

ICPS newsletter®

Ukraine needs to improve the way it's managing European integration

The problems Ukraine is facing in planning and implementing its Program for integration into the European Union were discussed at a roundtable of European integration specialists from both the Government and non-government organizations. Participants emphasized the need for Ukraine to continue to integrate into the EU and provided recommendations as to further carrying out the integration program

On 9 June 2004, the Ministry of Economy and European Integration (MEEI), together with ICPS, held a roundtable on "Problems and Prospects in Planning Ukraine's European Integration." Participants, who included representatives of government institutions, Ukraine's top think tanks and media, discussed the European integration process in the context of carrying out the Program for Ukraine's integration into the EU.

The Program for Ukraine's integration into the European Union was approved by Presidential Decree in 2000. It was the key instrument of Ukraine's strategy to move closer to the EU in political, social, economic, scientific, cultural and other areas and to fulfill the criteria for EU membership. However, this Program was not widely advertised and did not gain much public support; instead, it remained a purely Government document. For example, the results of opinion polls show that the country's population supports the European choice, although there is no real understanding of what the European Union is and what EU membership means. Experts say that the key reason behind this lack of public awareness is lack of information about the results of the Program—both among the public in Ukraine and in Europe.

On the other hand, the process of European integration ran into a slew of organizational problems. To date, the government has failed to set up a single governing body: the management functions continue to be divided between MEEI and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Nor has enough attention been paid to building institutional capacities and training civil servants who are responsible for the European integration.

The EU itself could assist in accelerating Ukraine's adaptation to European standards. After all, EU assistance to the latest group of candidate countries used a much more systematic and result-oriented approach. However, so far Ukraine is using its own resources to move closer to Europe. According to the roundtable participants, Ukraine has to continue implementing the Program for its integration into the EU, and take into account these recommendations:

- European integration needs to get broad-based feedback and public support in order to be transformed from an "idea of the political elite" into a society-wide priority. Information about its accomplishments should be widely disseminated among stakeholders in both Ukraine and in Europe;
- the Ukrainian Government should look for ways to optimize the process of planning, monitoring and assessing European integration. Ukraine needs to study the experience of the new EU members and institute their approach to using principles of change management;
- it is imperative to finance capacity-building among government employees in European integration by training them in the application of change management and strategic planning approaches;
- Government institutions need to widely involve NGOs in carrying out consultations, in policy-making, in keeping the public informed, and in other tasks of the European integration process.

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An action program for the new president!

In November 1999, during the last presidential election, the International Centre for Policy Studies organized a series of meetings to discuss key issues in government policy. Representatives of the Government, civic organizations, of research and educational institutions, and of the private sector across Ukrainian regions participated in these events.

The debates resulted in a recognition of the urgent need to develop a government reform strategy. Propositions regarding this strategy were formulated in a paper entitled "Ukraine's Future: A Plan for the President," which was put together in the form of an address to the newly-elected president of Ukraine.

Today, it is clear that the provisions of this document have not lost their relevance. Once again, ICPS would like to draw attention to the society's key goals, which the new president should transform into government policy:

- transforming the Government from an instrument of totalitarian administration into an effective institution for managing a democratic society;
- ensuring favorable conditions for business initiatives from active citizens;
- reducing the level of dissipation of Budget funds and beginning to spend it on the society's strategic goals;
- carrying out a human resource revolution in order to provide the society with specialists of a new quality.

"Ukraine's Future: A Plan for the President" was published in Policy Studies No.9, November 1999. For back issues of this publication, visit the ICPS site at: www.icps.kiev.ua/publications/ps.html

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