,” *American Political Science Review*, 81 (June 1987), p. 368.

6 Taras Kuzio, “Transition in Post Communist States: Triple or quadruple?” *Politics*, 21 (September 2001), pp 168–77.

7 *The Post-Communist Generation in the Former Eastern Bloc*, Pew Research Global Attitudes Project, 2010. <http://www.pewglobal.org/2010/01/20/the-post-communist-generation-in-the-former-eastern-bloc/>

8 *Public attitudes towards European integration in Ukraine*, the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Fund, 2013. <http://dif.org.ua/ua/polls/2013-year/mlfgblfblgmkl.htm>

It's worth noting that, in the Ukrainian context, the term "political generation" can refer to people who differ widely in age. What's significant is not the date of birth but how much or little individual is marked by post-soviet attitudes and models of behavior. Still, the change in the country's elites proved to be not such a direct one. For now, unfortunately, we can conclude that in the battle between the new generation and the post-soviet system, the system appears to still be winning.

In the 23 years that Ukraine has been independent, the new generation has not managed to become an agent of change in the country's political system. One of the leaders of the Euromaidan, Oles Doniy, observed that the brightest members of the new generation have come from the ranks of writers, journalists and performers, political analysts, politicians, and entrepreneurs, but have so far been unable to reach the political Olympus.<sup>9</sup>

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This is somewhat paradoxical, given that Ukraine's young people have already shown three times that they are capable of being catalysts for change. For one thing the "Granite Revolution" started by students became one of the foundations for Ukraine to achieve independence. Students from the University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy were among the first to launch the lengthy "Ukraine Without Kuchma" campaign that foreshadowed the Orange Revolution. The role of youth organizations and students in the Orange Revolution was decisive. And finally, the Euromaidan revolution of 2013-2014 also started with student protests against the failure to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union. In all of these cases, young people demonstrated a clear and active civic position, yet after each event came to an end, they remained outside the formal political system.

There are several reasons for this. First of all, the post-soviet political system by its very nature prevents the younger generation from joining politics and does everything in its power to keep the political culture of the young down. For instance, after the Granite Revolution, its activists could not run for the Verkhovna Rada because the lower age limit was 25. Young party or-

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9 Nadia Diuk, "The Next Generation in Russia, Ukraine and Azerbaijan: Youth, politics, identities and change," 2012, p. 45.

ganizations are not the place where young politicians are formed, where they can gain some experience or influence policy-making, but simply a “support system” for posting flyers, filling the ranks at rallies, propagandizing, and so on.<sup>10</sup>

The mechanism for selection into the elites is also biased. Experts have identified four sources for the formation of Ukraine’s political elite: business, administrative access, family and personal ties, and activism in party politics when the individuals start their political careers from the lowest rungs. Yet, this last source, which is actually the primary political vehicle in the West, is the least used in Ukraine.<sup>11</sup> In this manner, the “change of political generations will take place by imposing to the people those positions who are neither professionally nor morally acceptable to society.”<sup>12</sup> This almost guarantees that the *crème de la crème* will not necessarily be able to join the major league of politics.

Meanwhile, young Ukrainians are permeated with a spirit of negativism. They don’t trust politicians or social agencies. Based on a 2013 study by the Democratic Initiatives Fund, 68% of young people either partly or completely distrust the President of Ukraine, 78.9% distrust the Verkhovna Rada and 71.8% distrust the Government.

Ukraine’s post-soviet administrative bodies, which, in fact, largely serve to enrich the officials running them and not to develop the country, have little attraction for young civic activists. Journalists from the Big Idea social initiatives counted only four political organizations that actually represent the interests of young people and are represented by them.<sup>13</sup> And still, they have failed to penetrate big politics so far.<sup>14</sup>

10 Stadnyk M., Bohachuk S., “The role of youth in building an independent state.” [http://www.rusnauka.com/35\\_OINBG\\_2012/Politologia/4\\_122406.doc.htm](http://www.rusnauka.com/35_OINBG_2012/Politologia/4_122406.doc.htm)

11 “How can we change the quality of the political elite in Ukraine,” a lecture by Volodymyr Fesenko, 2012. <http://polit.ua/lectures/2012/02/28/fesenko.html>

12 Serhiy Parkhomenko-Bahrianiy, “Changing the elites and reviving Ukraine,” *Volyn Weekly*, Issue №1049. <http://volyn.rivne.com/ua/1638>

13 “Youth on the march,” April 6, 2012. <https://biggggidea.com/practices/643/>

14 “Young people are disillusioned today but still want to be active citizens,” Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Fund. [http://www.dif.org.ua/ua/events/molod\\_naiya.htm](http://www.dif.org.ua/ua/events/molod_naiya.htm)

One of these organizations, the Democratic Alliance or Demaliance, is well known for its active anti-corruption efforts. Its leader, 31 year-old Vasyl Hatsko, states that the fact that his party refuses financial support from Big Business on principle has allowed it to maintain its independence and objectiveness—at the cost of restricting its short-term options, including effective promotion.<sup>15</sup> New political forces lack the resources to break the system. As one illustration, the Democratic Alliance managed to pick up only two seats on the Kyiv City Council in the last election.

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What is worse, those young people who manage to get elected to office either accept the rules of the game or become its victims. “Post-soviet institutions tend to regenerate themselves continuously, as they reward individuals for putting the maximum of effort into gaining personal benefit from the status quo and not into changing or breaking it. Young politicians who don’t even remember the Soviet Union nevertheless easily adopt soviet modes of behavior and adapt themselves to the existing situation.”<sup>16</sup> In short, a mere change of generations is not enough to change the actual system.

Meanwhile, honest professionals often have no chance to perform effectively within the existing political system. This was amply evident in the Cabinet appointments based on the “Maidan quota,” after the Euromaidan revolution of 2013-2014. High profile civic activists like Yegor Sobolev and Tetiana Chornovol were given bodies to run that were not given official status to this day and therefore have no political clout whatsoever: the Lustration Committee and the Anti-Corruption Policy Agency.

In the end, the problem with elite is a reflection of problems within the society as a whole. The current generation of young people has adopted many soviet attitudes. For instance, a study called “Ukraine’s Youth” run by the Horschhenin Institute in 2012 revealed that 68.3% of young people thought that it was best to look for work with the help of family and friends. In addition, most young people, 84.6%, said that it was hard to be successful in Ukraine and 50.8% thought this was easier abroad.

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15 UIPP interview with Vasyl Hatsko, September 18, 2014.

16 “How can we get rid of post-sovietism?” Institute of World Policy, 2012, p. 22.

## The role of education in social change

Although it should be one of factors in the development of the individual, especially of young people, education does nothing to improve the situation in Ukraine today, but is more likely to maintain the status quo. Outdated curricula, corruption in post-secondary institutions, the decline of intellectual values, and the isolation of Ukrainian scientific endeavors from global scientific discourse all conspire to create a vicious cycle of post-sovietism in the country. Moreover, this situation is hardly accidental: politicians determine what kind of society they want to run and the educational system embodies their vision.<sup>17</sup> As a consequence, many talented and promising young people go abroad to study, and often to work as well.

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In an age of globalization, American researchers have identified studying abroad as an investment in the future. According to one study by Pennsylvania State University, studying abroad fosters personal growth and gives the person new ways of thinking and a different picture of the world itself.

The Governments of EU countries, Canada and the US allocate money from their state budgets both for their young people to study abroad and for foreign students to have opportunities to gain an education in a mature democracy. Not long ago, the Danish Minister of Education proposed reforming the system of funding for universities by offering these institutions additional money, not for the number of foreign students studying at them, but for the number of Danes whom they have sent abroad to study.

Obviously, in and of itself, education abroad cannot guarantee a change in mentality. However, it can help students develop those qualities that are help-

<sup>17</sup> [http://betterevidence.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/better\\_uk\\_policy\\_practice\\_sample\\_article.pdf](http://betterevidence.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/better_uk_policy_practice_sample_article.pdf)

ful when reforming a country. Kakha Bendukidze, the ideologist of Georgian reforms, said that education abroad fosters the uprooting of post-soviet ways of thinking, although he said that the main factor was not the education per se but the environment.<sup>18</sup> One National Deputy of Ukraine who represents the younger generation, Lesia Orobets, confirms this: graduates of western institutions are geared towards performance “and not towards pretty fairytales about why something didn’t work.”<sup>19</sup> Ukraine’s ex Minister of Economy Pavlo Sheremeta says that a western education develops a clear vision and the ability to communicate this vision.<sup>20</sup>

A number of post-soviet states have already placed their money on teams with foreign experience when it comes to reforming their stats. Possibly the most striking success story here is Georgia.

## 14 Georgia

It would be wrong to explain Georgia’s achievements solely based on the human factor, but it should not be underestimated, either. Mikheil Saakashvili, himself a graduate of Columbia University in New York, gathered around him a team of ambitious Georgians scattered all over the world and allowed them to apply the skills and experience they had gained abroad. They were exceptional not only by their western degrees but also by their youth and the absence, for most of them, of links to their predecessors.<sup>21</sup> In this way, people who were focused on reform came to power, not people inclined to take advantage of their office for personal gain.

Irakli Porchkhidze, First Deputy Minister for Reintegration under the Saakashvili Administration, was himself a graduate of both US and Hungarian universities. As he tells it, the new leaders of reform in Georgia were inspired by the example of those countries where they had had a chance to

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18 UIPP interview with Kakha Bendukidze, May 15, 2014.

19 UIPP interview with Lesia Orobets, July 30, 2014.

20 UIPP interview with Pavlo Sheremeta, July 16, 2014.

21 <http://georgia.iwp.org.ua/eng/public/47.html>

live. In addition to this, they were motivated by the prospects of developing a serious career and earning a decent salary.

*ADVICE FROM GEORGIA*

To ensure that Georgian government officials earned a competitive salary, the Saakashvili team turned to the UN Development Program and a slew of private donors. This allowed them to gather enough funds to pay for the first six months of their work. Later on, the salaries of civil servants were paid out of the state budget, which was increased through additional tax revenues. A famous radical step taken in Georgia was cutting back the state payroll, which also made it possible to optimize salaries for civil servants. Over 2004-2005, the civil service pay scale was thus increased 15-fold.

## Kazakhstan

Georgia is not the only post-soviet country that has actively taken advantage of the intellectual capital represented by graduates from western educational institutions. A second interesting example is Kazakhstan. Recognizing the new global challenges facing his country, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev began to invest in the formation of a new elite. In 2013, the Bolashak Program<sup>22</sup> celebrated 20 years since its inception. This program provided scholarships to more than 6,000 Kazakhs. One famous graduate of this program is Bakhurzhan Baibek, first vice president of the Nur Otan Party of Nazarbayev's Deputy Chief-of-Staff Habidullah Abdrakhimov, cardiologist Dmitry Gorbunov and others. Just under half of the Bolashak graduates work in the public sector and state enterprises, while 55% are applying their skills in private business.

The program was sharply criticized over the way it selected individuals for study abroad in the most prestigious universities around the world. For one thing, it was oriented primarily towards giving a ticket to a promising future for the children of officials and their relatives. Over time, the rules for getting a scholarship became more transparent, a mechanism for public monitoring

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22 <http://bolashak.kz/ru>

was introduced, and the government committed itself to ensuring that graduates would have opportunities to apply their knowledge upon their return.

Given the relatively small number of participants in this program, it is hard to assess its impact on the formation of a qualitatively new national establishment. Interestingly, while there is demand for graduates of western post-secondary institutions to carry out economic reforms in Kazakhstan, but they have had little impact on democratic transformations in their society.

## Lithuania

The European Union has been investing in student exchange and mobility programs for many years now. In this context, the experience of another post-soviet country, Lithuania, is an interesting case.

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“Create for Lithuania,” a program that was launched in September 2012, is a relatively new, yet successful example of how to involve young specialists with western diplomas in modernizing their society. Its director, Akvile Svolskiene, recalls how headhunters invited her to coordinate this initiative while she was living abroad and in charge of a program that involved work with graduates at a major Scandinavian corporation. The chance to return to Lithuania intrigued her, especially as this particular program was an initiative by Milda Darguzaitė, the executive director of the Invest in Lithuania state agency, who had herself lived abroad for 17 years. As in the case with Georgia, the program had the support of Government officials, especially the Lithuanian Minister of Economy, Rimantas Julius.

The program involved rotating among three state agencies during the course of an annual contract and working on specific projects that were already part of the Government’s Action Plan. Although the Lithuanians had gotten funding from the EU, the pay for participants in the program was at the level of a mid-range civil servant in Lithuania. Young Lithuanian professionals explain their reason for participating as being driven by a desire to bring change to their countries based on examples they had seen abroad. As one of the co-founders of the program, Svolskiene admits that, in addition to pa-



triotism, the participants are attracted by the possibility of really having an impact on the situation in their country. They work on high-level strategic projects, their status is also high, they have access to key government officials, and they report directly to the country's Prime Minister. In this way, Lithuania has been able to attract the best quality human resources to work on important state objectives.

The actual scale of the program is not that large: 20 participants are selected every year. During the first year, seven participants extended their professional activities in state structures, although the purpose of the program is not specifically to find people positions in the civil service. The organizers have pointed out that their main goal is to simply keep these qualified specialists in Lithuania. Svolskiene confidently calls these young professionals agents of change, because even if they do not take a government job or go into politics, they are still opinion makers.

After the coming to power of a new Government in 2013, the program was expanded at the regional level as well. President Dalia Grybauskaitė, whose team also includes advisors with western degrees, considers emigrating for an education an integral component of a free and open society. As she puts it, the only way to hold on to people is to invest into every individual, in their education and access to economic opportunities upon returning. "Lithuanians abroad are critically important for the success of Lithuania," Grybauskaitė says. "Their knowledge, ideas and connections make our country more competitive and attractive to the world."<sup>23</sup>

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## The Visegrad Four

The historical context of the Visegrad Four in the post-communist period provided the conditions for dissidents and oppositional movements to come to power and take up public office. Not many of the opinion-makers and state managers of the time had taken degrees abroad, but most of them had well-established contacts with colleagues in the mature democracies.

23 <http://www.ltuworld.com/homes/item/530-president-grybauskaitė-lithuanians-abroad-are-crucial-for-lithuania-s-success>

At the beginning after the Visegrad countries gained independence, social transformations were slow, but the promise of EU membership mobilized both politicians and Government officials. One interesting case is Slovakia, which, after being labeled the “black hole” at the heart of Europe in the 1990s, transformed itself into the “Tiger of the Tatry” [Mountains] in mere 10 years. One of the spurs to reform was the position of the European Commission in 1997, which decided not to include Bratislava in accession talks because the country had failed to meet the Copenhagen criteria.

In general, the process of European integration itself became the catalyst for social transformations in the countries of the Visegrad Group. The Governments of Poland, Czechia, Slovakia and Hungary all set up European integration departments. A key role began to be played by Ministries of Foreign Affairs and interagency negotiating teams. Although for the most part these consisted of adherents of the old school, just about every Visegrad Government had a few stand-out leaders with a western education or experience.

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These included such negotiators from Czechia as Pavel Telicka and Cyril Svoboda, who had interned at universities in the States. In Hungary, a graduate of Strasbourg University, Endre Juhasz, was the main negotiator for accession to the EU at the end of the 1990s and in 2002-2004 was Minister for European Integration.

From the beginning of the 1990s, the Hungarian Government had around 13 individuals holding ministerial portfolios who had had some experience studying abroad. Still, a western diploma was not seen as a criterion in the process of selecting civil servants. Indeed, Hungarian Foreign Ministry officials of the time most typically had diplomas from the Moscow State University of International Relations.

With EU accession, the market for specialists with a global education from the Visegrad countries expanded. Those who had earlier handled negotiations or worked in foreign policy in their countries began to build careers in European institutions. For instance, Czechia’s Marek Mora, who had degrees from German universities and had worked in the European Commission, now became State Secretary for European Affairs while his country held

the EU presidency. This then allowed him to direct the Private Office of the Secretary-General of the European Council.

None of the four Visegrad countries embarked on a consistent program of reform that involved engaging graduates of western universities in their administrations, other than internship programs at individual ministries and student loan programs. At the same time, an analysis of such initiatives shows that they were not that effective, especially as access to loan money to study abroad was complicated

Hungary made two attempts to launch programs to repatriate intellectual capital. The first one, launched in 2003 under name “Project Homecoming,” was intended to provide incentive for successful specialists to return to their homeland, especially by getting potential employers in a variety of spheres interested in them. The initiative was supported by the then Minister of Education Balint Magyar, but it gave few results because of lack of public funds, even after Hungary joined the EU.

The second attempt by Hungary was more successful. Started in 2013 with the Ministry of Human Capital, the “Come on Home” Foundation’s program focuses not only on graduates of foreign educational institutions but also on Hungarians who work or live abroad. It supports the work of the Career Development Center for those who want to return and work in Hungary. During its first year, the Center received more than 100 applications from Hungarian citizens living abroad. Still, studies suggest that efforts on the part of the third sector are not enough to achieve serious progress in attracting professionals with an international education or work experience to the country. The situation becomes more complicated by red tape in the shape of an overly-complex procedure for recognizing foreign degrees in Hungary.

In Poland, ministries and government agencies engaged graduates of western institutions largely on an individual basis. Until recently, the front-runner in this process was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The previous FM and currently Marshall [Speaker] of the Sejm Radoslaw Sikorski was the first member of Government who was publicly recognized thanks to his international experience, including a degree from Oxford. He launched the policy of

supporting student initiatives in Poland: the MFA organizes visits by Polish Members of Government to British universities and invites student delegations to come on study tours to its offices.

However, since 2012, with the coming of Bartolomei Sienkiewicz to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, this Ministry has been the most successful example of attracting young professionals with international experience to the civil service. The MIA would sign project-style contracts with such specialists that gave them full tax breaks, which effectively allowed them to be paid a larger salary. Still, this practice was widely written about in the Polish press and gained a large number of critics.

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Overall, the higher ranks of Poland's executive branch have already had quite a few graduates of foreign post-secondary institutions. One of the best examples is Pawel Swieboda, who is currently the director of the DEMOSEuropa analytical department. Previously he was the director of the European Union Department under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was he who was responsible for the final round of negotiations regarding Poland's accession to the European Union, which garnered him the unofficial epithet as "the man who brought Poland to the European Union." Among other graduates from western institutions in the Polish Government are Finance Minister Mateusz Szczurek and Deputy FMs Mikolaj Dowgielewicz and Rafal Czarkowski.

## Ukraine: How really necessary are reformers?

Ukrainian society has been demonstrating its attraction to European values and principles of governance for years now. In November 2013, Ukrainian citizens came out on the Maidan to show their support for human rights, a fair system of justice, an equal playing field for competition, and other declared basic principles of democracy.

There is huge demand in Ukraine for western experience and best international practice. Since the 1990s, hundreds of technical assistance programs have been carried out with the support of the European Union, which is the largest donor in Ukraine. Specialists from other countries have been advising Ukrainian Governments for years, as professionals in every sphere that has been declared a reform priority. At the same time, there are quite a few Ukrainian specialists with foreign diplomas and experience working in model democracies. Can these individuals become agents of change in Ukraine, the way it happened 10 years ago in Georgia? Is today's leadership prepared to engage this human capital for the sake of modernization, the way that their Georgian, Polish and Lithuanian counterparts have done?

According to the UN, more than 390,000 Ukrainians have studied abroad since 1998.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, this number is growing with every passing year. Most of them choose universities in Europe and North America. "Over the last five years, the number of Ukrainian citizens studying in Polish post-secondary institutions has tripled, it has doubled in Spain, Italy and Canada, and it has grown 41% in Czechia, Austria and Great Britain. [...] Altogether,

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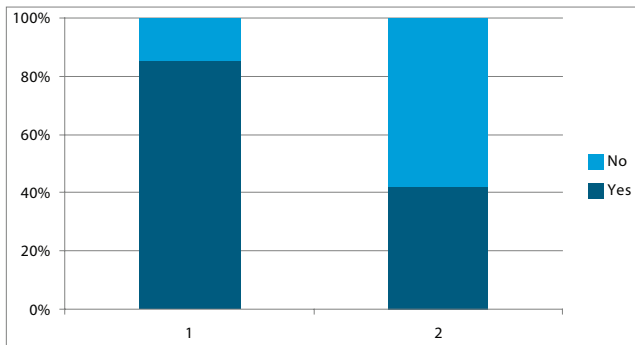
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24 [https://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=UNESCO&f=series%3AED\\_FSOABS](https://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=UNESCO&f=series%3AED_FSOABS)

the number of Ukrainian students in EU countries has grown 38% in the last five years.”<sup>25</sup>

There are no definite figures regarding the number of graduates who have returned to Ukraine. According to programs funded by the EU, nearly 60% of Ukrainians return to their homeland. This is also confirmed by a UIPP survey of graduates of western universities (see Fig. 1).

Figure 1. Graduates returning home



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1. Did you return to your homeland after your studies?
2. Were you required to return to your homeland as one of the conditions of your educational program?

Source: UIPP survey

Still, western donors make it perfectly clear that returning students to their homeland is not their purpose. Some countries, like Poland, are openly looking for an influx of migrants to replace their own brain drain to other countries. French diplomats have confirmed in unofficial conversations that the purpose of their country’s educational exchange programs is to establish a “circle of friends” for France, regardless of where these people eventually end up working. In this way, the incentive is there for Ukrainians to eventually to stay abroad. The question is, is there incentive to come home?

Since the country became independent, Ukraine’s government entities have not demonstrated any demand for Ukrainians with foreign degrees and

<sup>25</sup> <http://life.pravda.com.ua/society/2014/02/17/152708/>

diplomas. Not one government agency even collects basic information about the number of Ukrainian students in one country or another.

Certainly, there is a budget-funded program in Ukraine for undergraduates and graduate students to study and intern abroad. The program is oriented, among others, on specialists in the natural sciences, engineering and technology.<sup>26</sup> According to the Education Ministry, the state budget supported 275 individuals from 36 domestic post-secondary institutions in the 2011/2012 school year: 106 students, 82 graduate students, and 87 teaching professionals. This is a miniscule number compared to a total of more than 2.5 million students currently attending such institutions in Ukraine. This means that the overwhelming majority of those who might want to get a foreign degree will have to look for someone to sponsor a scholarship or pay for their own educations.

By contrast, during the period when eurointegration was a component of foreign policy, declared back during the Kuchma Administration, thousands of civil servants were able to learn about public administration in Europe, the US and Canada through study tours and exchange programs that were part of international technical assistance programs.

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Yet the effectiveness of such measures to expand experience is typically low for a number of reasons. Firstly, the selection of candidates is typically done without clearly stated criteria, making it more of a junket for the lucky participants. Secondly, there is no mechanism for monitoring to what extent the practices of one country or another were actually introduced in Ukraine. Thirdly, this kind of experience makes the CVs of the participants more attractive to the private sector, which can lead to a drain of the most competitive personnel from the civil service.

## Attempts at engagement

At no stage of its development has the Ukrainian government ever set itself the goal of qualitatively renewing its own personnel. So at the state

<sup>26</sup> [http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/uk/publish/article?art\\_id=245593826&cat\\_id=24427721](http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/uk/publish/article?art_id=245593826&cat_id=24427721)

level, other than isolated drop-in-the-ocean efforts, there have never been systemic initiatives to bring young professionals with western diplomas back home to Ukraine in order to capitalize on their skills. When European integration became a domestic and foreign policy priority after the Orange Revolution, then-Deputy Premier for European Integration Hryhoriy Nemyria underscored the need to engage graduates of European studies to work in the Government. However, because of the uncompetitive salaries being offered, his offer was unattractive to most professionals.

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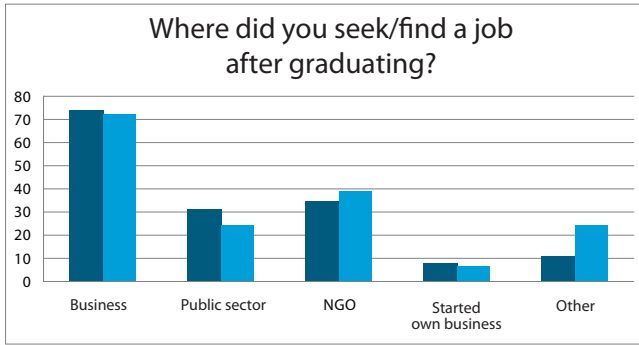
Another attempt to engage specialists with foreign experience was the establishment of the Economic Reform Coordination Center under the Yanukovych Administration in 2010. The Center put together a team that included specialists with foreign experience. According to the Presidential Decree on this Coordination Center, its employees were to be given open access to any information regarding economic reform. What's more, some of them were asked to work as advisors whose pay was funded from extra-budgetary sources on a competitive basis. But because of the consultative nature of its activities, the Coordination Center had no instruments for really influencing the decision-making process and hence on the reforms announced by the then leadership of Ukraine.

### Profile of a graduate

**B**ased on UIPP survey, most graduates looked for work in the private sector after returning to Ukraine. The second most popular employment among foreign diploma-holders was the non-state sector. The civil service was only in third place (see Fig. 2).



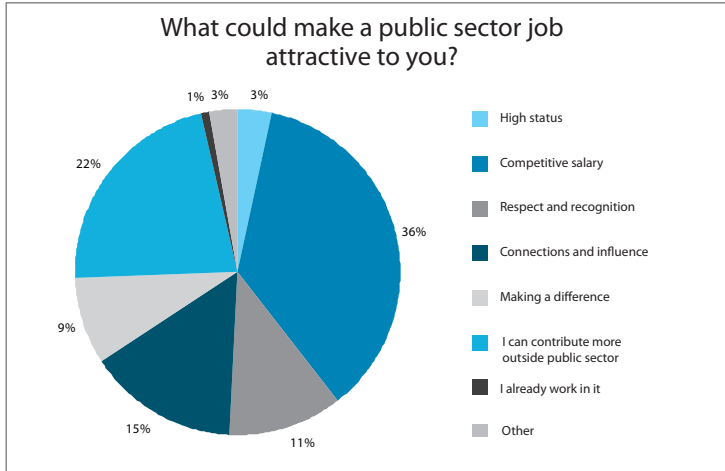
Figure 2. Job-seeking graduates



Source: UIPP survey

The impression is that if graduates from post-secondary institutions do find work in Ukraine's government offices, this is not because of but despite state policy and lack of support. Moreover, most Ukrainian universities do not participate in European mobility programs, which means that their students cannot include any time spent studying abroad as part of their academic requirements. What's worse, diplomas from even the most prestigious foreign universities are not recognized in Ukraine and the process of nostrifying a diploma is strangled in red tape. In addition to that, promising, ambitious graduates are put off by the low salaries and the impossibility of influencing the decision-making process (see Fig 3).

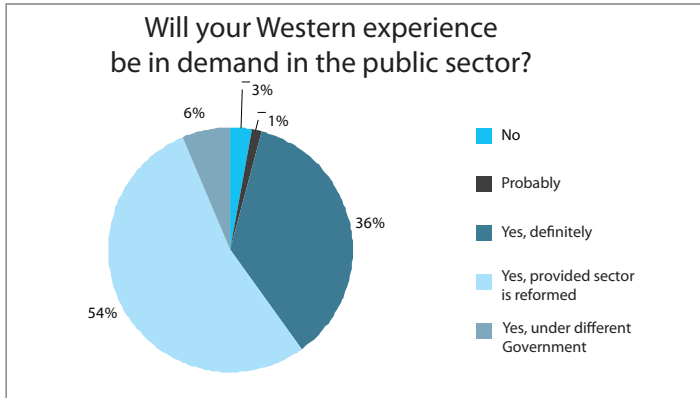
Figure 3. Attitudes towards public sector employment among graduates



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Nearly all respondents, 97%, stated that they could successfully apply the experience they had gained abroad in the public sector. However, 60% said that their skills would be useful if the civil service were reformed (54%) or there was a different Government (6%) (see Fig. 4).

Figure 4. Demand for international experience in the public sector

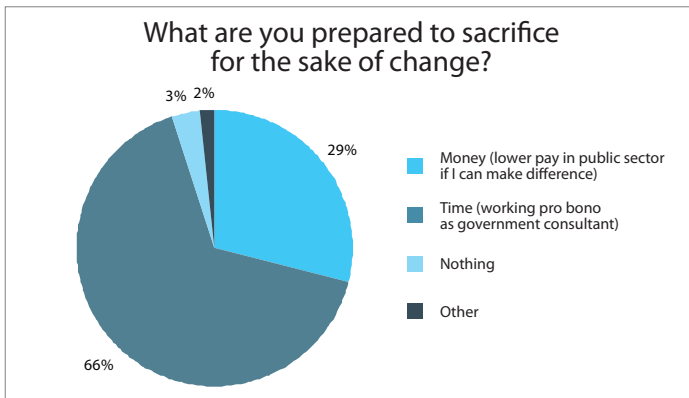


Source: UIPP survey

As mentioned, low salaries are one of the factors that discourage graduates from trying a career in the civil service. Still, the results of the survey show that 29% are prepared to sacrifice pay if they can effect change, while 60% are prepared to work on a pro bono basis as consultants (see Fig. 5).

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Figure 5. Readiness of graduates to sacrifice for the sake of change



Source: UIPP survey

Indeed, graduates of western institutions demonstrate this willingness not in mere words. After the Euromaidan revolution, a group of such individuals launched an initiative called “Professional Government.”<sup>27</sup> This initiative brought together more than 20 associations of alumni of foreign universities and programs in Ukraine and has registered more than 2,000 CVs. Recognizing the need to revive human resources in government agencies and to deracinate post-soviet habits and approaches, the initiative’s leaders turned to the country’s political leadership with a proposal to cooperate on both a paid and unpaid basis. According to Yuriy Lubkovych, the coordinator of the Alumni Club of British Columbia (Canada), those who studied in the West are not better than others, but they can add international experience that is desperately needed in Ukraine today.<sup>28</sup>

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In his recently-presented “Strategy 2020,” the President declared one of the tasks of the reformer team to renew the ranks of government agencies by 70%. It seems that the “Professional Government” initiative came at just the right time. However, so far there has not been any active cooperation between it and state institutions.

During the first months after the initiative was launched, an entire slew of ministries and agencies responded to the proposition. The most active among these were the SBU, Ukraine’s security agency, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, and the Education Ministry. National Deputies also invited individual members to work for them. Still, demand soon dropped off among the ministries. The number of people actually placed in positions is half as big as the number of requests from government agencies. As of now, around 40 graduates have been placed with government offices by the initiative, which can hardly be considered a large-scale renewal of personnel in the state apparatus.

Pavlo Sheremeta was one of the new faces in the Ukrainian Government: a renowned economist with global study and work experience. In the end, however, he only worked as Minister of Economic Development for six

<sup>27</sup> <http://proukrgov.info/about>

<sup>28</sup> [http://ipress.ua/articles/spetsialisty\\_iz\\_zakordonnoyu\\_osvitoju\\_ne\\_krashchi\\_prosto\\_ihniy\\_dosvid\\_potribnyy\\_ukraini\\_68041.html](http://ipress.ua/articles/spetsialisty_iz_zakordonnoyu_osvitoju_ne_krashchi_prosto_ihniy_dosvid_potribnyy_ukraini_68041.html)

months. Sheremeta was one of the first to invite a team of advisors with western diplomas to come work, albeit on a pro bono basis. Still, none of this led to significant change within the Ministry.

As Sheremeta himself put it, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade has nearly 1,300 employees working in 45 departments. He calculated that this number could easily be shortened to one quarter without affecting the work of the agency and while continuing to perform all its necessary functions. Unfortunately, the existing system works mainly for self-preservation: enormous red tape to dismiss employees and SBU reviews of new applicants on one hand, and an enormous workload in other areas on the minister himself on the other effectively make reform of the ministry's personnel impossible. Sheremeta's experience shows that under the current conditions it's very important to parachute into government agencies in teams, as trying to fight the system solo is practically impossible.

Former Minister of Internal Affairs Yuriy Lutsenko thinks likewise. He says that appointing a single person with western experience or even 10 graduates from prestigious universities will not affect the system. Lutsenko says that the pyramidal hierarchy needs to be replaced completely by so-called desks, where managers who are responsible for specific areas work. Alumni of western institutions themselves say that their experience will become useful for the public sector only on condition that the civil service is reformed.

Nicu Popescu, who received his PhD at the Central European University and was an advisor to the Prime Minister of Moldova, is convinced that engaging specialists as temporary advisors and consultants on a pro bono basis is utopian thinking. A Government needs people who are completely engaged on specific issues in depth, that is that they are full-time employed. Partly engaging or offering short-term employment is inadequate to achieve measurable results. Still, at this stage, Ukraine's leadership don't seem prepared to offer western graduates what Lithuania and Georgia did: status, access to key individuals responsible for decisions, and specific strategic projects.

## How possible is it to bring about change from the outside?

How ready the government machine will be to change and how much it will resist such changes depends on the capacity of the public to shape society-wide demand for reforms. The mobilization of civil society in Ukraine has been taking on more and more shape, shifting its focus from street actions to working in civil society organizations and the press. This has been supported by the significant volume of international technical assistance provided to Ukraine in support of its eurointegrational course.

30 A strong expert environment has been active in Ukraine for some time now. Still, the lack of mechanisms for effective interaction with those responsible for decision-making, the NGO community and think-tanks have not had many levers with which to influence officials or elected deputies. Even after 2005, the concepts of the strengthened expert community, which has been studying western transformation experience in depth, still remained on the shelves of their creators. Community Councils attached to ministries were largely window-dressing.

The historic events of Winter 2014 provided a new push to mobilize community activists and specialists in a variety of spheres who sensed the inevitability of the coming changes. It was as part of this development that the civic initiative, “Reanimation Reform Package,” came to life and its activity led to the drafting of 10 bills in less than a year that were passed in the Verkhovna Rada. This was possible to achieve because, on one hand, the state machine was not capable of independently producing quality legislation to regulate urgent problems, and on the other, because pressure was being put on the government by the international community, civil society in Ukraine, and the press.

This all makes it possible to say that a definite pressure group has taken shape among Ukraine’s civil society experts that has *de facto* temporarily taken on some of the functions of the government machine, which under the present circumstances has proved unable to carry out the task of managing change. Some of these community members have had a quality education

abroad and are attempting to institute international principles for organizing public administration in Ukraine.

Other individuals, even without a western diploma, have already taken up the examples of reform in neighboring countries and EU members thanks to the investments of the international donor community in developing civil society in Ukraine. One of the most important sources of such support was the Visegrad Four. Funding from their Governments was fairly limited, but concentrated on the most important areas. In fact, however, the most outstanding impact on the state and progress of civil society in Ukraine came from cooperation with Visegrad NGOs.

Social transformations and international practice are beginning to change the habitual homogeneity of Ukraine's political environment. After the snap VR election in October 2014, the composition of the legislature has gained considerable variety through the coming of faces that are far from typical for it. For instance, graduates of leading western universities, civic activists and well-known journalists have gained seats in the Verkhovna Rada through the party lists of various political forces. This gives reason to confirm the considerable pent-up demand among Ukrainian voters for politicians of the new generation, which the leading parties have attempted to satisfy. Although the critical mass of such reformers in Ukrainian politics is far from reached, the irreversibility of this process looks beyond any doubt.

## Conclusions and recommendations

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The main conclusion from the debate organized by UIPP around the prospects of social transformations in Ukraine and the role of young people and global education in this process was stated by Kakha Bendukidze. He stated that Ukraine has little choice at this point between evolutionary progress and radical approaches to change. The real choice is between a reform process that is radical but directed, where the Government deliberately starts making dramatic cutbacks in budget spending and in the government machine, fundamental changes in the principles under which it operates and how it runs its economic policies, and a process that is radical and out-of-control. The latter is the price of rejecting the first scenario and will lead to economic collapse, a frozen political crisis, and ultimately a failed state.

The experience of social transformations in post-soviet countries appears to confirm that the decisive role in the deliberate choice of a country's development scenario and its successful accomplishment is played by young people and those who possess global knowledge and experience as agents of change capable of generating public demand for reforms and of carrying such reforms through. The recommendations of the Ukrainian, Georgian, Moldovan and Lithuanian experts who were interviewed in the course of this study point to an urgent need to institute state policy in regard to these nine aspects:

- ◇ Undertake a complete **revision of the functions of the government machine** and a rejection of all those that are not fundamental to its effective functioning in a democratic society with a market economy.



- ◇ Follow the reduction in government by the necessary **reduction in the numbers of civil servants** in as short a time as possible. The resulting civil service should include only so many positions as are minimally necessary to carry out the new set of functions.
- ◇ Shortening the size of the government payroll will make it possible to save considerable public funds for the operation of the government machine, part of which should be directed at **significantly raising the salaries in the public sector**, which should become more competitive on the labor market.
- ◇ Simplify and make maximally transparent the process of hiring and firing civil servants to remove bureaucratic barriers and eliminate administrative resistance to a qualitative revival of the civil service. At the same time, draw up clearly specified rules for the **hiring, firing and promoting people in the civil service**. Together with a competitive salary, this should make it possible to attract human capital with a strong sense of responsibility and motivation.
- ◇ Shift the principles for dividing responsibilities among the managers of executive bodies to a flatter hierarchy that **delegates responsibility down the line to sub-units and makes them accountable for carrying out state policy in specific areas**, along the lines of the western concept of a “desk officer.” This will allow for the decentralization of individual government agencies and prevent influence from being concentrated in the hands of the director and the director’s deputies.
- ◇ **Pilot new principles and approaches to organizing the civil service** on the example of a single executive body will make it possible to minimize risks and overcome the lack of political will and administrative resistance at the early stages of reforming the government machine and to generate a success story that will satisfy public demand for serious reforms.

- ◇ **Drop the requirement to nostrify a foreign diploma** and draw up a list of world universities whose diplomas will be automatically recognized in Ukraine, which will remove some of the red tape and offer better conditions for graduates of western universities to return to Ukraine and to hire them in the public sector.
- ◇ During the period while the government machine is being reformed, **set up the position of Government ombudsman or state secretary for reform** with enough authority and hold an open competition with clearly stated professional criteria and requirements, open publication of all CVs preliminary selected among applicants, and an independent vetting commission including specialists in public administration with an international reputation. The presence of a global education or professional experience should be one of the criteria for selecting candidates for this position. At the same time, there should be an effective **mechanism for lateral coordination between the Government ombudsman for reform and the National Reform Council**<sup>29</sup> under the office of the President of Ukraine.
- ◇ **Institute a program for awarding bonuses to civil servants** who perform the best in implementing reforms, together with international donors. To prevent violations of the law on the civil service, these can be issued by a specially set up non-state fund in the form of an honorarium for an honorary lesson or publication. This kind of prize should be issued upon the decision of an independent commission following a review of the previous year's performance and should be the equivalent of the gross salary of a civil servant for that period.
- ◇ **Institute the option of interning and/or finding employment in the public sector** in a suitable position in their specialization over a specific period of time as **part of a scholarship program** set up jointly with donors, for studying abroad.

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29 <http://zakon0.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/644/2014>

## Experts who were interviewed in the framework of research “Western Education – a Tool for Europeanization of Ukraine?”<sup>30</sup>

**Akvile Svolkienė**, Director, Create for Lithuania Program

**Vasyl Hatsko**, leader, Democratic Alliance (DemAlliance)

**Irakli Proshkhidze**, co-founder and Vice President of the Georgian Institute for Strategic Studies

**Kakha Bendukidze**, Chair of the Board of the Free University of Georgia, Minister for the Coordination of Reforms 2004-2008

**Lesia Orobets**, National Deputy of Ukraine

**Nadia Diuk**, Vice President, National Endowment for Democracy

**Natalia Buhayova**, CEO, Kyiv Post

**Nicu Popescu**, Senior Analyst, EU Institute for Strategic Studies

**Pavlo Sheremeta**, Minister of Economic Development and Trade of Ukraine (2014)

**Yaroslav Hrytsak**, historian, Professor at the Ukrainian Catholic University

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<sup>30</sup> Titles are those at the time of the interview.