

Ukraine

Last update:	3 juni 2020
Population:	45,198,200 million (World Bank 2015 est.)
Prime minister:	Denys Shmyhal
President:	Volodymyr Zelensky
Governemental type:	Republic
Ruling coalition:	One party: Servant of the People
Last election:	21 July 2019 (Parliamentary elections)
Next election:	October 2020 (Local elections)
Sister parties:	Social Democratic Party of Ukraine (SDPU)

On 21 April 2019, the presidential runoff was won by comedian and actor Volodymyr Zelensky. He defeated incumbent President Petro Poroshenko with a landslide, gaining 73 per cent of the votes. Poroshenko got 25 per cent of the votes. The turnout was just over 62 per cent. Zelensky's role in the popular television series "Servant of the People" has become reality, as he plays a teacher-turned-president that goes on to wipe out corruption and fight against oligarchs. For a majority of the people, this refers to the political establishment personified, in this election, by Poroshenko, and the government's failure to end corruption over the years.

Zelenskiy succeeds President Petro Poroshenko, who had been elected to office following the so-called EuroMaidan revolution of 2013/14. Although Poroshenko managed to modernise the military and achieved a separation of the Ukrainian church from the Russian Orthodox church, his critics accuse him of coming up short on many of the promises he made regarding systemic changes. Zelenskiy, a newcomer with no prior experience in politics, will now have the daunting task of implementing major reforms expected by his voters.

Zelensky dissolved the parliament on 21 May 2019 to bring forward the parliamentary elections. This, in an attempt to gain a majority in parliament which would be needed to pass legislation. With approximately 43.14 per cent of the votes, Zelenskiy's Servant of the People party was the winner of the election. The party, only founded in 2018, is pro-European and pro-NATO but is other than that quite broad and undefined in its ideology. President Zelenskiy became Ukraine's first president, since the fall of the Soviet-Union, to rule the parliament with a single majority. However, the low voting turn-out is also historic: only 49.9 per cent of the population cast a vote.

In March 2020 Zelensky replaced the prime minister, giving Denis Shmyhal the position after then prime-minister Oleksiy Honcharuk resigned. The president hoped the new prime-minister could "do the impossible" and turn Ukraine's economy around as well as prepare for other reforms. Honcharuk had once before handed in his resignation after a recording of him was leaked of what appeared to be him criticising Zelensky's economic policy. He handed in his resignation days later to "remove any doubts" about his government's respect for Zelensky. However, Zelensky refused to accept the resignation because he wanted to give Honcharuk and his government another chance.

Political Situation

Political system

Ukraine has a parliamentary presidential system, which means that on a national level the country elects a head of state, the president, and a legislature. The president is directly elected by the people for a five-year term. The president needs a majority of the votes in the first round to be elected. Otherwise, a second round is held, in which the two candidates with the highest amount of votes (in the first round) can compete.

The parliament (Verkhovna Rada) has 450 members, elected for a four-year term. Until 2005, half of the members were elected by proportional representation and the other half by single-mandate constituencies. Starting with the 2006 parliamentary election, all 450 members were elected by proportional representation, but after a change under Yanukovich's presidency in 2011, the parallel system of proportional representation and single-member constituencies was restored. From that moment on, candidates were to be elected through party lists or self-nomination.

The constitution prescribes that the governmental parties must have a majority in parliament. Thus, minority coalitions are formally not an option for government coalitions. Representative bodies and heads of local government throughout Ukraine are elected simultaneously with the Verkhovna Rada.

Latest political issues

On 21 November 2013, a small protest broke out after President Yanukovich abandoned a trade agreement with the European Union, favouring closer ties with Russia. Online videos of police beating protesters later at night sparked a much larger outrage throughout the country, with hundreds of thousands of people taking to the streets within days, dubbed as the Maidan protest. The Maidan protests resulted in pro-EU protesters occupying the Maidan square and taking control of government buildings for months. Eventually, clashes between pro-EU protesters and the police resulted in an apogee on 18 February 2014, when over 70 protesters were killed. In the political turmoil that followed, President Yanukovich fled the country to Russia. An interim government was appointed with Olexander Turchynov as interim president. In the weeks that followed, pro-Russian protests broke out in eastern Ukraine and the southern province of Crimea. Pro-Russian and Russian forces took control of government buildings and strategic military complexes in the Crimea on 27 February, increasing tensions between Ukraine and Russia. On 16 March 2014, the Crimea joined Russia through a referendum in which an overwhelming majority voted in favour of Russia. The West claims this to be a violation of territorial integrity and a violation of international law, whereas Russia says it had to protect its Russian citizens in Crimea.

In the months following the annexation of the Crimea by Russia, the conflict reached a climax. Malaysia Airlines plane MH17 was shot down above eastern Ukrainian territory, killing all 298 passengers on board. The event sparked international outrage and triggered the close involvement of the international community. The European Union, the United States and other countries intensified sanctions on pro-Russian separatists and Russia. Meanwhile, the provinces of Donetsk and Lugansk declared themselves independent from Ukraine on 11 September 2014. On 6 September 2014, both parties agreed to a ceasefire in the capital of Belarus, Minsk.

This so-called Minsk I ceasefire was violated continuously and got out of control in January 2015. In February, Ukraine, Lugansk, Donetsk and Russia agreed to the Minsk II accords, and a new ceasefire was born. However, this ceasefire was violated intensively in the first week when pro-Russian separatists opened an offensive on the strategic city of Debaltseve, which eventually led to their victory when the Ukrainian army retreated from the area. After this offensive, both parties seem to abide by the Minsk II accords, although fighting remains an every-day activity.

Sanctions on eastern Ukraine and Russia remain.

Parliamentary Elections

On 20 May, the day of his inauguration, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced his intention to dissolve parliament and call early elections. On that day the presidential decree set the elections for 21 July, and Zelensky dissolved the parliament because the current coalition didn't have the support of the majority of the parliament. 62 MPs filed a constitutional challenge against the decree, but the Constitutional Court ruled in favour of early elections on 20 June. After the election results were published it became clear that the president's party, Servant of the People, won a majority. The party won 254 seats out of 424, thereby enabling it to form a government without a coalition. For the first time in the history of independent Ukraine, one party could control the cabinet of ministers, the office of the president and parliament on its own. Many consider the victory of Zelensky to be the result of disappointment in the previous government and the continuous power of oligarchs in Ukrainian society.

Campaign

The OSCE reported that during the campaigning period contestants were able to freely convey their messages to the electorate. The campaign was seen as competitive with a huge amount of candidates representing a wide spectrum of political options. Despite this, vote-buying remained widespread in many regions of the country, especially in single-vote mandate districts. The National police initiated over 125 criminal investigations concerning vote-buying. On top of that, several incumbent MPs and mayors, who stood as candidates, often misused their incumbency by promising and providing benefits to voters.

Election results 2019

Due to the war in eastern Ukraine elections couldn't be held in 26 different constituencies, and as a result, 26 out of 450 seats were

left vacant. With all votes counted, the Central Election Commission (CEC) showed five parties passing the 5 per cent threshold, thus entering the Ukrainian Parliament (Rada). Voter turnout was historically low with only 49.9 per cent of the population casting their vote.

Party	Seats party lists*	Seats constituencies**	Total	%
Servant of the People	124	130	254	4
Opposition Platform — For Life	37	6	43	1
Fatherland	24	2	26	8
European Solidarity	23	2	25	8
Holos (Voice)	17	3	20	5
Opposition Bloc	-	6	6	3
All-Ukrainian Union "Svoboda"	-	1	1	2
Self Reliance	-	1	1	0
United centre	-	1	1	-
Bila Tserkva Together	-	1	1	-
Independent single constituencies	-	46	46	1

* *Proportional lists*

** *Single-mandate constituencies*

The elections resulted in a major win for Zelensky's Servant of the People, along with which three new political parties entered the Rada, namely Opposition Platform - For Life, European Solidarity and Holos(Voice). Opposition Platform consists of former members from its predecessor For Life, Opposition Bloc Ukraine Forward! and Ukrainian Choice. The party is openly pro-Russian and anti-EU. European Solidarity is essentially a rebranding of "Poroshenko Bloc" and aims to continue Poroshenko's political agenda. Holos is founded by singer Sviatoslav Vakarchuk, who presents himself as anti-establishment and is considered to be a Liberal, pro-EU and pro-NATO. Thanks to Servant of the People and Holos, 80 per cent of MPs are newcomers. Furthermore, the average age of MPs has gone down from 48 to 41 years compared to the previous parliament. A record number of 87 women will enter the Rada as a result of the elections making up 19.3 per cent of the total number of deputies. A significant increase from 2014 when 11.1 per cent of the parliament was made up of women.

Aftermath

With Zelensky getting the majority in parliament he is now expected to deliver on his long list of promises made during his presidential campaign. First on the list is tackling the widespread corruption and influence of oligarchs in Ukraine. In this respect, elections are seen as a victory over the old elites ruling the country alongside oligarchs. But as OSCE and other reports show, oligarchs were heavily involved in the recent campaigns. With media coverage being particularly unfairly distributed, as it was largely dictated by business and political interests. This did not ensure equal coverage for all the candidates. President Zelenskiy himself has business ties to oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky, owner of 1+1, one of Ukraine's most popular TV channels, which had always broadcasted his shows and has given Zelensky a powerful platform. On the day before the presidential elections, the channel was filled with shows by comedian Zelensky. The overall media landscape lacks objectivity and is "divided along political lines", concentrated in the hands of a few owners.

Presidential Elections

On 21 April the presidential runoff was won by comedian and frontrunner Volodymyr Zelensky. He defeated incumbent President Petro Poroshenko with 73 per cent of the votes. Poroshenko got 25 per cent of the votes. The turnout of the votes was just over 62 per cent. On 31 March 2019, the first round of presidential elections was held in Ukraine. Comedian Volodymyr Zelensky then already enjoyed the majority, namely 30.23 per cent, of the votes. Incumbent President Petro Poroshenko was second with 15.95 per cent, followed by Bativshchyna Party leader Yulia Tymoshenko with 13.38 per cent.

Frontrunner Zelensky, 41 years old, is best known for his role in the political comedy series Servant of the People where he plays a

teacher that becomes president of Ukraine through some extraordinary circumstances and proceeds to fight corruption and shake up the political system. During his anti-establishment campaign, he mocked his political rivals with jokes, sketches and other performances. Zelensky promised that, if elected, he will fight against corruption and for reforms. Moreover, he promised to address and implement peace talks for eastern Ukraine. He also wanted to implement a new law on 'People's Rule' to establish referendums where Ukrainians could express their expectations for the authorities. More than 35 million people were eligible to vote in the first round.

Election results

Candidate	Party	First-round		Second round	
		Votes	%	Votes	%
Volodymyr Zelensky	Servant of the People	5,714,034	30.24	13,541,528	73.22
Petro Poroshenko	Independent	3,014,609	15.95	4,522,320	24.45
Yulia Tymoshenko	Fatherland	2,532,452	13.40		
Yuriy Boyko	Independent	2,206,216	11.67		
Anatoliy Hrytsenko	Civil Position	1,306,450	6.91		
Ihor Smeshko	Independent	1,141,332	6.04		
Oleh Lyashko	Radical Party	1,036,003	5.48		
Oleksandr Vilkul	Opposition Bloc	784,274	4.15		
Ruslan Koshulynskyi	Svoboda	307,244	1.62		
Yuri Tymoshenko	Independent	117,693	0.62		

Social Democratic Parties

Other Parties

Servant of the People

Party Leader: Volodymyr Zelenskiy

Number of seats: 254

<https://sluganarodu.ua/>

The Servant of the People party was created by President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, and was named after the popular TV series in which he played his most famous role: that of an ordinary school teacher who unexpectedly gets elected as President of Ukraine. The party does not have a clear ideology, and seems mostly focussed on eliminating corruption in the country.

Opposition Platform — For Life

Party Leader: Yuriy Boyko

Number of seats: 43

<https://www.platform.org.ua/>

The opposition Platform- For Life is the only pro-Russian party in the parliament, receiving 13 percent of the votes in the recent elections. It is lead by Putin ally Viktor Medvedchuk, and its program promises to stop the war in Donbass by negotiating directly with the Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic. Furthermore it aims to undo decommunization, Ukrainization and renegotiate the EU association agreement. Its program is almost identical to the Opposition Bloc party, not surprising since

Opposition Platform consists of many former Bloc party members who split with the party. The Opposition Platform has outperformed the Opposition Bloc in recent elections. Mainly by using the media empire of Medvedchuk, becoming the number one party for pro-Russian Ukrainians to vote for.

Batkivschina (All-Ukrainian Union "Fatherland" (incl. United Opposition))

Party Leader: Yulia Tymoshenko
Number of seats: 26
<http://www.tymoshenko.com.ua>

As the core party of the former Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc (BYuT), Batkivschina has been in parliament since the 2002 parliamentary elections. After the November 2011 banning of the participation of blocs of political parties in parliamentary elections, the party became a major force in Ukrainian politics independently. In the 2012 parliamentary elections the party also added "United Opposition" to its name, aligning several other parties under its colours.

The Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc (BYuT) was named after its leader and founder of the Fatherland Party (1999) Yulia Tymoshenko. After she was forced to step down in 2001, the Fatherland Party began to oppose presidential policies and Tymoshenko led the united opposition in 2001, creating the National Salvation Forum. The main goal of the forum was to form an electoral bloc aiming to oust President Kuchma. In November 2001, the bloc was renamed Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc. It consisted of the Fatherland Party, Sobor Party, Social Democratic Party, Republican Party, Conservative Republican Party, Christian Democratic Party, and Patriotic Party. The bloc gained 7.2 percent in the 2002 elections. BYuT cooperated with Our Ukraine in the 2004 presidential elections, supporting Viktor Yushchenko's candidacy. Once Yushchenko was appointed President after the Orange Revolution, Tymoshenko became Prime Minister. However, the cooperation faltered and finally resulted in Yushchenko sacking Tymoshenko on accusations of corruption. BYuT then ran independently in the 2006 parliamentary elections and became the second largest party, beating Yushchenko's Our Ukraine. However, it went into opposition.

In the 2007 parliamentary elections, BYuT managed to stay the second biggest party in parliament, almost closing the gap with the Party of Regions. Shortly after the elections, it was announced that BYuT and the Our Ukraine – People's Self Defense Bloc formed a coalition. Yulia Tymoshenko became the new Prime Minister. After Yanukovich won the presidential elections in 2010 and the parliament ousted Tymoshenko's coalition in a no-confidence vote, Tymoshenko went into the opposition again. In order to obtain a majority in parliament, Yanukovich needed the support of several extra MPs. Eventually, some BYuT MPs joined his coalition.

Tymoshenko had to go to jail, after being found guilty of abuse of power and being sentenced to 7 years in prison. She also had other lawsuits running against her as well, connected to her time as prime minister.

After the participation of blocs of political parties in parliamentary elections was banned in 2011, Batkivschina became the umbrella party with its election list including members of Reforms and Order Party, People's Movement of Ukraine, Front of Changes, For Ukraine, People's Self-Defense, Civil Position and Social Christian Party. In July 2012 members of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People joined this list. This list named themselves United Opposition "Fatherland". Because of the imprisonment of Tymoshenko at the time, Front for Change leader Arseniy Yatsenyuk headed the election list and is still the party's leader in parliament. The party remained the second largest in parliament after the 2012 elections (101 seats or 22.67 percent of the votes).

Tymoshenko was released from prison during the Maidan revolution of 2014, as Yanukovich was ousted, but hasn't managed to regain the prominent role that she had in Ukrainian politics. She has been allied with the European People's Party (EPP).

European Solidarity

Party Leader: Petro Poroshenko
Number of seats: 25
<https://eurosolidarity.org/>

European Solidarity is the rebranded party of former President Petro Poroshenko, previously known as Bloc Petro Poroshenko, which had been created on 27 August 2014. Poroshenko presented his new party after his defeat in the presidential elections in April 2019, and in the run-up to the early parliamentary elections on July 21, announced by the new President Volodymyr Zelenskiy. The party has a central-right, conservative ideology.

Holos (Voice)

Party Leader: Svyatoslav Vakarchuk
Number of seats: 20
<https://goloszmin.org/>

Holos (Voice) is a Liberal and pro-European party founded by famous Ukrainian musician Svyatoslav Vakarchuk. He presents himself as an anti-establishment candidate and promised that no incumbent MPs would be on the party's list for the parliamentary elections of 2019. The party is focused at fighting corruption through de-oligarchization and increasing the efficiency of the state. It is considered a centre-right party which demands more efforts from the government to battle the "Russian aggressor".

Opposition Bloc

Party Leader: Evgeny Murayev
Number of seats: 6
opposition.com.ua

Opposition Bloc Ukraine is a political party founded in 2014, and is mainly known as the party that has become the new political home of the de facto defunct Party of Regions, of ousted President Victor Yanukovich. In the latest parliamentary elections it won 29 seats, making it the 4th largest party. It was the successor of another party called "Leading force", which was founded in 2010 but did not participate in the parliamentary elections of 2012.

The party started working on 14 September 2014, after a forum took place in Kiev based on Peace, Stability and revival, six parties who all did not want to endorse Euromaidan, decided to merge and take part in the 2014 parliamentary elections as Opposition Bloc. The six parties that decided to merge were: Party of Development of Ukraine, All-Ukrainian Union "centre", Ukraine-Forward!, Labour Ukraine, New politic and "state Neutrality". Prior to the forum in Kiev, an American lobbyist called Paul Manafort was hired as an advisor to the presidential administration of Ukraine. Instead, he decided to argue to help stabilize Ukraine, and advised to create a new political party called Opposition Bloc. At the parliamentary elections, Yuriy Boyko headed the party's election list, though he also mentioned that Opposition Bloc does not represent parties, but rather consists of only individual politicians. On 27 November 2014, an opposition bloc parliamentary faction of 40 people was formed. Following the 2015 local elections, Opposition Bloc was one of the winners.

Opposition Bloc is a social liberal party. It wants a non-aligned status for Ukraine and wants to prevent Ukraine from becoming a member of NATO. They also want to protect Russian as a regional language, and want maximum decentralization.

The party became embroiled in a dispute between high ranking party officials which saw several prominent members, such as Yuriy Boyko, being expelled from the party. Expelled Opposition Bloc members joined forces in the new Opposition Platform which has roughly the same agenda as Opposition Bloc. But has quickly become larger than the Opposition Bloc due to support from Viktor Medvedchuk, who is backed by Putin. In recent parliamentary elections the party has relied on single-seat constituencies to gain 6 seats in the Rada

All-Ukrainian Union "Svoboda"

Party Leader: Oleh Tyahnybok
Number of seats: 6
<http://svoboda.org.ua/>

The All-Ukrainian Union "Svoboda" ("Freedom") was formed in February 2004 with the arrival of Oleh Tyahnybok as party leader. The party is the successor of the Social-National Party. Svoboda is a Ukrainian nationalist party that often voices opposition to perceived Russian influences in Ukraine. The party is known for its anti-communist stance, and several party activists over the years have been accused of trying to destroy communist-era statues. The party views the dominating role of Ukraine's oligarchy as "devastating". While oligarchs have typically played a major role in the funding of other Ukrainian parties, Svoboda claims to receive no financial support from oligarchs, but rather from Ukraine's small and medium-sized businesses.

The party has been accused of racism and anti-Semitism, which it denies. Party leader Tyahnybok stated in November 2012 that "Svoboda is neither an anti-Semitic nor a xenophobic party nor an anti-Russian party. Svoboda is also not an anti-European party.

Svoboda is simply and only a pro-Ukrainian party". This "pro-Ukrainian" element can be seen in Svoboda's political program; the party wants to ban adoptions by non-Ukrainians of Ukrainian children, wants to abolish Crimean autonomy and is in favor of criminal prosecution for 'Ukrainophobia'.

Svoboda went up from a marginal regional party to a power represented in the parliament within only a few years. Its national success was preceded by a local success, which analysts explain as a result of the policies of the Azarov government, who were seen as too pro-Russian by the electorate.

In the 2012 parliamentary elections the party's results were much higher than expected, with 10,44 percent (almost a fourteenfold of its votes compared with the 2007 parliamentary elections) of votes and 38 out of 450 seats in the Ukrainian parliament. In the 2014 elections the party only gained 4.71 percent, or 6 seats.

Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform (UDAR)

Party Leader: Vitali Klitschko

Number of seats: 0

<http://klichko.org/home/>

The Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform (UDAR) is a political party headed by Ukrainian professional heavyweight boxer Vitali Klitschko. In its current form the party was founded on 24 April 2010 on the basis of the Vitali Klitschko Bloc, a local political alliance in Kiev. The party has an anti-corruption and pro-European platform.

During the 2010 Ukrainian local elections the party gained about 400 representatives in municipalities and Oblast Councils (regional parliaments). The party's election list was a mixture of candidates who used to represent parties from all over the political spectrum of Ukraine.

In July 2012, party leader Klitschko stated that his party would not cooperate with the Party of Regions in the new parliament. In the 2012 parliamentary elections UDAR won 13.97 percent of the national votes and 6 constituencies and thus 40 parliamentary seats. During the Maidan revolution, Klitschko was one of the political leaders representing the Maidan at talks with Yanukovich and the European leaders.

Biographies

Volodymyr Zelensky

President

Zelensky was born in the city of Kryviy Rih on January 25, 1978. In 1995, he entered Kryviy Rih Institute of Economics, which is part of Kyiv National Economic University, where he received a law degree. He underwent a two-month internship during his time at the University. In 1990, he became famous as a comedian through a stand-up comedy TV show.

Denys Shmyhal

Prime Minister

Denys Smyhal was born on the 15th of October 1975 in Lviv. He graduated from Lviv Polytechnic in 1997. From his graduation in 1997 until September of 2005 Smyhal worked as an accountant in various companies. After that he became Deputy General Director of a company called "LA DIS" for a few months. He then became the Director of the investment company "Comfort-Invest" for two years, before becoming General Director of a company called "Roasinvest LLC" until September 2009.

He then worked in several leading roles in Ukraine's Lviv Oblast until December 2013. From the 1st of August 2019 Smyhal served as the Governor of Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast, before being appointed Minister of Regional Development on February 4th 2020. Smyhal replaced Oleksiy Honcharuk as Prime Minister of Ukraine in March 2020.

Shmyhal is married to Ekaterina and has two daughters.

Oleksiy Honcharuk

Former Prime Minister

Honcharuk was born in 1984 and, since 2005, worked as a lawyer and as the head of different law departments within various companies. In the 2014 Ukrainian parliamentary election Honcharuk unsuccessfully tried to get a parliamentary seat for the Force of People party. After the election, he became an adviser to ecology minister Ihor Shevchenko and First Vice Premier Stepan Kubiv. At the end of 2018, Honcharuk co-created the right-liberal NGO "People are Important", which was supposed to grow into a political party. The party was not deemed ready enough to take part in the snap July 2019 Ukrainian parliamentary election.

On 28 May 2019, Honcharuk was appointed Deputy Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine Zelensky. In this position, he was responsible for the block of economic development and continuation of reforms. On 29 August he was officially nominated for the post of Prime Minister, and that very same day, the parliament easily approved Honcharuk with 290 deputies voting in favour of his appointment.

Honcharuk was the youngest Prime Minister of Ukraine since he was 35 at the time of his appointment. He has this in common with his predecessor Volodymyr Groysman who was 38 at the time of his appointment. Honcharuk resigned as prime-minister on March 4th 2020.

Petro Poroshenko

Former President and Leader of "European Solidarity"

Petro Poroshenko was born on 26 September 1965. He is a Ukrainian billionaire businessman and was elected as the fifth President of Ukraine on 25 May 2014. Poroshenko served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2009 to 2010, and as the Minister of Trade and Economic Development in 2012. From 2007 until 2012, he headed the Council of Ukraine's National Bank.

Outside politics, Poroshenko owns, along with a number of other companies, a large-scale confectionery business, which has earned him the nickname of 'Chocolate King'. He was elected president by capturing more than 54 per cent of the votes in the first round, thereby winning outright and avoiding a runoff. During the parliamentary elections on 26 October 2014, his bloc became the largest party in parliament. After losing the Presidential elections to current President Zelensky, Poroshenko remained in politics, heading his European Solidarity party.

Poroshenko is married to Maryna Perevedentseva since 1984. The couple has four children.

Yulia Tymoshenko

Leader of Batkivschina (All-Ukrainian Union "Fatherland" (incl. United Opposition))

Yulia Tymoshenko was born in 1960 in Dnepropetrovsk. In 1984 she graduated from the Dnepropetrovsk State University, Faculty of Economics. After graduation, she worked as an engineer-economist in a machine-building plant in Dnepropetrovsk.

After that, she went into private business and together with her husband headed several commercial enterprises, including oil and gas trade. The latter grew into a multi-million enterprise and was in trouble with the tax authorities by 1996. Tymoshenko claimed the authorities were harassing her because of political reasons.

In 1997 Tymoshenko became first deputy to the leader of the All-National Movement Hramada, Pavel Lazarenko and entered parliament for the first time in 1998. Both harshly criticised the Kuchma Presidency. In November 1998, however, she unexpectedly called for a dialogue with Kuchma and left Lazarenko, motivated by his authoritarian rule of Hramada. She then created her own political force, Batkivishina.

In 2001, Tymoshenko, while president of United Energy Systems of Ukraine, was removed from her position and arrested under charges of forging customs documents and smuggling gas between 1995 and 1997. After her release, she called on Yushchenko to head the opposition movement.

In 2004, Bloc Yulia Tymoshenko and Yushchenko's Our Ukraine announced the creation of the Force coalition to support Yushchenko's candidacy in the 2004 presidential elections. As a result of repeat elections after mass demonstrations (dubbed

'Orange Revolution'), Yushchenko became president and Tymoshenko PM. The relationship between Yushchenko and Tymoshenko was bad and deteriorated even further over the course of years of squabbling and power struggles. She was PM on and off. She ran for president in the 2010 election as the main rival to Victor Yanukovych, losing the Presidency by 3 per cent of the votes.

Tymoshenko was released from jail following the Maidan revolution. Earlier, she had been found guilty of abuse of power and was sentenced to 7 years in prison.

Yulia Tymoshenko is married and has a daughter.

Vitaly Klitschko

Mayor of Kiev

Vitali Volodymyrovych Klitschko (Ukrainian: Віталій Володимирович Кличко), was born on 19 July 1971 in Belovodsk, Kyrgyzstan. He is a Ukrainian politician and the current Mayor of Kiev (the capital and largest city in Ukraine), head of the Kiev City State Administration and former professional boxer. He is the leader of the Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform (UDAR) and a former Member of the Ukrainian parliament. During the 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections and the following Orange Revolution, Klitschko openly supported the candidacy of Viktor Yushchenko. Klitschko became actively involved in Ukrainian politics in 2005 and combined this with his professional boxing career until his departure from boxing mid-December 2013. In 2005, Klitschko was appointed as an adviser to President Yushchenko. He was a leading figure in the 2013–2014 Euromaidan protests and announced his possible candidacy for the Ukrainian presidency but later withdrew and endorsed Petro Poroshenko. He was elected Mayor of Kiev on 25 May 2014. The UDAR Party together with Vitaly Klitschko decided to enter the Verkhovna Rada elections in 2014 together with the Petro Poroshenko Bloc and even though Klitschko won a seat, he gave it up to stay on as Mayor of Kiev.

Klitschko sees the European Union as Ukraine's model for future political and economic development. He is also in favour of NATO-Ukraine cooperation. Klitschko's main concern is social standards and the economy of Ukraine. He believes "the issue of language is not the top priority". He also advocates lower taxes to stimulate the economy. He wants to ensure the independence of judges by switching from a system of appointed judges to a system of elected judges.

Svyatoslav Vakarchuk

Leader of the "Holos" party

Svyatoslav Vakarchuk is the leader and founder of the "Holos" party and born on May 14, 1975. He is the lead vocalist of Okean Elzy, the most successful rock band in Ukraine. A former member of the Ukrainian parliament, he founded the "Holos" party in 2019. Many expected Vakarchuk to be running in the presidential elections, with Zelensky announcing on an Instagram post that they both should run. In the end, Vakarchuk didn't run for president, but he remained in politics.

On 16 May 2019, Vakarchuk announced the creation of a new political party, Holos. Vakarchuk assured on 19 May 2019 that if elected to parliament, he would not stop playing music, but political activity would be a priority. His party and personality look similar to Zelensky, but as Vakarchuk explained that his party is more serious when it comes to fighting corruption. Vakarchuk pointed out that his campaign only accept donations from donors who are vetted by his staff and found to be free of connections to "oligarchs."

Source

- BBC
- Central Election Commission
- Central Europe Review
- Chernobyl.info
- Committee to protect Journalists
- Economist
- Election World.org
- EU External Relations
- EU Institute for Security Studies

- Freedom House – Nations in Transit 2005
- Glavred info
- Government Portal
- Guardian
- International Herald Tribune
- Liga
- Kmu
- Korrespondent
- Kyiv Post
- Mirror Weekly
- NATO – Ukraine
- OSCE/ ODIHR Election Reports
- Rada portal
- Reuters
- RFE/RL
- Rian
- The Guardian
- The Telegraph
- Transitions Online
- Ukrainian Government Portal
- UA Monitor
- Ukraine info
- Ukrainian Monitor
- Ukrainian Weekly
- Ukrayinska Pravda
- Unian News from Ukraine
- US Department of State