

# Civic Space Portal

**Olesya Arkyhypska**

*International Renaissance Foundations (IRF), Ukraine*

**Svitlana Bilous**

*Civic Space Portal (IRF), Ukraine*

**Vitaly Yarinich**

*Civic Space Portal (IRF), Ukraine*

## INTRODUCTION: UKRAINE, CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE INTERNET

Internet use in Ukraine has grown rapidly over the past years. In January 2001, the number of Internet users constituted 4.6% of the Ukraine's population, in January 2002—5.5%. In 2003, the number of Ukrainian e-users reached 8% of Ukrainian population or 3.8 million people (Press release, 2003). Research shows that about 2% of Ukrainian men and 2% of women have access to the Internet at home. Thirty-seven percent use Internet at work, 22% at home and 21% in Internet access sites (e.g., Internet cafes, libraries, etc.). Thirteen percent of Ukrainians residing in cities with the population of more than 500,000 inhabitants are Internet users, however in other areas of Ukraine its rate is lower—only 1%.

The commitment and involvement of civil society is equally important in creating an equitable Information Society, and in implementing ICT-related initiatives for development (WSIS, 2003). The Internet can be considered as a tool for the democratization of society, which facilitates the exercise, and protection of human rights (civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights) (Freedom of information, Transparency, eGovernment, 2004).

While using the Internet, non-governmental organizations become more effective and this has a positive influence on civil society development. According to the research conducted by the Internews-Ukraine (Internet and Civil Society of Ukraine, 2003) the Internet is used by civil society organizations to:

- Have access to information placed on Web sites of media sources, NGOs, the government;
- Receive and disseminate information (especially information related to the protection of the rights of citizens, the community and organization);
- Disseminate publications, positive experiences and news to NGOs and the public;
- Communicate and exchange experiences and establish partnerships both in Ukraine and abroad;

- Expand their activities work to a wider group of people, build networks; prepare and co-ordinate initiatives; and
- Search for financial and information support for their work.

## UKRAINIAN NGOs AND THE CIVIC PORTAL

Notwithstanding the need for a broader presence in the Internet medium, to date, the majority of Ukrainian NGO-related resources are visited at a rate of less than 50 visitors per day, which is insufficient to play an influential “electronic” role. These figures are also extremely low compared to commercial resources rates. Due to the lack of IT specialists, NGO Web sites in Ukraine are not regularly updated and contain limited information on the projects and initiatives implemented by represented NGOs. Such resources may serve as a platform for closer acquaintance with the NGO, but cannot be a primary source for prompt use of information by partner organization, media, or local government. At the same time, electronic communication between Ukrainian NGOs was limited to the use of mailing lists released irregularly.

The concept of the NGO portal has emerged as a reaction to numerous requests expressed by Ukrainian NGOs to design a complete online toolkit that would: generate reference, information and resource data; facilitate e-access and systematize data required for the development of the civil society in Ukraine; provide technical support; and, spread information on NGO activities to the public.

In March 2001, the International Renaissance Foundation (IRF, 2004) supported the project to establish the Civic Internet Portal. Subsequently, the Portal was supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2004). Summer 2002 was marked as the first online release of the Portal that delivered news service to Ukrainian NGOs. In 2003, based on survey results and a series

of trainings “Efficient NGOs Through ICT Use” covering 10 regions, the spectrum of online services has greatly expanded and the Portal was titled as the Civic Space Portal (2004). Currently, the IRF’s Information Program administers the project.

## Portal Goal and Tasks

The goal of the Civic Space Portal is to:

- Provide the third sector with the ICT kit to enhance the professional capacity of Ukrainian NGOs and improve their efficient networking;
- Systematize and archive available resources and reference information on the third sector in Ukraine and within the region; and
- Disseminate information on the third sector to media, government, and public—at the regional, national and trans-border levels.

## Portal Products and Services

The Civic Space Portal provides a series of services and products:

- **News Line and Events Calendar:** daily inform on the third sector news within Ukraine and in the region;
- **Web catalogue of Ukrainian NGOs:** regional and international donor agencies, information and fundraising services, resource centers that may be of interest to NGOs;
- **Online Forum and Poll:** online opinion of Internet users on pressing issues of the third sector;
- **E-Library of the Third Sector:** electronic publications and announcement of editions online—from NGOs and for NGOs;
- **Online Consultant:** documents and reference sources and finance and law for Ukrainian NGOs, enabling NGO users to post questions and get prompt qualified answers;
- **Project Marketplace:** simplified mechanism on submission of project proposals from Ukrainian NGOs to a pool of donor agencies;
- **Jobs Exchange:** updates on new vacancies and resumes for NGO representatives;
- **E-Mailing** of news, announcements, and posts by third-sector players, scholarships and grants, trainings and Portal updates.

NGOs may also get use of such technological services as:

- **News Export** to Web sites of NGOs;
- **Web-Mail** for NGOs;

- **Text Version** for NGOs that experience slow Internet access;
- **E-Mail List** administration for users that do not have opportunity to support their Internet resources; and
- **Web-Hosting** for Ukrainian NGOs.

Among consumers of Portal services and information are NGOs in 25 regions of Ukraine, regional communities, resource centers, think tanks, local and international donor agencies, social services, central and regional government authorities, mass media, press centers of political parties, Ukrainian citizens.

## VISION OF SUCCESS

### The Interlinkage of Services and Products

Currently, the Civic Space Portal offers a wide spectrum of information, advisory and technological products and services for the third sector based on advanced customer-oriented ICT.

### Interactivity Mode

Resource is characterized by simplicity of posting (presenting) information and commenting on posts of others by online users. Organizations or a group of organizations may discuss the problems of practical interest in the Forum, rate E-library incomings, or join interactive events, initiated by the Portal together with partner organizations.

### User-Friendliness

Search option and categorization enables easy navigation through over 3,000 news and events (both fresh and archived) in the *Newsline* and *Events Calendar*, nearly 500 resources by 48 categories in the *Web catalogue*, 300 documents by 81 categories in *E-library*; as well as over 100 documents on finance and law in the *Online Consultant*. Users may search by the time of publication, source, region, subject, or using other parameters.

### Technological Support of Users

The Portal team provides over 200 representatives of NGOs with Web-mail e-mail accounts for NGOs (Web-Mail, 2004), whereas 40 NGOs use Web-hosting on a free basis (Hosting, 2004). Also, NGOs that experience slow e-traffic may use text version delivered by the Portal (Text only, 2004).

8 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: [www.igi-global.com/chapter/civic-space-portal/11359](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/civic-space-portal/11359)

## Related Content

---

### Information Communication for Child Development Service

Malathi Somaiah and V. Vijayalakshmi (2005). *Encyclopedia of Developing Regional Communities with Information and Communication Technology* (pp. 439-444).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/information-communication-child-development-service/11418](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/information-communication-child-development-service/11418)

### Immersive Visualization of Virtual 3D City Models and its Applications in E-Planning

Juri Engeland Jürgen Döllner (2012). *International Journal of E-Planning Research* (pp. 17-34).

[www.irma-international.org/article/immersive-visualization-virtual-city-models/74821](http://www.irma-international.org/article/immersive-visualization-virtual-city-models/74821)

### Intelligent Engineering Construction Management: Long-Distance Construction Management

Min Hu, Gang Li, Xidong Liu, BingJian Wu, Yannian Wang, Zhongming Wu and Qian Zhang (2021). *AI-Based Services for Smart Cities and Urban Infrastructure* (pp. 162-189).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/intelligent-engineering-construction-management/264779](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/intelligent-engineering-construction-management/264779)

### Harnessing the Chaotic: Using the Participatory Geoweb to Make Sense of Forest Fires

Jon M. Corbett, Samantha Brennan and Aidan Whitely (2016). *International Journal of E-Planning Research* (pp. 27-41).

[www.irma-international.org/article/harnessing-the-chaotic/158036](http://www.irma-international.org/article/harnessing-the-chaotic/158036)

### Integration of Legal Aspects in 3D Cadastral Systems

Mohamed Sobaih Aly El-Mekawy, Jesper M. Paasch and Jenny Paulsson (2015). *International Journal of E-Planning Research* (pp. 47-71).

[www.irma-international.org/article/integration-of-legal-aspects-in-3d-cadastral-systems/132955](http://www.irma-international.org/article/integration-of-legal-aspects-in-3d-cadastral-systems/132955)