

# Business etiquette, language & culture

## Language

Ukrainian is the national language in the whole of the country, although Russian is widespread and is a major language in eastern and southern cities as well as in Crimea.

Knowledge of English varies and generally depends on the generation and industry. Younger people tend to have a level of English suitable for communication in comparison to the older generation. Contacts in heavy industries or agriculture would not usually speak English. Contrary to these, IT or creative sectors would normally have a decent command of English.

With rare exceptions, city signs are not duplicated in English so learning the Cyrillic alphabet is recommended. Learning a few words in Ukrainian is advisable, especially in the countryside, where English is not widespread.

For initial correspondence we recommend writing in Ukrainian or in Russian to ensure a higher response rate. Sending thank you letters or acknowledging nil interest is not common, therefore please do not be discouraged but pursue your enquiry. To ensure the best results for meetings, hiring an interpreter is recommended. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukraine-list-of-interpreters>.

## Meetings and presentations

Personal contacts are extremely important and if after initial correspondence, you feel that your partner is interested, we highly recommend a visit to the market. Any important issues should be discussed face-to-face. However, general introductory meetings are not always welcome and you should be ready to present your specific points even during the first appointment.

Appointments should be confirmed shortly before a meeting date and are usually difficult to arrange in advance. Smart dress code and punctuality are advisable to show respect. Hand shaking is more important than in the West and there are some associated customs such as avoiding shaking hands across a threshold. If you wish to present flowers, make sure they make an odd number.

## Negotiations

Ukrainians are hospitable and business meetings/negotiations can be quite extended. There is also a chance that natural hospitality overshadows the overall business purpose. Nevertheless, cautiousness is usual and people normally treat even basic

data as confidential, such as number of staff, turnover, etc. This information is difficult to get on the phone but can be obtained at a meeting when a link is established. When meeting with various officials, from municipalities to ministries, they may want to conclude a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Such MoUs are common in Ukraine and although they do not produce legal obligations such as commercial contracts, they are still regarded as an important part of the partnership process.

## Ukrainian public holidays

### 2019

#### **Date:**

#### **Holiday:**

Tuesday 1st January

New Year's Day

Monday 7th January

Orthodox Christmas Day

Friday 8th March

Women's Day

Sunday 28th April

Orthodox Easter Sunday

Monday 29th April

Orthodox Easter Monday (only in 2019)

Wednesday 1st May

Labour Day

Thursday 9th May

Victory Day

Sunday 16th June

Orthodox Whit Sunday

Monday 17th June

Orthodox Whit Monday (only in 2019)

Friday 28th June

Constitution Day

Saturday 24th August

Independence Day

Monday 26th August

Independence Day Holiday (only in 2019)

Monday 14th October

Defender's Day

Wednesday 25th December

Catholic Christmas Day

*(NB some dates may be subject to change)*

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