

# THE INTERNET: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN UKRAINE

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Anyone who has been following the news and information media recently cannot help but have noticed references to such terms as: *The INTERNET*, *World Wide Web* and the *Information Highway*. These terms refer to a dynamic new way that people around the world are using for communication and accessing vast amounts of computer related information.

Ukraine is also taking part in this world wide change in computer communication primarily because of two very important INTERNET projects. These projects are the **United Nations Kyiv INTERNET Project** and the **UARnet (Ukrainian Academic Research Network) based in Lviv**. These projects were necessary because the newly independent Ukraine lacked its own version of an academic and research computer network and the commercial INTERNET providers operating in Ukraine most often supplied expensive and undependable service. The commercial INTERNET providers also relied on a computer network that first passed through the Russian Federation, a holdover from the former Soviet Union, when all communication to the outside world first had to go through Moscow.

The Russian Federation requires

INTERNET traffic that is carried on a computer network originating in Ukraine to pay for the service in "hard" currency. If a Ukrainian based commercial provider failed to pay these network charges on time, then the INTERNET traffic would often be delayed or worse, the information being transmitted would simply disappear. There was also a concern by some individuals that INTERNET traffic going to or from Ukraine through the Russian Federation might be viewed by security agencies in Russia.

These were some of the reasons why the United Nations Kyiv Freenet project and the UARnet came into being. These two projects, while being funded from separate organizations, both have a similar goal and philosophy of connecting Ukrainian institutions to the rest of the world via a Ukrainian controlled and operated INTERNET system.

## The United Nations Kyiv Freenet project

In November 1994, the United Nations Office in Ukraine became the first

UN/UNDP field office to establish full INTERNET capability. Under a UNDP-financed project, "Strengthening of Information and Communications Infrastructures for Democratic Reform," the UN Office set up Kyiv's first public-access INTERNET node, the Kyiv Freenet, serving the capital city and providing e-mail and other services. In the first month of operation, over 200 institutions – including the Parliament, government ministries, academic institutes and non-governmental organizations – signed up for access, through the Kyiv Freenet, to the information superhighway. A World Wide Web server was established. NGOs were given space on the web server for their own programs, communications and projects.

All nodes on the global INTERNET are accessible from Ukraine, and the WWW server provides automatic links to a number of UN sites around the world, as well as to a whole range of institutions dealing with sustainable development. The WWW site offers an array of graphical and text information about the United Nations Office in Kyiv, while the Kyiv Freenet Project gives "not-for-profit" organizations free access to the INTERNET.

The Kyiv Freenet project now has more than 260 user organizations. Each of these organizations is given its own DOMAIN name on the Kyiv Freenet. Once the software to operate on the Kyiv Freenet is installed on an organization's computer, electronic mail addresses for authorized users can then be created. For example, the domain name that has been assigned to the Canada-Ukraine Partners Office in Kyiv is:

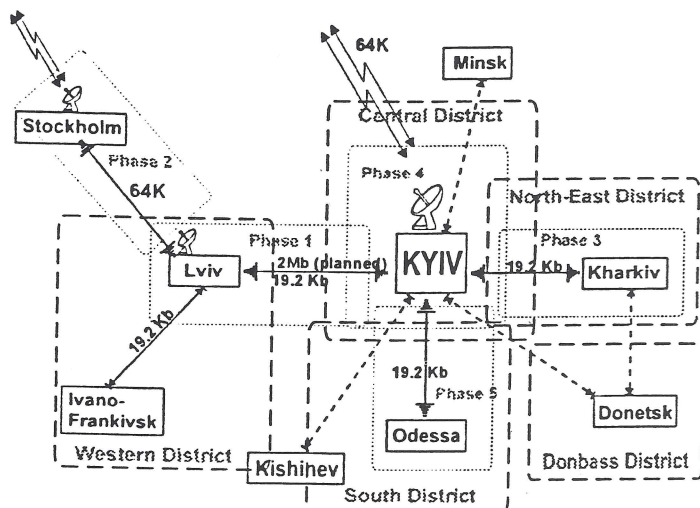
partof.freenet.kiev.ua

This office has a person who is in charge of INTERNET mail and their account name is "CUPP". The INTERNET electronic mail address of the Canada Ukraine Partners Office is a combination of its domain name and the user "CUPP" which is:

cupp@partof.freenet.kiev.ua

Once the electronic mail addresses are established, a user of the Kyiv Freenet system is able to send and receive Electronic mail to anyone else in the world who has access to INTERNET mail.

Due to the small number of phones lines that are available for the Kyiv



Current INTERNET connectivity scheme in Ukraine.