

## Results of the international language and literature competition for gifted youth of Ukraine

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### ABSTRACT

The article provides the analysis of the results of the Taras Shevchenko International Language and Literature Competition for Pupils and Student Youth in 2018-2022. The methods of the quantitative analysis were used to determine the number of participants and winners of the competition (diplomas of I, II, and III degree) in each region of Ukraine, as well as among the foreign participants. It was found that over the past 5 years, 3,384 people from 24 regions of Ukraine and the city of Kyiv participated in the language and literature competition. The winners were 1,636 people, which is 48.3% of the total number of participants. It was found that 240 participants from 16 countries around the world took part in the competition. The obtained results will allow us to identify the regions of Ukraine and its international partners who actively participated in the competition; Departments of Education and Science of Ukraine will be able to popularize the Ukrainian language and enhance the involvement of gifted youth in intellectual competitions. The further research will provide the quantitative analysis of participants who are going to take part in All-Ukrainian competitions in 2023-2024 academic years.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The modern realities of life demand that more attention should be paid to gifted youth who can significantly influence the social and economic development within the region, country, and the world. Support and development of talented youth is carried out at different stages of their formation and in various directions. It is important for adults to timely identify children's potential in a certain area of knowledge, so that in the future they could make the maximum contribution during their professional activity [1]. Usually, pre-developed criteria [2] and diagnostic tools are used to identify gifted students [3]. Parents play a very important role, since they determine their children's educational needs, form value orientations, help to solve emotional and social arguments [4]. Considerable work on diagnostics and development of gifted youth is carried out at school [5], [6].

Along with the traditional educational process, development and support of gifted youth takes place during non-formal education [7], or in combination of non-formal and traditional education [1]. The kinds of extracurricular development for gifted pupils and students are summer schools, Olympiads, contests, tournaments. Most intellectual competitions deal with natural and exact sciences, including biology [8],

physics [9], mathematics [10]. Pupils can show their creative abilities at architecture competitions [11], textile craft [12], music [13], [14], radio drama competition [15], digital stories [16], languages [17]. Ukraine is also focused on comprehensive support of gifted youth, involving them in various intellectual and creative competitions at the local, regional and international levels. The Taras Shevchenko International Language and Literature Competition for Pupils and Student Youth is quite well-known. Pupils, cadets, students of professional (vocational and technical) and higher education have participated in it for 12 years.

The main goal of the research is to quantitatively analyze the results of the language and literature competition over the past 5 years (2018-2022). This will allow us to identify the regions of Ukraine and its international partners that actively participated in the language and literature competition and popularized the Ukrainian language. Besides, quantitative indicators across the regions are of practical importance. In every region, there are postgraduate education institutes which are in charge of conducting III (regional) stage and which report to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine on the number of participants involved in the competition. On the basis of the obtained results, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine directs the activity of specialized educational and research institutions at the popularization of the Ukrainian language and better involvement of gifted youth in intellectual competitions.

## **2. THE COMPREHENSIVE THEORETICAL BASIS**

### **2.1. Involvement of gifted youth in intellectual and creative competitions**

Gifted youth often attract researchers' attention due to their uniqueness or specificity. Depending on the context, this category includes a group of people who have high academic achievements in certain sciences, significant intellectual abilities and personal qualities, or those who can find unique approaches to solving problems [18]. Researchers pay attention to the top leadership qualities [19], the high motivation for acquiring new knowledge, the ability to be creative while solving different tasks. At the same time, gifted youth face certain risks and problems due to the nature of their uniqueness [20].

Since talent is a multidimensional feature of personality [2], it is recommended to identify talented children at the level of primary school. As a rule, the class teacher and consultant, based on observations of the child and communication with his parents, is able to see the features of uniqueness and roughly determine the type of giftedness: creative, intellectual, social, academic, and artistic. Teachers and counsellors are able to direct the creative and scientific activities of gifted students, as well as to prevent crisis situations in the classroom during learning and communication. This goal can be realized through the use of appropriate diagnostic tools [3]. On the other hand, in order to solve these tasks, teachers must have appropriate training and personal qualities: professional authority, enthusiasm, and benevolence. They ought to have developed problem-solving skills in order to develop them in gifted children [5]. Also, they ought to apply different forms and methods of teaching and to explain the educational material clearly. The important issue is the formation of critical thinking and value orientations as for the gender roles [6].

An effective way of intellectual and creative development of gifted youth is participation in competitions, which are considered one of the types of informal education [8]. They allow students to realize their talents, to increase self-confidence, to develop creativity [12] and critical thinking skills. A characteristic feature of competitions is the positive contest between participants, solving a number of tasks [1], which involve a much higher level of complexity compared to the school course [10], the use of a wide range of methods of scientific knowledge. In the process of preparation for intellectual or creative competitions, pupils/students accumulate their own experience, develop skills and abilities in a certain field, learn to solve practical tasks. To do this, they use various means and methods: they study scientific and professional literature; they do the tasks offered at competitions in previous years [21]; they have consultations with teachers and participants of previous competitions; they have additional classes with tutors. A wide range of electronic resources and technologies can also be used, including science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)-education [22], immersive technologies [23], online flipped classrooms [24], massive open online courses [25], virtual laboratories [26], and educational platforms.

Today, we can observe that competitions and Olympiads are held in various fields of science and technology. Depending on the competition, participants improve their professional skills and personal competencies: communication and language skills [17], ability to work in a team, self-confidence [15]; written communication skills, mathematical and graphical skills; critical and creative thinking, and initiative [16]. In addition, during the competition, participants communicate with experienced professionals in a certain field of knowledge, they get into a positive environment and communicate with other participants who have similar abilities, they visit fascinating tourist sites, and other educational institutions.

## 2.2. Conducting intellectual and creative competitions in Ukraine

In Ukraine, national and international competitions for gifted youth are supported by the National Centre “Minor Academy of Sciences of Ukraine”, the State Scientific Institution “Institute of Education Content Modernization”, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, institutions of postgraduate pedagogical education, higher education institutions, and non-governmental public organizations. Students of the Minor Academy of Sciences, as well as all willing pupils and students, can participate in intellectual competitions organized by the Institute of Education Content Modernization. Pupils of forms 5-11, students of vocational and technical educational institutions, students of higher education institutions participate in competitions (Olympiads, contests, and tournaments).

At the all-Ukrainian level, everyone can participate in the following intellectual competitions, such as: physics competition “Levenia”; “smart” devices modeling competition “Steam House”; “Robotrafik” competition; open Ukrainian language marathon; Ukrainian studies game “Soniashnyk”; and creative essay competition “One Day”. They are joined mainly by students of secondary schools, lyceums, and gymnasiums. In addition, everyone can participate in competitions organized by non-governmental institutions. An example can be the All-Ukrainian student literary and artistic competition “Paths of Kameniar”, founded by the Ivan Franko International Foundation, and the essay contest “My Shevchenko”, founded by the public organization “Innovative Horizons of Ukraine”. The international competitions held in Ukraine include: the Taras Shevchenko language and literature competition for pupils and student youth; competition of young historians “Leleka”; Ukrainian language competition named after Petro Yatsyk; “Kangaroo” mathematical contest; game on the world literature “Sunflower”; competition in informatics and computer skills “Bober”; interactive nature competition “Kolosok”; and natural history game “Helianthus”. The conditions of participation, the age of participants, the rules of evaluation are specified in the rules which are developed for a specific competition and published on the website of the official organizing institution.

## 3. METHOD

During the research, we used several theoretical methods. Analysis and synthesis of scientific literature on the research issues to determine the impact of intellectual competitions on the development of gifted children, and the state of organization of intellectual competitions in Ukraine. Analysis of domestic regulatory documentation which defines the rules and terms of the Taras Shevchenko language and literature competition. The methods of quantitative analysis were used to determine the number of participants and winners of the language and literature competition in each region of Ukraine, as well as foreign participants in the competition.

Over the past 5 years, 3,384 people from Ukraine and 240 people from other countries have taken part in the Taras Shevchenko International Language and Literature Competition. The sample was made on the basis of the published orders of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine on the results of the competition: 2018 (Order No. 900 dated 10.08.2018 “On the results of the VIII Taras Shevchenko International Language and Literature Competition for Pupils and Student Youth, held for Ukrainian pupils and students living outside Ukraine”), 2019 (Order No. 978 dated 11.07.2019 “On the results of the IX Taras Shevchenko International Language and Literature Competition for Pupils and Student Youth, held for Ukrainian pupils and students living outside Ukraine”), 2020 (Order No. 1153 dated 18.09.2020 “On the results of the X Taras Shevchenko International Language and Literature Competition for Pupils and Student Youth, held for Ukrainian pupils and students living outside Ukraine”). Beginning from 2021, the titles of the orders were slightly changed: 2021 (Order No. 513 dated 07.05.2021 “On awarding the winners of XI Taras Shevchenko International Language and Literature Competition for Pupils and Student Youth”), 2022 (Order No. 631 dated 15.05.2022 “On awarding the winners of XII Taras Shevchenko International Language and Literature Competition for Pupils and Student Youth”).

The obtained data were grouped according to several criteria, namely: the number of participants, the number of winners, the number of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd degree diplomas, and the year. It allowed us to reveal the dynamics of pupils and students’ participation in the language and literature competition over the past 5 years. For the quantitative analysis of scholarship holders, the criteria for grouping data were the year, the number of scholarship holders, and the region. Since the number of scholarship holders is the same every year, we were able to identify the regions with the minimum and maximum number of scholarship holders.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Features of organization of Taras Shevchenko International Language and Literature Competition for Pupils and Student Youth

Recently, the demand for participation in competitions for knowledge of the state language and national traditions has increased in Ukraine. One of such competitions is the Taras Shevchenko International Language and Literature Competition for Pupils and Student Youth. It is held for students of general secondary education, students of vocational and technical education, cadets, students of vocational pre-higher education and higher education. Participants have an opportunity to demonstrate the poetic heritage of Great Kobzar, reflect on the meaning of life, demonstrate their own civic position, and receive an invaluable lesson in morality and patriotic strengthening. The competition is regulated by the decree of the President of Ukraine dated September 30, 2010 "On the Taras Shevchenko International Language and Literature Competition for Pupils and Student Youth", by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated June 1, 2011 No. 571 "on approval of the regulations on the Taras Shevchenko International Language and Literature Competition for Pupils and Student Youth".

Conducting the competition involves several stages. Four stages are held for pupil competitions: school stage (October), district/city stage (November), regional stage (December), and final stage (February). Student competitions take place in three stages: at the level of an educational institution (November), regional (December), and final one (February). Such stages make it possible to identify the best participants who can present their knowledge and abilities at the national level during the final stage. Participants living outside Ukraine join the international language and literature competition only at the final stage.

The development of tasks for each stage is carried out by the institution that manages the process: i) stage I—educational institutions where the competition is held; ii) stage II—district education department; iii) stage III—institutes of postgraduate education; and iv) the final stage—the Institute of Education Content Modernization, Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. Tasks are prepared separately for each age category: for pupils of forms 5-11; cadets; students of professional (vocational and technical) education. For students of vocational pre-higher and higher education, there are tasks on the humanities and not humanities. Depending on the age category, participants are offered a different amount of time to complete the tasks. For 5-7 form students –2 astronomical hours; for 8-9 form students –3 astronomical hours; 4 astronomical hours are given to students of forms 10-11, cadets, students of vocational and technical, and higher education institutions.

We would like to emphasize the fact that sometimes competitions lack the principles of transparency and healthy competition between teams [14]. However, it is not the case with this language and literature competition. To ensure the principles of academic integrity, each stage involves the creation of the organizing committee and competent jury. At the first stage of the competition, the jury is formed from the staff of the educational institution where intellectual competitions are held. At the second stage, representatives of the district and city education departments join the jury. During the third stage, employees of the Department of Education and Science of regional administrations join the organizing committee and the jury. Specialists of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine are involved in the final stage. During the formation of the jury, a person's specialty, work experience, position, and educational institution where he works are taken into account.

### 4.2. The qualitative analysis results

Over the past 5 years, 3,384 people have taken part in the Taras Shevchenko International Language and Literature Competition. Out of them, according to the regulations on conducting competitions, 1,636 people became winners, which is 48.3% of the total number of participants. The generalized data on participants and winners of the language and literature competition are presented in Figure 1.

As seen in Figure 1, in 2019 the maximum number of participants (900 people) was involved, which is 37.6% of the total number of participants for five years. The fewest number of participants was in 2021 (339 people, 10% of the total number of participants for five years). If we compare the obtained indicators for 2019 and 2021, we can state a threefold decrease in the number of participants. It can be explained by the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in Ukraine. As a result, the language and literature competition were held in a distant mode. At that time, some regions failed to provide the distant format of the competition in time, which slowed down the support of gifted youth with the help of appropriate competitions. At the same time, in 2022, the number of participants increased and numbered 635 people (18.8% of the total number of participants for five years).

All winners of the language and literature competition receive diplomas of the I, II, and III degree. For 5 years (2018-2022), out of 1,636 winners, 246 people (15% of the total number of participants) received a diploma of the first degree, 548 people received a diploma of the second degree (35% of the total number of participants), 842 people received a diploma of the third degree (50% of the total number of participants). A more detailed quantitative analysis of the winners is presented in Figure 2.

The winners of the Taras Shevchenko International Language and Literature Competition for Pupils and Student Youth, who scored the maximum number of points at the final stage, become scholarship holders of the President of Ukraine. There were 39 annual scholarships of the President of Ukraine are solemnly awarded by the President himself as the highest award at the state level. The distribution of scholarships of the President of Ukraine takes place as: pupils of forms 5-11 (three scholarships for each form, 21 scholarships); students of vocational and technical educational institutions (three scholarships); cadets of higher military educational institutions (three scholarships); students of vocational pre-higher education (three scholarships each for the humanities and not humanities areas, and six scholarships); students of higher education institutions (three scholarships each for the humanities and not humanities areas, and six scholarships). Generalized data on scholarship holders of the President of Ukraine for 5 years are presented in Table 1.

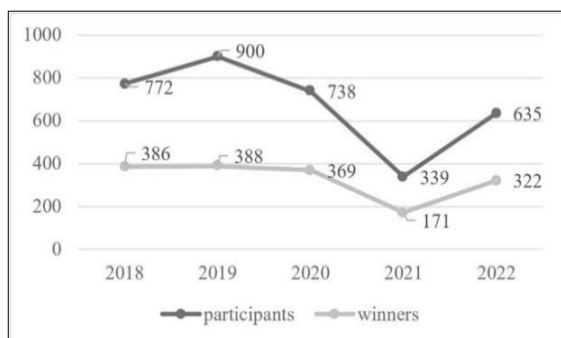


Figure 1. The number of participants and winners in Ukraine over the past 5 year

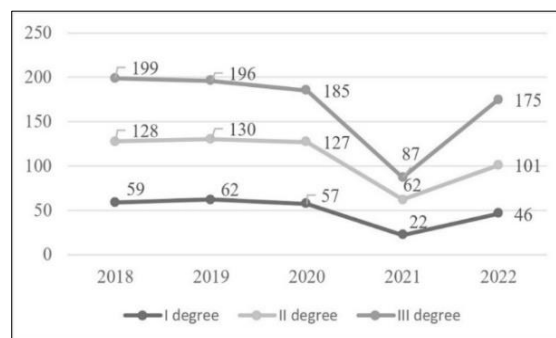


Figure 2. The number of the I, II, and III degree diplomas over the past 5 years

Table 1. The number of scholarship holders of the president of Ukraine by region

Regions	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
Vinnitsia	2	2	1	5	2	12
Volyn	1	2	2	-	2	7
Dnipropetrovsk	1	-	-	-	-	1
Donetsk	3	1	1	2	-	7
Zhytomyr	1	-	-	-	-	1
Zakarpattia	2	3	3	-	4	12
Zaporizhzhia	2	1	-	1	2	6
Ivano-Frankivsk	3	2	2	-	4	11
The city of Kyiv	5	4	4	3	4	20
Kyiv	2	1	-	1	-	4
Kirovohrad	-	-	-	2	2	4
Luhansk	1	1	1	-	2	5
Lviv	2	2	-	6	1	11
Mukolaiv	2	2	4	-	3	11
Odesa	1	2	2	-	2	7
Poltava	1	1	-	-	-	2
Rivne	1	2	3	-	2	8
Sumy	1	2	2	3	2	10
Ternopil	1	1	1	2	2	7
Kharkiv	1	1	4	3	-	9
Kherson	1	2	1	-	1	5
Khmelnysk	-	1	1	5	1	8
Cherkasy	1	4	3	2	1	11
Chernivtsi	1	2	-	-	-	3
Chernihiv	2	-	4	3	2	11
Total	39	39	39	38	39	193

Based on the analysis of Table 1, it can be seen that only four regions (Vinnitsia, Sumy, Ternopil, and Cherkasy) and the city of Kyiv had scholarship holders every year. The maximum number of scholarship holders over the past 5 years was in the city of Kyiv (20 winners), Vinnitsia, Zakarpattia (12 winners each), Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Mykolaiv and Cherkasy (11 people each) regions. There were fewer scholarship holders from Dnipropetrovsk and Zhytomyr regions, which were represented by only 1 scholarship holder over the past five years.

Since the language and literature competition is international, there are gifted young people among the participants who live outside Ukraine. For the past five years (2018-2022), only 2018, 2019, and 2020 were presented at the international level. It can be explained by the fact that in 2021 and 2022 participation in the competition was impossible due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. The winners of the international level were included in the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science. Quantitative indicators that demonstrate the participation of Ukrainians living outside Ukraine in the Taras Shevchenko International Language and Literature Competition for Pupils and Student Youth for 3 years are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The number of participants/winners of the competition outside Ukraine

Country	2018		2019		2020	
	Participants	Winners	Participants	Winners	Participants	Winners
Germany	6	3	–	–	–	–
The Republic of Belarus	8	4	–	–	28	14
The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	6	3	12	6	18	9
Georgia	4	2	–	–	–	–
Turkey	4	2	–	–	–	–
The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan	4	2	–	–	–	–
The Kingdom of Sweden	8	4	4	2	8	4
Uzbekistan	2	1	–	–	–	–
The USA	12	6	–	–	–	–
The Hellenic Republic	4	2	–	–	–	–
The Kingdom of Belgium	4	2	10	5	10	5
Canada	2	1	–	–	–	–
The Republic of Moldova	–	–	28	14	46	23
Hungary	–	–	2	1	–	–
Romania	–	–	6	3	–	–
Poland	–	–	–	–	4	2
Total	64	32	62	31	114	57

Table 2 shows that the distribution of the number of participants by year is 27% (64 people) in 2018, 26% (62 people) in 2019 and 47% (114 people) in 2020. The smallest number of participants was in 2019 (62 participants), and the largest number was in 2020 (114 participants). For three years the largest number of participants was represented by the Republic of Moldova (74 people, 31% of the total number of participants), the Republic of Belarus (36 participants, 15% of the total number of participants), the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (36 participants, 15% of the total number of participants). If we analyze the number of participating countries, 12 countries joined the competition in 2018, and 6 countries in 2019 and 2020, respectively. There are countries that participated in the competition for three years: the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Kingdom of Sweden, and the Kingdom of Belgium. Representatives from the Republic of Moldova and the Republic of Belarus participated in the competition twice. Other countries took part in the competition only once, mostly in 2018. All winners living outside Ukraine were awarded diplomas of the I, II, and III degrees, as seen in Figure 3.

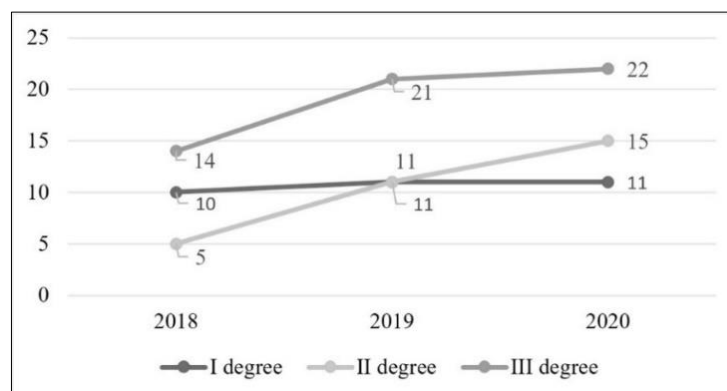


Figure 3. The number of the I, II, and III degree diplomas for 3 years

Based on the analysis of Figure 3, it can be concluded that out of 240 participants living outside Ukraine, 120 people became winners. That is, the number of winners was 50% of the number of participants. This indicator corresponds to the regulatory framework for conducting intellectual competitions in Ukraine (in this case, it is the regulations on the competition). If we analyze the number of diplomas depending on the degree, then we have the following indicators: 32 diplomas (27% of the total number of winners) of the first degree, 31 diplomas (26%) of the second degree and 57 diplomas (47%) of the third degree.

#### 4.3. Discussion

In most countries, gifted youth are considered the nation's elite. Therefore, time and resources are spent on it, and it is involved in various activities. It might be due to the potential opportunities of talented children and their focus on the good of society [18]. Support and development of gifted youth should be provided by parents, educational institutions and relevant ministries [1]. It is important that headteachers should understand giftedness since school is the place where the diagnosis and development of gifted youth takes place [27]. In this way, continuity will be ensured in the preparation of talented young people for adulthood, the time when they can best apply their talent for public benefit. On the other hand, the level of support and development of gifted youth is not always sufficient. It is explained by the features of national consciousness [7], crisis situations occurring in the country [28], low level of income [29], [30], and other reasons.

Let us note that gifted youth sometimes fail to participate in various competitions due to objective and subjective reasons. For example, it can be demonstrated by the low rate of participation in the language and literature competition in 2020 (339 people, 10% of the total number of participants for 5 years) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At that time, many intramural events were canceled due to the imposed restrictions. Over time, the competition organizers, including those in Ukraine, found a way out of the problematic situation through the use of the distance mode. This is a natural step, since the fourth industrial revolution significantly affects technological innovations, development of digital capabilities and technologies, global communication and the need for talented people [31]. In research works, there are reports of online physics competitions [9], playing the piano [13]. In the case of conducting online events, development of pupils and students' social competence for effective communication and interaction at a distance becomes important [32]. In addition, a significant responsibility for the organization of learning and communication in a distance format is laid on teachers and parents who ought to master digital technologies and support gifted children [33].

An important condition for participation in various competitions is a stable motivation for self-development [9] and win. In this context, previous work [18] indicates a correlation between the increase of moral interest and the development of intelligence. Children should be encouraged to participate in competitions, they should be told about benefits, and they should be prepared for competitions throughout the year. To do this, you can use the tasks of increased complexity in the preparation process [21], interviews with participants of previous years' competitions [15], and orientation to meeting new friends. The work [13] indicate the possibility of employment based on the results of the competition, which is also considered a significant factor in increasing motivation to participate in the competition.

In any case, it is necessary to note the achievements of students who won competitions or took high positions there [1]. In the case of the international language and literature competition, 39 winners of the final stage are awarded a scholarship of the President of Ukraine. It should be noted that not only gifted youth receive incentives for participating in competitions. The victory of pupils/students in international and national competitions is taken into account as quantitative indicators when calculating the overall rating of schools/universities. The teacher counts the victory of the student who he was preparing for the competition as one of the licensing conditions for carrying out educational activities at a higher education institution.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

All in all, an effective way of talented youth's intellectual and creative development is participation in various competitions which are one of the types of non-formal education. Recently, the demand for participation in competitions where students can demonstrate their level of the state language, civic position, and patriotism has increased in Ukraine. Over the past 5 years, 3,384 people from 24 regions of Ukraine and the city of Kyiv have joined the Taras Shevchenko International Language and Literature Competition for Pupils and Student Youth. Among them, 1,636 people received the I, II, and III degree diplomas, which is 48.3% of the total number of participants. The highest award of the international language and literature competition is the annual award of 39 scholarships of the President of Ukraine. The maximum number of scholarship holders over the last 5 years is in the city of Kyiv, Vinnytsia, Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Mykolaiv, and Cherkasy regions.

There were 240 participants from 16 countries took part in the Taras Shevchenko International Language and Literature Competition in 2018-2020. Most often, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Kingdom of Sweden, and the Kingdom of Belgium joined the competition. A total of 120 participants became winners and received 32 diplomas of the first degree (27% of the total number of winners), 31 diplomas of the second degree (26% of the total number of winners), and 57 diplomas of the third degree (47% of the total number of winners). Further research will provide a quantitative analysis of participants from Ukraine and abroad who will take a part in the competition in 2023.

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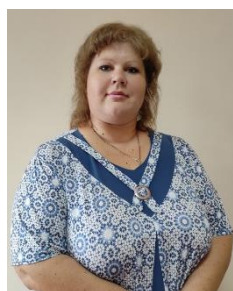
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