

Ukraine

Country name	Ukraine
State title	Ukraine
Name of citizen	Ukrainian
Official language	Ukrainian
Country name in official language	Україна (Ukraina)
State title in official language	Україна (Ukraina)
Script	Cyrillic
Romanization System	Ukrainian national romanization system (BGN/PCGN 2019 Agreement)
ISO-3166 code (alpha-2/alpha-3)	UA/UKR
Capital	Kyiv
Capital in official language(s)	Київ (Kyiv)

Introduction

Ukraine borders Russia to the east, has six European neighbours to the west and borders the Black Sea and Sea of Azov to the south. Part of the Soviet Union until the Union's break-up in 1991, Ukraine's strategic location on the boundary between Russia and Europe plus significant mineral and agricultural wealth have long ensured Ukraine's geopolitical significance.

There has long been a divide between the Russian-speaking east and the Ukrainian-speaking west, with previous declarations of separatist intent from a number of southern and eastern oblasts. Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 is not recognised by HMG, though Ukraine has no practical authority in the area. Parts of the eastern Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts are similarly outside Ukraine's control.

Geographical Names Policy

The Ukrainian language is written in a modified Cyrillic script (see Script and romanization, below). PCGN policy, in agreement with the US Board on Geographic Names (BGN), is to apply the Ukrainian national romanization system to Ukrainian language geographical names across Ukraine.¹

Kyiv

The capital city name should be represented as Kyiv, in accordance with the preference of Ukraine that this spelling be used in English-language contexts. This spelling also accords with the romanized

¹ This policy was adopted in December 2019, replacing the former policy to apply the BGN/PCGN 1965 romanization system for Ukrainian. See section headed Script and romanization.

form generated from application of the Ukrainian national romanization system to the Ukrainian Cyrillic, Київ. The English conventional name might still sometimes be seen as Kiev, though it should be noted that this form is close to the Russian (Київ, romanized *Kiyev* according to the BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Russian), and therefore may present ambiguity and indeed a misleading connotation. PCGN recommends that the use of the spelling Kiev, even as a cross-reference, be limited if possible.

Crimea

Crimea is an autonomous republic of Ukraine (Автономна Республіка Крим/*Avtonomna Respublika Krym*), which has a majority Russian-speaking population. Despite Russia's annexation of Crimea and of the predominance of the Russian language in this region, it is PCGN/HMG policy to use Ukrainian-language geographical names in Crimea, including recent 'decommunised' names (see below), and new second-order administrative structure (see Administrative structure, below) in recognition of the sovereign authority.

Donetsk and Luhansk

It is also PCGN/HMG policy to reflect Ukrainian-language geographical names, including recent 'decommunised' names (see below), and new second-order administrative structure (see Administrative structure, below) in these oblasts.

'Decommunisation' of geographical names

Many names have been changed since independence, principally to remove references to the communist past. A particularly concerted effort took place in 2016, whereby the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory (Український інститут національної пам'яті) published a list of approximately 1000 settlements whose names would be changed: these name changes were enacted by decree. PCGN has details of the changed names available on request. These new names should be adopted across Ukraine, though the former name can be retained as a cross-reference if deemed useful.

Language

According to Article 10 of the Constitution of Ukraine, the official language of Ukraine is Ukrainian; Ukrainian has held this sole official status since before the fall of the Soviet Union, being the subject of the Ukrainian SSR law "On languages in Ukrainian SSR", adopted in 1989. Since Ukraine's independence '*official topographic maps as well as the bulk of cartographic products, have been published in Ukrainian*' [[Ukraine Toponymic Guidelines](#), 2011, ISBN 978-966-475-839-7].

Apart from the official Ukrainian language, languages of a number of other ethnic groups are spoken in Ukraine. Russian is the mother tongue of over 30% of the population, and is spoken as a second language by most Ukrainians.

The subject of adopting Russian as an additional state language has unsurprisingly been closely correlated with the political stance of successive leaders. The nationalist Viktor Yushchenko, president 2005-2010, had stipulated that Ukrainian should be the sole state language, whereas his pro-Russian successor Viktor Yanukovich, president 2010-2014, talked of promising to hold a referendum on making Russian official. Since Yanukovich's removal, the preference for Ukrainian has been strongly reasserted and in 2019 a new law was passed aiming to strengthen the common use of Ukrainian and regulating its use in the media, education, and business.

Other minority languages include Crimean Tatar spoken in Crimea; Hungarian, principally spoken in Zakarpatska oblast; and Romanian, spoken in Chernivetska oblast and Zakarpatska oblast. Ukrainian toponymy includes many influences from these and other languages, though '*such place names have*

been influenced by the Ukrainian language and assimilated into Ukrainian toponymy' [Ukraine Toponymic Guidelines, 2011].

Script and romanization

The modern Ukrainian alphabet consists of 33 letters, used to represent 38 phonemes sounds: Аа, Бб, Вв, Гг, Ґґ, Дд, Ее, Єе, Жж, Зз, Ии, Іі, Її, Йй, Кк, Лл, Мм, Нн, Оо, Пп, Рр, Сс, Тт, Уу, Фф, Хх, Цц, Чч, Шш, Щщ, Ъь, Юю and Яя; of these, four (Ґ, Є, І and Ї) do not feature in Russian Cyrillic.

In 2019, BGN and PCGN agreed to adopt the Ukrainian national romanization system for US and UK government use. The previous policy had been to apply the 1965 BGN/PCGN romanization system for Ukrainian; in 2019 BGN and PCGN agreed that the implementation of the Ukrainian national system could be considered sufficiently widespread to adopt the system for UK and US use. This national system was also adopted by the United Nations in 2012.

For reference, the differences between the two systems are as follows:

Cyrillic	Ukrainian national system 2010 (2019 BGN/PCGN Agreement)	Formerly used BGN/PCGN 1965 system
Зг	zgh	zh
Є	ye initially; ie elsewhere	ye
Ї	yi initially; i elsewhere	yi
Й	y initially; i elsewhere	y
Ю	yu initially; iu elsewhere	yu
Я	ya initially; ia elsewhere	ya
Ь	not romanized	'
'	not romanized	''

The 2010 national system for Ukrainian, adopted by BGN/PCGN in 2019, does not contain any letter-diacritic combinations and special characters in addition to the unmodified letters of the basic Roman script.

The Crimean Tatar language officially adopted a Roman-script orthography (replacing Cyrillic) in 2025. This alphabet includes the following letter+diacritic combinations in addition to the basic Roman script: â; ç; ğ; ñ; ö; ş; ü.

Sources for geographical names

Sources of information on standardised geographical names include the Acts of the Supreme Council (Verkhovna Rada) of Ukraine, state and local authorities, plus official editions of administrative maps of Ukraine and the oblasts, archive and statistical data, encyclopaedias and other reference materials.

The State Service of Geodesy, Cartography and Cadastre, State Scientific Production Enterprise "Kartohrafiya" produces many maps and atlases in Ukrainian, which are easily accessible; their website can be found here: <http://www.ukrmap.com.ua/en> though it should be noted that many of the name changes through decommunisation have not yet been reflected on the interactive mapping on this website.

Ukraine's decentralization reform website includes good up-to-date mapping, and shows the new decommunised names and the new *raion* boundaries (see Administrative structure, below) on its interactive mapping: <https://atu.decentralization.gov.ua/#>.

The UK Defence Geographic Centre has (May 2020) compiled a comprehensive list of geographical names capturing the many decommunised name changes and reflecting the PCGN policy for names. Contact PCGN for further details.

The NGA GEOnet Names Server is also a good source of names in Ukraine.

TOPONYMIC FACTFILE

Administrative structure

Ukraine is divided into 27 first-order administrative divisions, consisting of 24 oblasts (regions), one Autonomous Republic (Avtonomna Respublika Krym - Crimea), and two cities with special status (Misto Kyiv and Misto Sevastopol).

<i>Region (romanized Ukrainian)</i>	<i>Region (Ukrainian Cyrillic)</i>	<i>Anglicised region name²</i>	<i>ISO 3166-2 code</i>	<i>Centre (romanized Ukrainian)</i>	<i>Centre (Ukrainian Cyrillic)</i>
Avtonomna Respublika Krym	Автономна Республіка Крим	Crimea	UA-43	Simferopol	Сімферополь
Cherkaska oblast	Черкаська область	Cherkasy	UA-71	Cherkasy	Черкаси
Chernihivska oblast	Чернігівська область	Chernihiv	UA-74	Chernihiv	Чернігів
Chernivetska oblast	Чернівецька область	Chernivtsi	UA-77	Chernivtsi	Чернівці
Dnipropetrovska oblast	Дніпропетровська область	Dnipropetrovsk	UA-12	Dnipro ³	Дніпро
Donetska oblast	Донецька область	Donetsk	UA-14	Donetsk ⁴	Донецьк
Ivano-Frankivska oblast	Івано-Франківська область	Ivano-Frankivsk	UA-26	Ivano-Frankivsk	Івано-Франківськ
Kharkivska oblast	Харківська область	Kharkiv	UA-63	Kharkiv	Харків
Khersonska oblast	Херсонська область	Kherson	UA-65	Kherson	Херсон
Khmelnyska oblast	Хмельницька область	Khmelnyskyi	UA-68	Khmelnyskyi	Хмельницький
Kirovohradska oblast	Кіровоградська область	Kirovohrad	UA-35	Kropyvnytskyi ⁵	Кропивницький
Kyivska oblast	Київська область	Kyiv	UA-32	Kyiv	Київ
Luhanska oblast	Луганська область	Luhansk	UA-09	Luhansk ⁴	Луганськ
Lvivska oblast	Львівська область	Lviv	UA-46	Lviv	Львів

² Acceptable form for use in text and likely to be encountered in e.g. press reporting, sometimes with an English generic term, e.g. Donetsk region.

³ Previously Dnipropetrovsk

⁴ And see Other Significant Locations, below

⁵ Previously Kirovohrad

TOPONYMIC FACTFILE

<i>Region (romanized Ukrainian)</i>	<i>Region (Ukrainian Cyrillic)</i>	<i>Anglicised region name²</i>	<i>ISO 3166-2 code</i>	<i>Centre (romanized Ukrainian)</i>	<i>Centre (Ukrainian Cyrillic)</i>
Misto Kyiv	Місто Київ	Kyiv City	UA-30	Kyiv	Київ
Misto Sevastopol	Місто Севастополь	Sevastopol City	UA-40	Sevastopol	Севастополь
Mykolaivska oblast	Миколаївська область	Mykolaiv	UA-48	Mykolaiv	Миколаїв
Odeska oblast	Одеська область	Odesa	UA-51	Odesa	Одеса
Poltavska oblast	Полтавська область	Poltava	UA-53	Poltava	Полтава
Rivnenska oblast	Рівненська область	Rivne	UA-56	Rivne	Рівне
Sumska oblast	Сумська область	Sumy	UA-59	Sumy	Суми
Ternopilska oblast	Тернопільська область	Ternopil	UA-61	Ternopil	Тернопіль
Vinnytska oblast	Вінницька область	Vinnytsia	UA-05	Vinnytsia	Вінниця
Volynska oblast	Волинська область	Volyn	UA-07	Lutsk	Луцьк
Zakarpatska oblast	Закарпатська область	Zakarpattia	UA-21	Uzhhorod	Ужгород
Zaporizka oblast	Запорізька область	Zaporizhzhia	UA-23	Zaporizhzhia	Запоріжжя
Zhytomyrska oblast	Житомирська область	Zhytomyr	UA-18	Zhytomyr	Житомир

Second-order divisions

In 2020, as part of an ongoing decentralization policy in Ukraine, in Resolution number 3650 "On the creation and abolition of regions", the previous 490 second-order administrative level districts (raions and miskradas) were removed and 136 new raions were created. OPORA (a Ukrainian non-governmental organization for public oversight of elections) has created an [online map](#) of the new raions and communities in Ukraine, and Ukraine's decentralization reform website also shows these raion boundaries on its interactive mapping: <https://atu.decentralization.gov.ua/#>

Other Significant Locations

<i>PCGN Approved Name</i>	<i>Name in Ukrainian Cyrillic</i>	<i>Conventional Name (where one exists)</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Feature Type</i>
Black Sea	Чорне море (Chorne more)	Black Sea	43° 00'N 35° 00'E	Inland sea
Carpathian Mountains or Karpati ^{see footnote6}	Карпати (Karpati)	Carpathian Mountains	47° 00'N 25°30'E	Mountains
Chornobyl	Чорнобиль	Chernobyl	51° 16' 25"N 30° 13' 21"E	Abandoned populated place
Danube or Dunay ⁶	Дунай (Dunay)	Danube	45° 20' 00"N 29° 40' 00"E	River
Dniester or Dnister ⁶	Дністер (Dnister)	Dniester	46° 18' 15"N 30° 16' 25"E	River
Dnipro or Dnieper ⁶	Дніпро (Dnipro)	Dnieper	46° 29' 51"N 32° 18' 31"E	River
Kamianets-Podilskyi	Кам'янець-Подільський		48° 41' 12"N 26° 34' 50"E	Populated place
Kramatorsk ⁷	Краматорськ		48° 43' 50"N 37° 35' 17"E	Populated place
Mariupol	Маріуполь		47° 08' 09"N 37° 34' 02"E	Populated place
Mukachevo ⁸	Мукачево		48° 26' 29"N 22° 43' 13"E	Populated place
Sea of Azov	Азовське море (Azovske more)	Sea of Azov	46° 01' 47"N 36° 22' 24"E	Inland sea
Sievierodonetsk ⁹	Сєвєродонецьк		48° 56' 47"N 38° 29' 10"E	Populated place

⁶ PCGN may recommend transnational feature names (e.g. rivers and mountain ranges) be shown with their conventional English name and/or the relevant local form according to the product. Specific guidance is available on request.

⁷ Acting administrative centre of Donetsk oblast

⁸ Previously Mukacheve until 2017

⁹ Acting administrative centre of Luhanska oblast

Useful references

- BBC Country Profile (no longer updated): <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-18018002>
- CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/ukraine/>
- Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Travel Advice
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO): www.iso.org
- Languages: www.ethnologue.com, www.omniglot.com
- PCGN paper: [Crimea – Second-order administrative divisions](#)
- Ukraine: [administrative map](#) and <https://atu.decentralization.gov.ua/#>
- Ukraine “Kartohrafiya”: <http://www.ukrmap.com.ua/en>
- Unicode Consortium: www.unicode.org
- US Board on Geographic Names GONet Names Server: <http://earth-info.nga.mil/gns/html/index.html>

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