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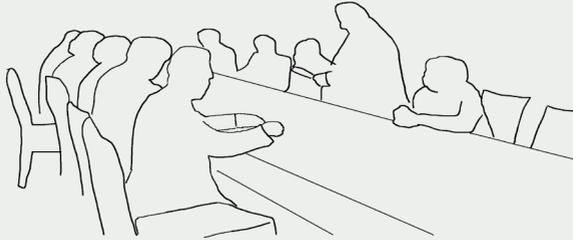
The Central Election Commission: The Facts

On November 13, 1997 the Central Election Commission conducted its first meeting as a permanent, independent state body. This date is considered the birthday of the CEC. However, elections were organized and administered before that date.

In Soviet Ukraine, elections of People's Deputies were called by the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. The CEC was created no later than four months before the elections. It consisted of a chair, two deputy chairs, a secretary and 27 commissioners. CEC commissioners served five-year terms in Soviet times.

To administer the 1990 elections of People's Deputies of the 12th convocation, the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR formed the CEC. Those were the final elections to the Verkhovna Rada during the Soviet Union's existence.

After adoption of the Act of Proclamation of Independence of Ukraine on August 24, 1991, the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR of the 12th convocation was renamed the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of the 1st convocation. The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine empowered a Central Election Commission to administer election of the President and a referendum on December 1, 1991. It was the referendum that resulted in approval of the Act of Proclamation of Independence of Ukraine.

БЮЛЕТЕНЬ

для голосування на всеукраїнському референдумі

АКТ

ПРОГОЛОШЕННЯ НЕЗАЛЕЖНОСТІ УКРАЇНИ

ВЕРХОВНА РАДА УКРАЇНИ

24 серпня 1991 року

«Чи підтверджуєте Ви Акт проголошення незалежності України?»

«ТАК, ПІДТВЕРДЖУЮ»   «НІ, НЕ ПІДТВЕРДЖУЮ»

In 1991, 54 percent of the population in Crimea –
561,498 citizens – voted for Ukrainian independence.

In November 1997, building upon provisions of the
Constitution of Ukraine, a Central Election Commission
was created and in December, the Law of Ukraine
"On the Central Election Commission" was adopted
which specified the Central Election Commission is a
permanent state body, which, in accordance with the
Constitution of Ukraine and Laws of Ukraine, provided
for organization, preparation and conduct of elections
of the President of Ukraine, the People's Deputies (or
Members of Parliament) and all-Ukrainian referenda.

The first CEC composition

«The people who came to work in the Commission are real professionals who were able to realize the complexity and responsibility of their work. And most importantly, they honorably justify the high trust placed in them.»

**CEC Chair
Mykhailo Riabets,
1998**

During 25 years, CEC membership was changed six times.

The CEC provided for organization and administration of:

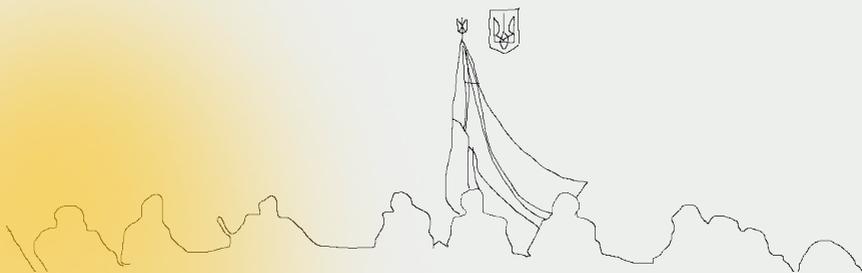**7** parliamentary election campaigns

5 presidential election campaigns

1 One all-Ukrainian referendum in the year 2000.

Administrated:

15 repeat elections; and,

33 interim parliamentary elections.

The CEC provided consultative and methodological support for election commissions during local elections in 1998, 2002 and 2006.

From 2015-2019, the CEC called 988 elections in newly formed amalgamated territorial communities.
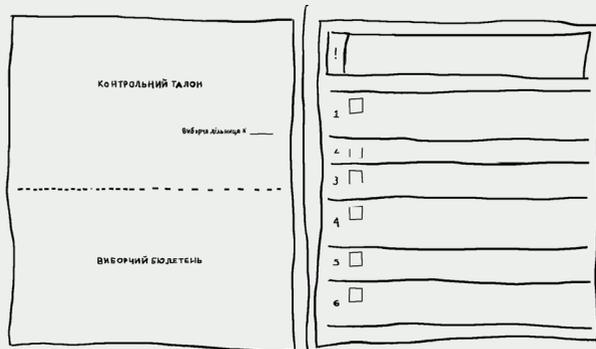
The CEC conducted

2 210 meetings

The CEC adopted

16 997 resolutions

ЦЕНТРАЛЬНА ВИБОРЧА КОМІСІЯ

The CEC's biggest challenge has always been to work with **legislative changes.** The CEC administered elections in periods when changes to election legislation were made on the eve of the electoral process and, sometimes, even after those processes were in motion.

The 1998 parliamentary elections were the first to be administered by the newly-created CEC as an independent state body and the first elections held under a **mixed majoritarian-proportional system.** The CEC adopted normative acts, or resolutions, to clarify and manage new electoral legislation.

The CEC managed those elections at a high level and developed proposals for improving various election procedures.

The 2006 parliamentary elections and the early elections of MPs in 2007 became new pages in the history of the CEC. They were held exclusively **under the proportional system.** In those years, the CEC emphasized regulation of numerous mechanisms for organizing elections and providing consultative and methodological assistance to District Election Commissions (DECs) by organizing workshops, classes and conference calls with DEC chairs.

«When organizing and conducting these elections, the Central Election Commission provided for compliance with principles of the rule of law, independence, objectivity, competence, professionalism, collegiality of consideration and resolution of issues, adoption of well-founded decisions and openness. The entire complex of legal, organizational, financial and logistical measures to ensure free expression of the citizens' will implemented without exception.»

**CEC Chair
Yaroslav Davydovych,
2006**

The 2007 election day was repeatedly rescheduled because of the political crisis of that time and related battles over the dissolution of the Verkhovna Rada. The CEC worked under heavy time pressure and the electoral process was restarted on three separate occasions.

«The honesty, openness and democracy of these elections (the early 2007 elections of the MPs of Ukraine) were confirmed by all international observers. Undoubtedly, the Central Election Commission is interested in its work being completely transparent and open: All international institutions were provided, on request, with the most complete information on the Commission's activities during this election campaign.»

**CEC Chair
Volodymyr Shapoval,
2008**

Over time, there emerged new **difficulties in connection with the illegal Russian annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, occupation** of part of the territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts and general **hostilities in the east of Ukraine.** These circumstances complicated organization of voting in the early presidential and parliamentary in elections in 2014 in electoral districts not controlled by Ukrainian authorities and areas adjacent to armed fighting with Russian-controlled separatists and units of the Russian army.

In 2015, during the local elections in the cities of Mariupol and Krasnoarmiysk (now known as Pokrovsk) in the Donetsk oblast, Territorial Election Commissions (TECs) were unable, due to political processes in that region, to organize and administer city council and mayoral elections.

Taking into account CEC proposals, the Verkhovna Rada adopted a separate law so those local elections would go forward. The law's feature was the procedure for **producing ballot papers by the CEC** and their direct transfer to Precinct Election Commissions (PECs), without involving TECs in the process.

In 2019, the newly appointed CEC membership administered, within a shortened period of preparation, two rounds of the presidential election (March 31 and April 21) and early parliamentary elections on July 21.

«The elections of the President of Ukraine showed a colossal increase in Ukrainian society's confidence in the elections. Therefore, telling the story and showing how the newly appointed CEC proved, during such a short period of its work, that we can and should be trusted – this is an excellent example for our international partners as well.»

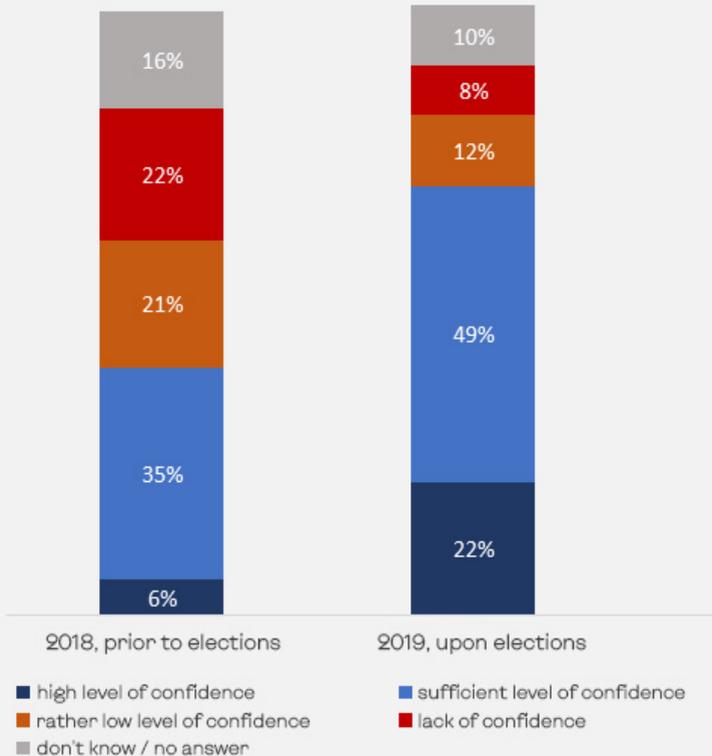**CEC Chair
Tetiana Slipachuk,
2019**
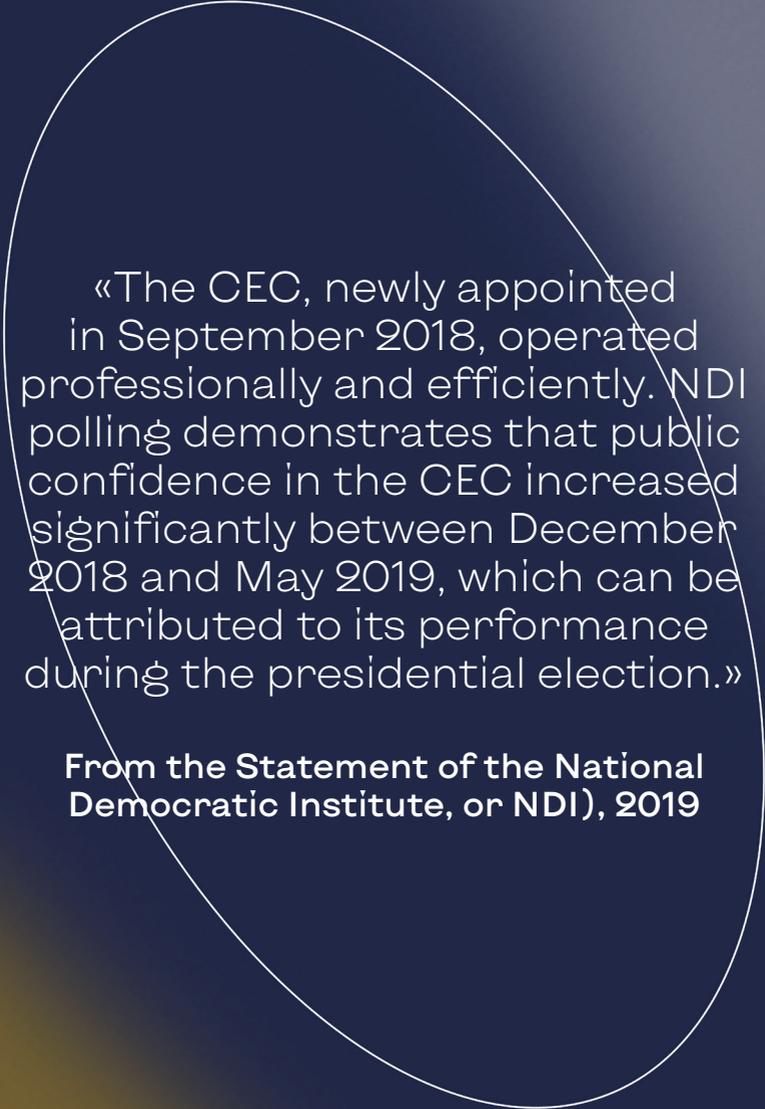
«The CEC, newly appointed in September 2018, operated professionally and efficiently. NDI polling demonstrates that public confidence in the CEC increased significantly between December 2018 and May 2019, which can be attributed to its performance during the presidential election.»

From the Statement of the National Democratic Institute, or NDI), 2019

Most Ukrainians express either great or sufficient confidence in the Central election Commission (CEC)

«What is the level of your confidence in the CEC capacity to arrange fair elections?»

	2018, prior to elections	2019, upon elections
don't know / no answer	16%	10%
lack of confidence	22%	8%
rather low level of confidence	21%	12%
sufficient level of confidence	35%	49%
high level of confidence	6%	22%

Legend:
- high level of confidence
- sufficient level of confidence
- rather low level of confidence
- lack of confidence
- don't know / no answer

The longest ballot paper was one meter long at the interim parliamentary election in Single-Member District Number 205, Chernihiv oblast, July 26, 2015

The CEC has been actively involved in improving national electoral legislation. An important achievement was adoption of the Election Code in late 2019. The new CEC, appointed on October 4, 2019, worked productively on amendments to the draft legislation.

ВИБОРЧИЙ КОДЕКС УКРАЇНИ

And then, the most difficult elections in the history of independent Ukraine took place – the 2020 local elections.
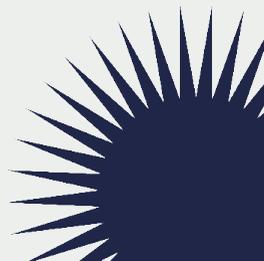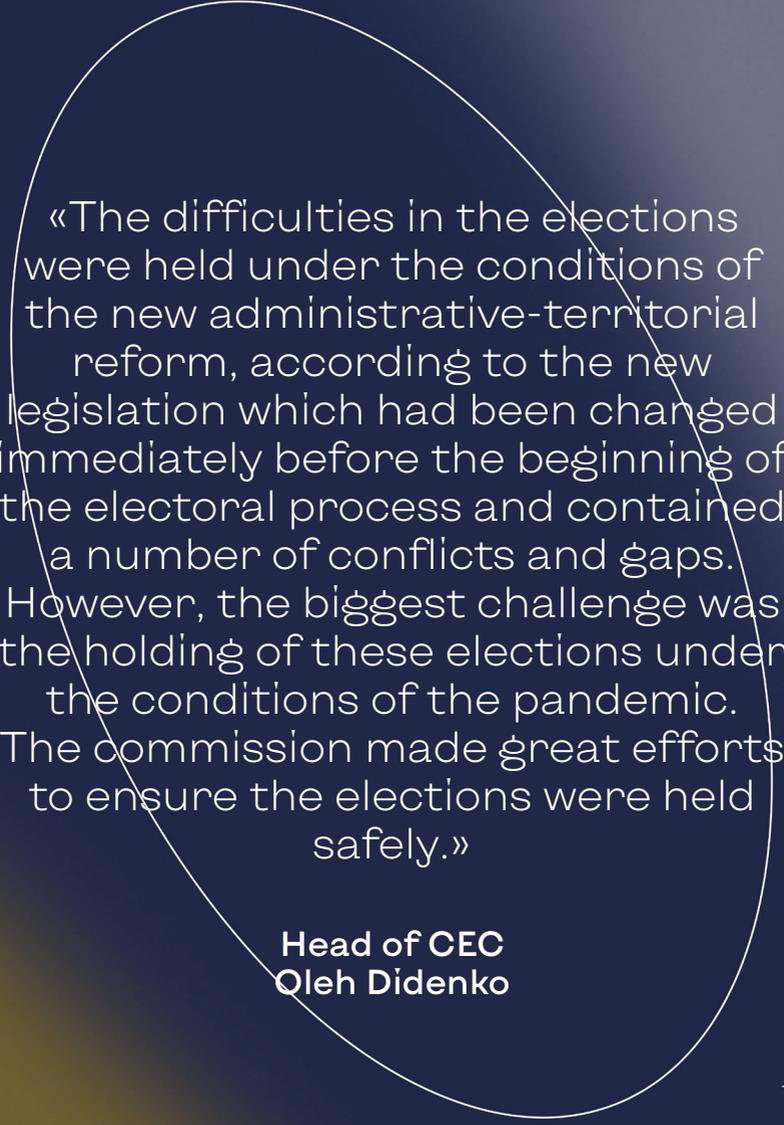
«The difficulties in the elections were held under the conditions of the new administrative-territorial reform, according to the new legislation which had been changed immediately before the beginning of the electoral process and contained a number of conflicts and gaps. However, the biggest challenge was the holding of these elections under the conditions of the pandemic. The commission made great efforts to ensure the elections were held safely.»

**Head of CEC
Oleh Didenko**

Recent years have been rich in achievements. For the first time in its history, the CEC adopted the Strategic Plan for Development of the Central Election Commission

● the CEC adopted the Strategic Plan for Development of the Central Election Commission

СТРАТЕГІЧНИЙ ПЛАН ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЇ ВИБОРЧОЇ КОМІСІЇ НА 2020 – 2025 РОКИ

● Provided for the exercise of the right of the citizens of Ukraine to vote regardless of the registration of their place of residence

«With this document, we reaffirmed the Commission is motivated to dynamically develop and be modernized in order to guarantee that elections are organized at the level of world standards.»

**Head of CEC
Oleh Didenko**

During the 2020 local elections, Ukrainians could for the first time vote where they stay rather than where they are registered. About 100,000 people changed their voting address in the 2020 local elections. This is more citizens than the population of the city of Kamianets-Podilskyi.

For the first time, **information posters with a QR code** were used at polling stations during the 2020 local elections. By following it, people with visual and hearing impairments could receive necessary information about elections in a format accessible to them: Audio or sign language.

The CEC became **more open and transparent,** began to communicate more actively and initiated annual public reporting.

In recent years, Ukraine's index of positive electoral process and pluralism has increased significantly. Every year the Economist Intelligence Unit publishes an annual rating: The Democracy Index. In the category "Electoral Process and Pluralism" for 2020-2021, Ukraine received 8.25 out of 10 possible points. Scores in the 8-10 range are characteristic of a full-fledged democracy and, in this category, Ukraine ranks among the most democratic countries in the world.

The Economist INTELLIGENCE UNIT

ІНДЕКС ДЕМОКРАТІЇ ЗА 2021 РІК

8,25
з 10

у категорії «виборчі процес та плюралізм»

During the CEC's existence, automated technologies were implemented in almost every area of work which significantly accelerated task performance.

As the CEC began its work in 1997, it only had two computers to work with. One was used for entering letters and draft decisions, while on the other, a primitive "Document Circulation" program was installed which only allowed registering incoming correspondence. Later, a new document management system was installed for registering incoming, outgoing and internal correspondence. Envelopes and mailing registers were already created automatically.

e- doc

At present, the CEC is implementing an electronic document management system. This is one of the activities of its joint project with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Project Coordinator in Ukraine, "Strengthening of Cyber Security and Transparency of Electoral Processes in Ukraine." The project's goal is complete automation of document management processes in the CEC.

The Unified Information and Analytical System (UIAS) "Vybory" ("Vybory" translates to "Elections" in the Ukrainian language) has also followed an evolutionary path since 1998. Its predecessor was the Information and Analytical System, "Vybory-98," which was created during preparation for parliamentary elections. It had two levels: The CEC information collection and processing center and 27 regional centers that received information from DECs. However, communication between the CEC and the regions was only maintained when election results were received.

The next year, the UIAS "Vybory" was put in place for the presidential elections. Its software and technical complexes were installed on the premises of all 225 election commissions. And, information about voting and vote-counting was collected for each precinct.

In 2002, during regularly-scheduled parliamentary elections, reliable telecommunications connection was, for the first time, provided for transmitting information from the DECs to the CEC throughout the entire electoral process rather than only on the day of voting. In parallel, a backup information transmission channel was operating – Ukrposhta's corporate network.

Subsequently, a voter lists information and analytical subsystem was created in the UIAS for compiling and correcting voter lists in election precincts. It served as the basis for the initial filling of databases of the State Voter Register, or SVR.

In 2007, a Comprehensive Information Protection System was built within the Information and Analytical System, (IAS), "Elections of the People's Deputies of Ukraine"; and, three years later, within the IAS, "Elections of the President of Ukraine."

In developing and improving the UIAS, a web-oriented architecture was used with a unified database and server resources on the CEC's premises. In the regularly-scheduled and early parliamentary elections in 2012 and 2014, information from the SVR on permanent election precincts and single-member election districts began to be accessed. A module was developed for saving DEC documents, such as decisions and reports, in the system and publishing them on the CEC website.

During preparation for the 2010 local elections, a new Information and Analytical System, "Local Elections", was created in the UIAS and functioned at the CEC level. TEC information was received by the CEC in both paper and electronic form and was uploaded to the IAS database using a special software module.

At the next local elections five years later, information from the TECs was transmitted through the SVR maintenance bodies and was received on the CEC's server with a prior check of content and message encoding.

In October 2021, the CEC approved a concept of the Unified Automated Information and Analytical System, or the CEC's UAIAS.

Creating the CEC's UAIAS and implementation of information technologies in the activities of election and referendum commissions will contribute to increasing transparency and availability of information on election and referendum processes; ensure relevance and reliability of information on election and referendum processes; improve the performance of election and referendum commissions; increase the speed of election and referendum result processing; and, enhance public acceptance of vote protocols following voting and vote-counting.
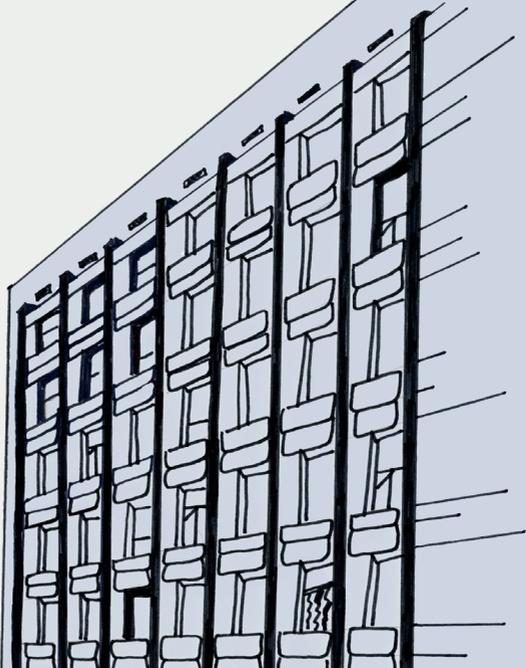
The CEC's international activities have actively developed since its founding.

The CEC concluded bilateral cooperation agreements with election management bodies in 13 countries: Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Turkey, Hungary and Russia.
However, cooperation with Russia formally was terminated following the Russian invasion and illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Within the framework of implementing the Strategic Plan for 2020-2025, the CEC will expand cooperation with election management bodies of other countries. Negotiations with the electoral regulatory institutions of Germany and Sweden have begun. Cooperation with the electoral bodies in Albania, North Macedonia, Slovenia and Croatia is also being considered.

In 2017, the CEC joined internship programs of the Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB), headquartered in South Korea. And since 2019, following a decision of A-WEB's General Assembly, the CEC became a full member.

The CEC provides accreditation and advisory support to international election and referendum observation missions and to separate groups of observers from international nongovernmental organizations and other countries. Official observers from international organizations and countries are registered at elections and referenda in Ukraine.

Also important for the CEC's effective work is international technical assistance which has been provided for many years by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Project Coordinator in Ukraine and the Council of Europe.

During years of cooperation with IFES, multiple international technical assistance projects have been implemented. IFES Donors are the governments of Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States. These projects strengthen electoral processes, ensuring citizens' effective participation in gender equality and raising overall electoral awareness.

With IFES, training sessions were conducted and educational materials for election commissioners were developed. Joint events were organized, including regular coordination meetings, briefings, trainings and seminars, webinars, conferences, online surveys and consultations.

IFES provides ongoing support to the CEC in conducting study visits with international election management bodies and other international partners.

In 2016, to improve the professional level of election commissioners and other electoral stakeholders, the CEC and IFES created the Administrative Center for the Training of Elections Process Participants (known as the Training Center) where trainings and webinars are regularly administered.

In 2020, at the request of the CEC within the framework of the Council of Europe Project, "Supporting the Transparency, Inclusiveness and Integrity of the Electoral Practice in Ukraine," a presentation was developed of organization and administration of elections under the new Election Code. A free resource, "CEC: Prosvita", was created in plain language as an educational portal about elections.

TECs' work was facilitated during the 2020 local elections by "The TEC's Electronic Office", an online resource and system for entering, processing and transmitting TEC data. Implemented jointly with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Project Coordinator in Ukraine, it significantly helped TEC members to enter data, draw up voting results protocols and transfer them to the CEC. In the 2020 local elections, 59 percent of TECs, or 981 TECs, worked with this office.

In preparing for the 2020 local elections, the CEC jointly developed software and a CEC chatbot with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Project Coordinator in Ukraine. On that platform, all electoral subjects – including the general public – were able to find answers to questions related to the local elections.

As Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine began, the CEC took a proactive position in communication at the international level. At the conclusion of February 2022, the CEC called on international organizations, in particular the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and international election management bodies to stop cooperation with Russia and Belarus and expel these two countries' election management bodies from the Association of European Election Officials (ACEEEO), the oldest election management organization in the region;. The CEC was a founding member of the ACEEEO in 1994. However, ACEEEO members did not vote to expel Russia and Belarus.

To state its opposition to nondemocratic election management bodies in international institutions, the CEC withdrew from the ACEEEO along with other European election management organizations. The CEC's leadership led to the subsequent dissolution of ACEEEO.
The process of creating a new pan-European association of election management bodies, one which would not allow membership of election bodies whose countries' governments are openly undemocratic and violate fundamental norms of international law, has begun.

And, an open letter was sent to the Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB) with a call to terminate Russia's and Belarus' memberships.

State Voter Register – One of the World's Most Accurate Voter Registration Systems

In February 2007, the Law of Ukraine, "On the State Voter Register", was adopted, according to which the CEC became the State Voter Register's administrator. At the conclusion of September 2009, the Automated Information and Telecommunication System "State Voter Register" was put into operation. In August 2011 it was transformed into the Automated Information and Communication System, or AICS.
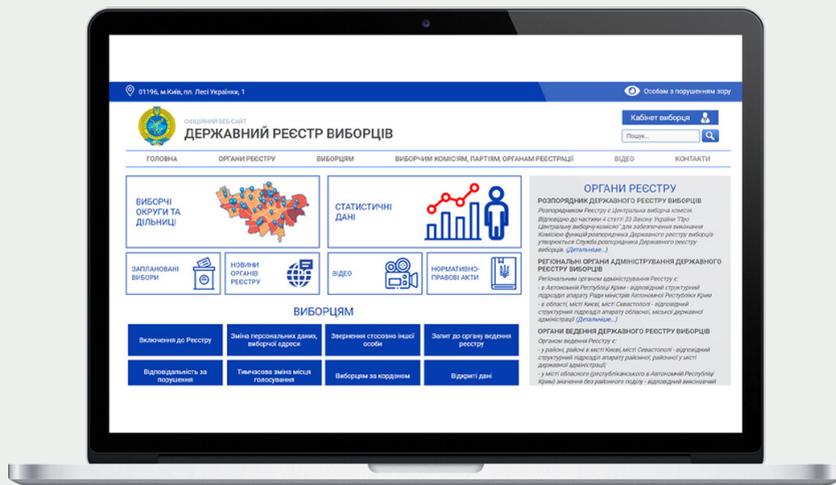
«The State Voter Register is a serious obstacle to manipulating the quantitative indicators of the electoral body. At present, the State Voter Register system enables full control of the grounds – the documents, the specific actions – for a particular person's appearance in the Register's database. Introduction of the State Voter Register in Ukraine created the prerequisites for improving election procedures; in particular, it made it possible to promptly receive information about changes in the demographic situation and the place of residence of citizens.»

CEC Deputy Chair Zhanna Usenko-Chorna, 2012

The State Voter Register's (SVR) tasks
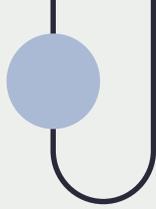
are maintaining voter records and compiling voter lists for all elections.

Today, the SVR contains 38,167,329 records, of which 34,771,313 records are related to voters.

Every month the SVR maintenance departments receive about 25,000 pieces of information as part of the periodic update of its database. This database contains more than 300,000 records from almost 6,000 subjects – bodies of place of residence registration, bodies of civil status registration of acts, the State Penitentiary Service, the Ministry of Defense and the State Migration Service.

Since its inception, the SVR processed more than 65.9 million records in more than 3.8 million pieces of information. During that time, its departments cooperated with more than 32,300 information providers. More than four million voters submitted applications to the maintenance bodies asking for inclusion in the SVR and for changing identification data, electoral addresses or temporary changes of voting place.

Over the years, the SVR produced 365,685 voter lists for national and local elections.
Another important task of the SVR is production of personal invitations during elections based on SVR data which prevents errors and is in contrast to manual input which has the effect of reducing burdens on PECs.
As the SVR was launched, a register of election precincts was created and is kept current regardless of election dates.

Software has been developed for reading and working with data containing passports in the form of a plastic card. The SVR maintenance departments are equipped with card readers for reading information from identification cards.

In August 2011, the SVR launched its own Internet information resource. Since then, the SVR website was visited by about 6.5 million people, half of whom used the "Voter's Personal Office" service, which allows the voter to check his or her inclusion in the SVR, obtain information about election precincts created on a permanent basis, and view all election campaigns in which the voter can participate. In the "Voter's Personal Office," each user can submit applications for inclusion in the SVR; change identification data and election address; temporarily change his or her voting place; and, inquire about his or her personal data.

The SVR has received 203,000 requests: Applications for inclusion in the SVR, changing identification data and electoral addresses and changing incorrect data in the SVR database.

Also important is protection of information resources. A powerful, comprehensive information protection system called AICS "State Voter Register" was created. During its operational period, more than 25,000 viruses were detected and neutralized.

According to electoral experts, including our international partners, the SVR is one of the most accurate voter registration systems in the world.

The CEC During the War

As Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine began, the CEC continued its work under martial law. On the first day of the war against our country, the CEC held an urgent meeting and decided to cease electoral processes, all elections and the processes of initiating an all-Ukrainian referendum which were underway at that time. Holding elections and referenda is prohibited during martial law.

The CEC suspended the operation of AICS "State Voter Register" for the period of martial law to secure the integrity of the SVR database, ensure protection of personal data stored in that database and protect the SVR from unauthorized access, illegal use, copying, distortion and destruction of its data.

For that period, maintenance of the SVR will be suspended. The administrator's service organized work to protect the integrity of the SVR's database, including its hardware and software.

In April 2022, the CEC received numerous appeals from TECs that had come under Russian occupation. The CEC considered the circumstances and, where Russian armed forces are occupying Ukraine, the CEC suspended the exercise of TEC authority and activities because of threat to the life and health of TEC members and overall public safety. The CEC also is concerned about the organization, preparation and administration of illegal referenda or elections by Russia.

After the beginning of information propaganda campaigns waged by representatives of Russia and Russian collaborationists calling for the organization of pseudo-referenda in the occupied territories of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson oblasts regarding their accession to the Russian Federation, the CEC assessed the proposed referenda process as having nothing to do with democratic referenda, violates international law, legally void and unconstitutional.

To confirm this position, the CEC adopted three resolutions. The CEC called on the world to not recognize any results of such "expressions of popular will," and apply personal special economic sanctions against the Russians involved in organizing and preparing pseudo-referenda in the four occupied territories. And, the CEC proposed increasing political and diplomatic pressure on Russia by providing clear signals about negative consequences toward Moscow for yet another attempt to illegally change Ukraine's internationally-recognized borders.

After the illegal "voting" was held in the occupied territories, the CEC once again appealed to foreign countries and international organizations to condemn Russian actions and Moscow's occupation administrations, not recognize results of such pseudo-referenda and contribute to ending Russia's occupation of Ukrainian territories as soon as possible.

The CEC called on democratic countries' election management bodies and specialized international organizations to halt cooperation with Russia and its governing bodies, terminate Russia's membership in international institutions and prevent participation of Russian citizens in international election observation.

In predicting potential issues that may arise during administration of elections after termination of martial law in Ukraine and revising Ukrainian election law, the CEC has proposed election legislation over the last several months. International partners and Ukrainian civil society, particularly IFES and Civil Network OPORA, were actively involved in this important legislative work.

On September 27, 2022, the CEC adopted proposals for holding elections after Ukraine's victory. They were sent to the Verkhovna Rada's Committee on State Building, Local Governance, Regional and Urban Development for consideration during preparation of legislation.
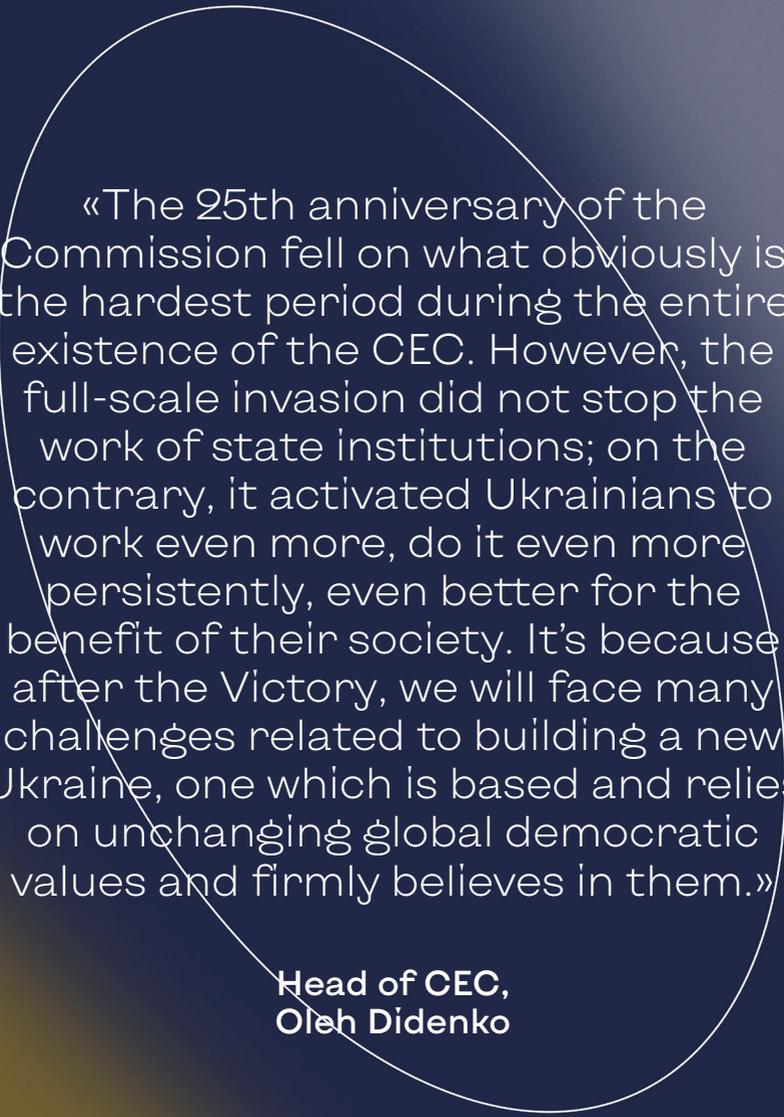
«The 25th anniversary of the Commission fell on what obviously is the hardest period during the entire existence of the CEC. However, the full-scale invasion did not stop the work of state institutions; on the contrary, it activated Ukrainians to work even more, do it even more persistently, even better for the benefit of their society. It's because after the Victory, we will face many challenges related to building a new Ukraine, one which is based and relies on unchanging global democratic values and firmly believes in them.»

**Head of CEC,
Oleh Didenko**

The CEC 2019

CEC