

A Citizens' Struggle: combatting
disinformation by self-organised
online communities.

Perspectives from Ukraine and
Czechia



Talking about Ukrainian Wikipedia



Who is who in the wiki movement

Wikipedia: biggest encyclopedia ever, one of world's top-10 websites.

- Exists since 2001, in Ukrainian since 2004, over 300 languages
- Written and managed by a self-organised community of volunteers
- Based on online collaboration and collective decision-making

Wikimedia Ukraine: NGO supporting (but not managing) Wikipedia

- Exists since 2009, one of 38 similar organisations worldwide
- Incorporated in Ukraine, 100+ volunteers and small paid staff.



Who can edit?

Almost everybody.

Wikipedia is written by volunteers, for most people it's a hobby or a way of self-expression.

Most editors are not experts (some are, but that's not required).

Most of them deeply care about the project.



How can you trust Wikipedia?

Of course, Wikipedia is not perfect and is not 100% never wrong. But:

- It has a broad set of rules to ensure it's actually an encyclopedia;
- A broad community enforces (and maintains) these rules;
- Wikipedia is based on reliable sources which are displayed in articles;
- Everybody can edit: most fakes are deleted almost immediately.



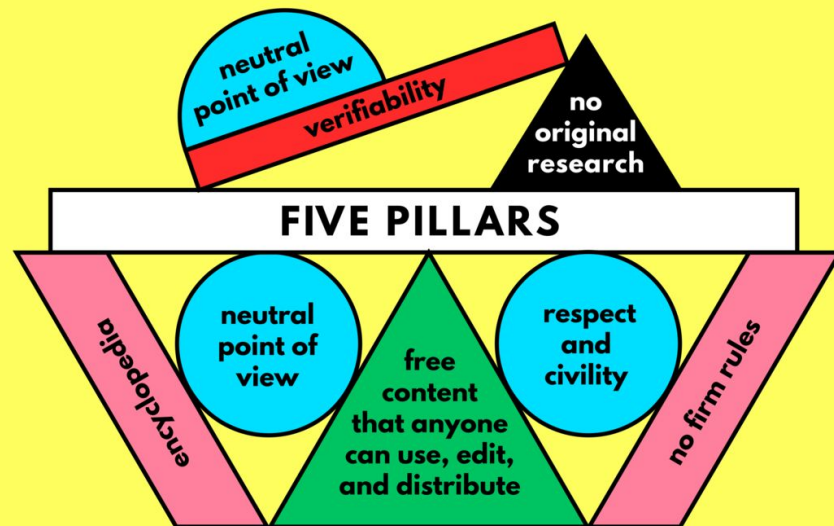
Sets of rules

Wikipedia requires reliable sources and neutral point of view.

All information should be confirmed by a reliable source.

No opinion or view should be given an undue weight, and only notable viewpoints should be mentioned.

Own theories or conclusions not accepted unless published in a peer-reviewed source.



Broad community behind Wikipedia

Thousands of people create and maintain Ukrainian Wikipedia content:

- >9000 people a month make at least one edit, >1000 regulars. Any of them can edit (almost any) article or participate in a discussion.
- >500 reviewers and rollbackers have tools to review articles.
- 47 administrators can delete or protect articles or (un)block users.
- Technical tools: watchlist notifications, robots, automated filters...



Reliable sources in articles

- Any reader can see what sources were used in a given article.
 - If all sources are unreliable, article may be deleted.
- Information without sources may be removed (and regularly is).
- Known disinformation websites or sources lacking quality review are explicitly banned and cannot be used on Wikipedia.
- Secondary sources (e.g. analysis, evaluation) are strongly preferred to primary (e.g. someone's diary or speech), especially for living people.



Editing in practice

Most articles can be edited by anyone, registered or not.

A destructive edit can be auto rejected if it matches a pattern.

Even if it passes, it is usually labelled for review by humans.

The more popular the topic is, the more people watch it and the faster they will notice and remove.



Версія за 16:19, 24 лютого 2022 (ред.)

[REDACTED] (обговорення)

(Мітки: Редагування з

мобільного пристрою,

Редагування через мобільну

версію)

← Попереднє редагування

Рядок 1:

```
[[Файл:Flag of Russia.svg|border|right|120px]]
```

Версія за 16:21, 24 лютого 2022 (ред.) (скасувати)

Леонід Панасюк (обговорення

| внесок)

(Скасування редагування №

34728032 користувача

[REDACTED] (обговорення))

(Мітки: Скасування, Посилання на сторінки неоднозначності)

Наступне редагування →

Рядок 1:

```
+ {{Інші значення|Одеса (значення)}}{{!}}Одеса}}
```

```
+ {{Місто України
```

```
+ | назва = Одеса
```

```
+ | прапор =
```

Ukrainian Wikipedia community during the war



Wikipedia as a source of information

- With the war's start, readers were desperately looking for information – from general context to recipes of a Molotov cocktail
- Audiences for news media immediately skyrocketed – and Wikipedia readership also grew

106,877,169 user views in UkWiki in April, second highest month in history. The leader – the article about Russia's invasion itself – raked in 3 million views in less than six months, an absolute record for UkWiki



Community capacity

Increased readership put a strain on the volunteer community – at the very time when Wikipedia was of the least interest to many of the volunteers affected by the war

User activity decreased sharply at the beginning (108,237 user edits in UkWiki in March – 40% decrease year-over-year). By early June, 68% of Wikimedia Ukraine members surveyed reported their activity had decreased since the all-out invasion. The situation became better over the summer but worsens again with widespread power blackouts.



Community resiliency

That said, the community has been more resilient than one might have feared:

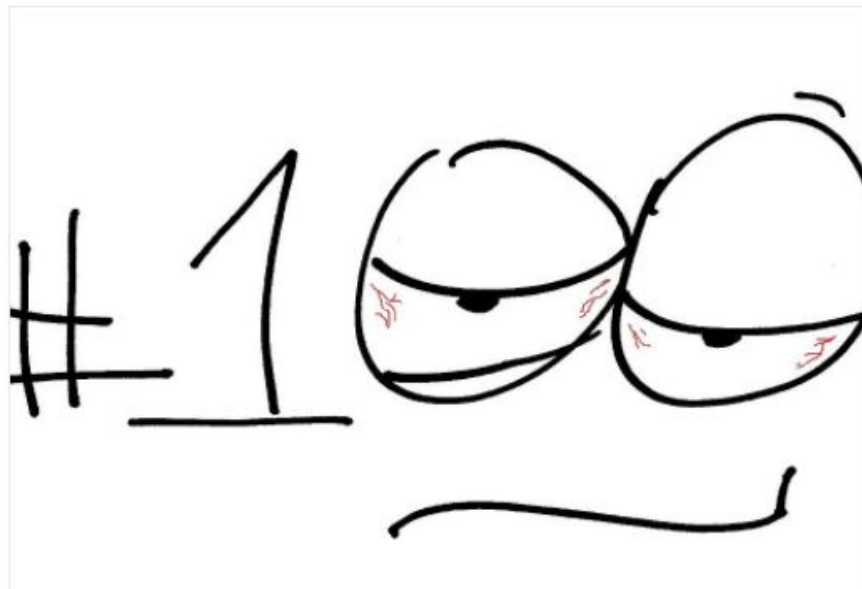
- many people have continued to volunteer for Wikipedia while in wartorn Ukraine as a way to be useful and keep mental sanity;
- Ukrainians living abroad doubled down on their activity;
- different avenues of coordinated response emerged.





Editing Wikipedia from a bomb shelter in Kharkiv, Ukraine – Viacheslav Mamon's story

30 August 2022 by Anton Protsiuk



New article on Wikipedia every day – completing the #100wikidays challenge during the war

22 June 2022 by Anton Protsiuk

(Some of the) responses

- **Fast-tracked decision making among the volunteer community** – e.g. temporary administrators under a simplified procedure
- **Support from the international volunteer community** – e.g. global administrators helping fight destructive edits



(Some of the) responses

- **Institutional support:**

- Wikimedia Foundation – overall support + tech maintenance
- Wikimedia Ukraine – working with specific community members to help with specific needs
- other Wikimedia organizations from Europe & beyond



So, UkWiki didn't fall victim to rampant misinformation, did it?

It didn't.

Existing structures and barriers, community resilience, institutional support have helped keep Ukrainian Wikipedia up and running.

That said, there're many long-term challenges, especially now that we're in the war of attrition & Russia's deliberate targeting of civilian infrastructure plunges Ukrainian cities into literal darkness.



Czech Wikipedia

With 514K articles it's the 28th largest Wikipedia (out of about 320)

Approximately 4 million pages viewed per day.



- 850 verified editors, 30 administrators
- an average of 3384 vandalisms per month (~113 vandalisms per day) are returned
- ! [Croatian WP Disinformation Assessment 2021!](#)

There are currently 46 active pro-Kremlin disinformation websites in the Czech Republic. Although their number has decreased from 52 year-on-year, they are still active.

Last year, they published 197 177 articles, which is 6% more than the previous year, according to data provided by the European Values Center for Security Policy.

Source:

<https://www.ceskovdatech.cz/clanek/176-dezinformace/>



L. M. Glackens, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

How propaganda has affected Czech WP since the Russian invasion of Ukraine

- **Russian-Ukrainian government**: A trend table "summarizing" the behavior of the different actors - link to historical version - table reflects more of a Russian perspective (although it pretended to reflect both) - was reverted within days (added 5/14, reverted 6/6 - noticed by an unlogged user and deleted - checked by patroller and removed)
- **Russian invasion of Ukraine (2022)**: sourcing efforts by Aeronet, "bombing of residential settlements in Donbas based on Ukrainian army plan"
- **Brezhnev's nationality: Russian/Ukrainian**: Substitution of nationality back and forth by various users, probably in response to Russian propaganda.

- News list:

<https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/tech-technologie-internet-rus-ci-ukrajinec-ceska-wikipedie-bojuje-o-breznevovu-narodnost-212366>



How propaganda affected Czech WP in the past

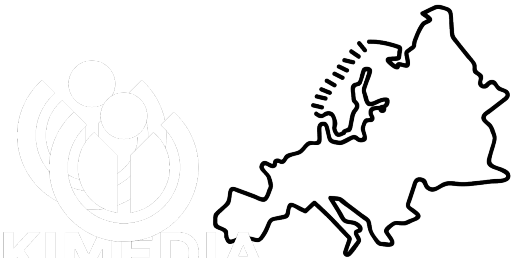
- **2020-2021: [Crimea peninsula](#)**: the article has long featured a pro-Russian view

"The US and EU expressed support for the 2014 unconstitutional coup and, according to the current opposition in Ukraine, even financed and organized the coup"

Article titled: "How Czech Wikipedia is occupying Crimea."

<https://www.respekt.cz/agenda/jak-ceska-wikipedie-okupuje-krym>

- **2020: [Stalin](#)**: the shift of the article from neutrality "Expansion into the Baltics and Bessarabia" => "Reclaiming the Baltics and Bessarabia" and more



WIKIMEDIA CZECH REPUBLIC ACTIVITIES

Educational Programs

We fulfill our mission to contribute to a world of free and open knowledge and lifelong learning. Through our Programs for Schools, Seniors Write Wikipedia, and Open Education Program, we strive to attract newcomers, spread awareness of Wikimedia projects, and deepen relationships and activities within the Czech community.

Programs for Community

We support editors and photographers who volunteer to create free content for Wikipedia, Commons, Wikidata and other Wikimedia projects. We provide support, resources, and motivation to both the new and more experienced members of the wiki community who edit, photograph, or organize events for others. These most often take the form of events, contests, or grants.

Programs for Partnerships

In our Programs for Partnerships, we bring together GLAM, Wikidata/Tech and Advocacy to collaboratively acquire, disseminate, and advocate for digitized collection of open source (or potentially open source) works, objects and data, in the most effective way. We are setting partnerships with cultural and other institutions and we build Wikidata – an open, collaboratively developed international networked data infrastructure.



Our vision

"Together we are building a world in which every person has free access to all human knowledge and the right to contribute to it freely."

Educational Programs

Seniors Write Wikipedia

The life wisdom of seniors will find its place at Wikipedia, while they will find their place in the digital world and gain a new and meaningful hobby. Professor Sokol and other editors came up with the idea for the Seniors Write Wikipedia courses in 2013. Since then, in addition to senior courses across the country, we have been providing online support, organizing Senior WikiTowns and other educational events.



Author: Kibakn999, Seniors p81 | Wikimedia, F12ef 2018 02.jpg, CC BY-SA 4.0

Activity: Programs for Libraries

We are dedicated to working with libraries and librarians who often host and lead our courses. Through our courses and workshops, librarians learn how to use Wikipedia and pass on this skill. We work with libraries in the field of media literacy support and regularly involve them in the global campaign #LiblRef, i.e. one librarian = one citation added on Wikipedia.

Open Educational Program

Wikimedia is here for anyone with a burning love for education. You do not seem to fit any of our target groups? Don't worry! Get in touch anyway, everyone can get involved. We'll help you take your first steps in the Wikiworld.

Sign up for a course, come to one of our Wiki-Clubs or read our editing guides. Live or online, there's something for everyone.



Author: Štěpán Pech, Editor: Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, Evropské přílohy (9) | CC BY-SA

Programs for Schools

Wikipedia belongs to education. That's why we offer a wide range of collaborative activities for schools and educators, such as Wikipedia seminars, digital literacy or topical Wikipedia writing workshops. Contact us and we will create a tailor-made project for you.

Activity: Teach (with) Wiki

We are teaching educators to teach using Wikipedia. Through the Ministry of Education's accredited courses, we help teachers integrate critical thinking and digital literacy development into the education of elementary and high school students. The program teaches students how to work with resources and information.

Activity: Students Write Wikipedia

Let's put an end to the term papers that nobody reads. The future belongs to open and shared knowledge. We teach students to write and use Wikipedia.

We provide a platform for students and teachers to submit credited work in the form of Wikipedia articles. Using the tools of Toolkit, teachers can assign entries for students to write and track their activity. This creates validated content and a chance to create term papers and articles in a meaningful way all at the same time.



WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia



Author: Štěpán Pech, Editor: Shared

THANK YOU

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