

## Country Profile: Ukraine

Ukraine is the second largest country in Europe, covering some 600,000 square kilometres bordered by Russian, Poland, Belarus, Slovakia, Hungary, Moldova, and Romania. It has a population of about 40 million people. The capital is Kyiv (Kiev).

Ukraine became an independent semi-Presidential parliamentary State in 1991. A new Constitution was adopted on 26 June 1996 declaring Ukraine a Republic and including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and 24 Oblasti (administrative regions).

Ukraine is by now well known as the 'breadbasket of the world'. While there is extensive agriculture, there are also steel works, manufacturing and service industries. The majority of employed persons (61.2%) work in the services sector. The IT sector has been widely acknowledged as booming. The number of IT specialists increased by almost 150% between 2011 and 2016 and the sector shows 26% annual growth, making it the fastest growing sector in the country. Small and medium enterprises form 99% of business. The industry sector employs 25.1%, while only 13.7% work in agriculture. In reshaping and rebuilding the future Ukraine, a need for a modern environmentally informed construction industry to 'build back better' is acknowledged<sup>1</sup>.

Educational attainment is high, and 'compared the OECD average, Ukrainians are clearer at age 15 about their ambitions for working life, and occupations commonly entered through VET programmes are high on the list<sup>2</sup>'. Over 60% of people under age 35 have tertiary level qualifications. Ukraine has one of the highest enrolment rates for higher education in the world. A total of 70% of secondary school graduates go to university and 82% of unemployed people in Ukraine have completed higher education (45%) or vocational training (37%). Ukraine is an acknowledged 'powerhouse' for highly skilled platform workers, providing freelance web-based and IT services in web and graphic design, programming/IT, multimedia, marketing, copywriting, web and graphic design, programming/IT, multimedia<sup>3</sup>.

Ukraine has for many years experienced fluid emigration and migration of both highly skilled and blue collar workers; the European Training Foundation summarise that in 2020, 6.1 million people born in Ukraine resided outside the country, while 5 million foreign-born people lived in Ukraine (equivalent to 11% of the population), suggesting that talent partnerships and the recognition of prior learning (RPL) in VET and workplace learning can contribute to both current host countries and to the ultimate strengthening of Ukrainian efforts to rebuild in time.

### The system of education

The Ukrainian system of education and training has been systematically modernising since independence; stimuli for reformation include commitment to the Bologna process, the adoption of the National Framework of Qualifications in 2011, and in response to continued subsequent engagement with stakeholders, including close collaboration with EU partners in VET. The new developments are well described on the ENIC NARIC page: [Ukraine - ENIC-NARIC](#). The medium of instruction is Ukrainian across most programmes nationally.

Reform has begun in primary and secondary schools and is set out in a vision document, the 'New Ukrainian School' which describes the EU and other key competences of lifelong learning that inform the curricula and the cross disciplinary abilities that are to be nurtured. The general educational

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<sup>1</sup> [etf skills and migration country fiche ukraine 2021 en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [How vocational education and training \(VET\) systems can support Ukraine \(oecd-ilibrary.org\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [platform work ukraine 0.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

experience is moving from an eleven-year cycle to a twelve year one, between primary (four years), basic secondary (five years), profile (field-specific) and secondary education (three years), in focused high schools or VET centres. It will take some time for this to take full effect, with the first graduates anticipated in 2030.

Basic secondary will have two cycles, an adaptation cycle and the second cycle, and is more oriented towards problem solving and choosing paths in accordance with interests and abilities. Profession-oriented education is either academic or professional; academic education typically aspires towards progression in university and provides for advanced study in some areas. The Professional track supports completion of general secondary education and provides training for a first profession while maintaining possibilities for continuing education. Work is in progress towards implementing the 'new Ukrainian school' model, which focuses less on the acquisition of knowledge and more on application and understanding.

Traditionally school programmes are broad and encompass a wide range of subjects, including e.g. Ukrainian language and literature, Mathematics, a foreign language and literature, History of Ukraine, World History, Geography, Biology, Physics, Environmental education, Science of Law (up to twenty subjects may be covered). Foreign languages begin to be learned in the Basic Education cycle.

Completion of General Secondary Education is marked by the award the Attestat. Where achieved after 2019, this will include Grade 12 (Свідоцтво про здобуття повної загальної середньої освіти). Final examinations test Ukrainian language, History and Mathematics with a small number of other subjects. Students can specialise to some degree in subject choices. Second level education is offered in Gymnasium, Lyceum, Technical Secondary Schools, Colleges, and Vocational Schools. Progression to higher education is traditionally managed by an option of a separate independent examination, the External Independent Evaluation (EIE)/National Multi-subject tests (NMT), although due to COVID and the current crisis this has been somewhat disrupted.

The main qualifications giving access to higher education include the Certificate of Complete General Secondary Education: Аттестат про повну загальну середню освіту ( from 1992-2018), the Certificate of Complete General Secondary Education: Свідоцтво про здобуття повної загальної середньої освіти ( from 2019 onwards), the Diploma of Professional Junior Bachelor Диплом фахового молодшого бакалавра, and the Junior Specialist Diploma (Junior Bachelor Diploma) Диплом молодшого спеціаліста (Диплом молодшого бакалавра). This latter award is being phased out.

VET in Ukraine is also undergoing change, with the development of a range of 'centres of excellence' among some 754 VET institutions. Adaptation is supported by EU partners including through the EU4Skills programme. This supports a re-orientation of standards, programmes and assessment so that there is a greater match between labour market supply and demand and taking account of skills for the future. New standards are developed and published, providing for modularised approaches and based on learning outcomes models. VET spans secondary, pre-higher and professional education, and can be part of short-cycle higher education (EQF Level 5, NFQ Level 6). A dual model has been adopted, providing for both theoretical and skills base.

Higher education is also adapting significantly. From independence in 1991, educational reform was central to governmental policy with successive Acts providing for structural changes that ultimately enabled alignment with the principles and tools of the Bologna Process, to which Ukraine committed in 2005. At that point, a two-cycle system of Bachelor/Specialist/Master was in place, and shortly

thereafter, ECTS (2007) and Diploma Supplements were introduced. ISCED classifications were adopted in 2011 and ultimately four cycles of a Qualifications Framework were adopted, providing for a Doctorate (Philosophy, Arts), Masters, Bachelors, and Junior Bachelors programmes, strictly within the Higher Education Sector, and alongside it in parallel, there were Professional Pre-Higher Education (Short-cycle qualifications) and Professional Qualifications. The programme of educational reform intensified both after 2014, and 2017 as the National Framework of Qualifications continued to be engaged with across stakeholder groups.

From 1991-1996, when the transitional system was phased in, Ukraine followed the Soviet system of education having been part of the USSR until the Union's dissolution in 1991. From 1996 until 2014, a transitional system was in operation wherein Bachelor and Master's degree programmes existed alongside the long, single cycle degree structure leading to a Specialist Diploma. The last cohort of students was accepted onto Diploma programmes in 2016, with the final group of students graduating in 2021-2022. The function of the Diploma was to grant access to a Master's programme or to work. In parallel to closing out legacy programmes, new programmes were introduced, aligned with Bologna requirements. The Junior Specialist Diploma has also been phased out, replaced by programmes leading to the Junior Bachelor or Professional Junior Bachelor awards within the short cycle provision, since 2020.

A National Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education was established independent from the Ministry of Education and Science with cross cutting responsibilities. There are about 600 Higher Education Institutions There are about 600 Higher Education Institutions (HEI) including Universities (університет) Institutions (інститут) Academies (академія) Conservatories/academies (консерваторія) and Colleges (коледж). All HEIs are listed on EDEBO.

The academic year is divided into two semesters, generally beginning in either September and in January/February.