

Cultural and social impact of the Turkish Republic on Ukraine in 2008-2024

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Ukraine and the Republic of Türkiye have a complex history of bilateral relations that has developed significantly since the post-Soviet era. Although both countries were historically separated by geography and political affiliations, their relationship has evolved due to shared trade, security, and regional stability interests. Official diplomatic relations were established in 1991, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, with an Agreement on Friendship and Cooperation signed in 1992, laying the foundation for political, economic, and cultural collaboration. Despite periods of stagnation, particularly due to Türkiye's strategic focus on Europe and its improving relations with Russia, the mutual connections have particularly strengthened after 2008. Both countries have enhanced their cooperation primarily in the security and defence field. At the same time, social and cultural incorporation of Turkish national institutions and the business sector to Ukraine played a crucial role in the realization of Turkish public diplomacy.

Between 2008 and 2024, through its media diplomacy, educational initiatives, institutionalization of cultural cooperation, and business investments in the Ukrainian economy, Türkiye developed a complex model of soft power projection. The blog analysis focuses on specific data in education, media, cultural, and social developments of TR in Ukraine, conducted in [Interdependence Database](#) on Geo-Power project.

The **Yunus Emre Institute**, organized by TR in 2007 as a national institution on the enlargement of Turkish language, culture, and history in international level opened its Office in Kyiv in 2017. The establishment of the Yunus Emre Institute (YEE) in Kyiv in 2017 had a big impact of Turkish cultural outreach on Ukraine. YEE became a main center for Turkish language and culture education, officially connected to Ukrainian universities on the basis of the Turkology Protocol (formal agreements with foreign universities to support Turkish language and culture studies). According to official data, more than 5 000 Ukrainian students passed the courses organized by the Institute or participated in the Turkish language Certificate exam (2017-2024). Language summer schools, organized by Yunus Emre Ankara have accepted more than 70 students from Ukraine with full grant support.

Besides the governmental programs which also have educational impacts, we can mention here, Türkiye Bursları (Turkish Scholarships), which aims to provide funding to bachelor's and master's students from Ukraine to study at Turkish Universities. During the years before the Russian full-scale war in Ukraine, from 5 to 10 students have consistently received placements, particularly in Turkish language, international relations, and Islamic studies programs.

Additionally, several Ukrainian universities have participated in the **Mevlana Exchange Program** (analog of Erasmus programs) since 2013, including the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Kyiv B. Grinchenko University, and Odesa I. I. Mechnikov National



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University. The program facilitates short-term academic mobility between Turkish and Ukrainian institutions. The number of exchange short-term programs – both the Erasmus mobility program with the Turkish Universities and Mevlana program have has increased threefold since 2022.

The **Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA)**- national Turkish institution has actively operated in Ukraine since the 2000s with a location in Crimea. With a reinforced presence after 2014, the annexation of Crimea, TİKA office in Kyiv focused on supporting war-affected, vulnerable communities, including Crimean Tatars. The main orientation of its financial support was devoted to healthcare institutions, historical restoration (especially of Crimean Tatar and Gagauzian heritage), educational infrastructure destroyed by war and religious centers.

Turkish media diplomacy in Ukraine developed across several layers. Turkish television dramas became highly popular among Ukrainian audiences in the 2010s, contributing to a favorable perception of Turkish society and values, particularly among female viewers.

Türkiye also invested in media presence in Ukraine - the **Crimean News Agency (QHA)** relocated from Crimea to Kyiv in 2015, provides multilingual coverage in **Ukrainian, English, and Turkish**. The agency, with the support of the Turkish government, has opened its office in Ankara, reports extensively on bilateral relations, diaspora affairs, and shared threats such as Russian aggression. The other example is **Radio Hayat** station in Kyiv, the first Turkish-language radio station in Ukraine, which worked actively during 2015-2019 years

At the official level in 2011, Turkish state agency Anadolu Ajansı and Ukrainian state news agency Ukrinform signed a news exchange agreement, aimed at promoting bilateral media cooperation.

Türkiye's social and cultural impact has been reinforced through institutional economic presence in Ukraine and an increased number of investments in Ukrainian infrastructure from Turkish businesses.

The Association of Turkish Businessmen in Ukraine (TUID) and **the Turkey-Ukraine Industrialists and Businesspeople Association (TUSIB)** have become platforms for Turkish investors, facilitating networking, coordinating high-level economic missions, and promoting bilateral dialogue. **DEİK (Foreign Economic Relations Board)** coordinated regular Turkey-Ukraine Round Table Meetings, supported by Turkish and Ukrainian high-level commerce officials, helping to create business dialogue after 2022 during wartime.

In 2024, Turkish direct investments were approximately \$ 0.5 billion, and up to \$3 billion when including third-country channels, placing it in the 14th rank among all investments in Ukraine. ONUR Group, Bayrak Makina, Turksell, Limak, Ozaltin, ASELSAN and ROKETSAN became the key Turkish companies operating across different sectors in Ukraine.

In post-2022 recovery efforts, ONUR Group became actively incorporated into the engagement in the rebuilding of public infrastructure and investing in humanitarian aid.

Co-production of Bayraktar TB2 drones in Ukraine with Bayrak Makina made a contribution not



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only to economic and defence sphere but also created a strong social impact. During the war, Türkiye provided increased multi-faceted assistance to Ukraine and was quite vocal in defending Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Furthermore, Türkiye is the most prominent supporter of Ukraine's control over 219 220 the Crimean Peninsula and an advocate of Crimean Tatars living in Ukraine and abroad.

The Ukrainian-Turkish bilateral partnership is most noticeable in the sphere of economics and culture. The volume of interstate trade has been on the rise within these three years, with Türkiye being the key market for Ukrainian exports. Türkiye also largely invests in projects in Ukraine to be fulfilled now and after the war ends.

Between 2008 and 2024, Türkiye became a multifaceted actor in Ukrainian cultural, social, and institutional development. Through established programs like YEE language courses, Türkoloji protocols, TIKA office programs, media outreach, business, and national companies' investment, Turkey strengthened its presence in Ukraine's civil sphere.

Trade imbalances, geopolitical ambiguity, and security threats still remain challenging in promoting Turkish public diplomacy and developing a strong bilateral relationship. At the same time, sustained engagement of Turkish institutions, cultural projects, and strategic business entities has made Turkey a recognized and culturally visible in Ukraine.



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