

Wspólnie
tworzymy
szkoły
możliwości

Refugee students in Polish schools.

Where are we at the start of another school
year?

Report from a qualitative study conducted by Badania i Działania for the
Center for Civic Education.

Magdalena Tędziągolska, prof. Bartłomiej Walczak, dr Kamil M. Wielecki



Dear Reader!

In Polish schools, there are almost 150,000 young people who fled the war in their home country. One-fourth of Polish classrooms have at least one Ukrainian child.

The Polish school has welcomed refugees with open arms, and the education authorities have created institutional solutions that enable them to continue learning. Teachers still need additional external support – from the educational authorities, administrative bodies, teacher education centers, and social organizations.

Our education system can address all students' emotional and social needs – Polish and Ukrainian- only when conditions that favor educational integration are created in all schools.

At the Center for Civic Education, we have been carrying out actions that help schools work with new students since February 2022. Over 50,000 teachers and administrators from around 4,000 schools have benefitted from these actions thus far. Our efforts are based on knowledge that comes from research that is continuously being pursued further.

The „Refugee students in Polish schools" report presents such unique, country-wide research results. With it, we have gained deep insight into the situation in Polish schools, and we've come closer to learning how they address the needs of Polish and Ukrainian students.

The researchers describe how education is organized, identifying the most effective solutions. They establish what the teachers need to do, to work effectively in the new reality. They point out the problems that require immediate action.

We have formulated a range of recommendations based on the data acquired from more than 150 interviews.

The key directions of action include:

- > standardization of the actions of schools concerning educational integration,
- > supporting the competencies of teachers and administrators when working in a culturally diverse environment,
- > promoting solutions helpful to school integration and which counteract exclusion,
- > developing a system for monitoring the efficacy of the implemented actions.

The conclusions presented in the report will contribute to more effectively supporting teachers and school administrators, building systemic solutions for integration, and enabling all students in our schools to achieve the educational success that matches their capabilities.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jędrzej Witkowski". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long vertical stroke extending downwards from the end.

Jędrzej Witkowski
Chairman of the board

Center for Civic Education

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of the second research wave, conducted as part of a project that supports schools hosting students from Ukraine.

The goal of the study was to explore the needs and tensions in school communities that host refugee students from Ukraine and to compare changes between the first and second research waves, to plan long-term support for schools with Ukrainian students, especially a program for supporting administrators and teachers and a program for working with the school.

The first study (May-June 2022) was conducted at the end of a great and spontaneous show of solidarity sparked by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Numerous Polish schools suddenly faced such challenges as multiculturalism, multilingualism, and many other challenges connected to working with refugees from a war-torn country. The first wave of the research provided a picture of the closing of that difficult period.

What has changed over the next year? To answer this question, we have decided to return to the same schools and to add new ones to the sample group.

This was a qualitative study; its results cannot lead one to conclusions about the entire educational system. Every single time we use such terms as "teachers" or "students," we should be using the word "respondents" instead, but that would prove tiring to the Reader.

Nevertheless, the in-depth analysis of processes at the visited schools reveals specific patterns that likely apply to many Polish schools hosting refugee students.



The study was conducted by a Polish-Ukrainian team: Magdalena Tędziągolska, Anna Biernat, Ivan Posylnyi, Pola Rożek, Elżbieta Świdrowska, Bartłomiej Walczak, Kamil M. Wielecki, Anna Żelazowska-Kosiorek.

SPECIAL THANKS

We want to express our gratitude to the faculties of the schools participating in the study and the students, their parents, and others for the time and trust they gave us. We hope the conclusions will contribute towards creating more systemic and professional support of schools in their daily work.

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Summary

Ukrainian students appreciate the Polish school, but there exist dangers to their sense of safety and their educational integration.

Ukrainian students appreciate the openness, kindness, and individualization in Polish schools. Still, they also talk about the stress of being in a new environment and studying, the excessive workload (especially for students learning simultaneously in two systems), difficulties overcoming the language barrier, cultural differences, and the experienced xenophobia.

"Back to the normal" is a desired idea, but there is a need for systemic solutions and for developing the teachers' competencies.

Nearly a year and a half after the first refugees from Ukraine arrived, administrators' and teachers' narratives keep repeating the phrase "back to normal." What does it mean? Over the year, both groups have acquired experience and formulated different action patterns to treat Ukrainian students like Polish ones. Some teachers acknowledge the unique needs of Ukrainian students and try to individualize their work with them, but this is not a systemic approach. Schools put pressure on assimilation (in extreme cases – trying to forbid the use of Ukrainian in conversations between refugee students), which leads to neglecting the individual/unique educational needs of Ukrainian students and the dropping out of non-integrated people from the system.

There is a lack of systemic solutions for student integration. Moreover, teachers require better preparation for working in a multicultural environment, and administrators must improve their skills in managing a school with refugee students.

Polish and Ukrainian students are functioning apart.

We see a separative approach in schools, expressed in forming „foreign" classes or seating Ukrainian students together. This poses a severe barrier to integration. Results are best when creating mixed classes with few foreign students. However, this solution is less realistic in some schools because many Ukrainian students were admitted. In effect, we see two communities functioning apart in the schools – a Ukrainian and a Polish community, with very little or no room for integration.

Preparatory classes, in their current form, are not a functional solution, moreover they lead to the isolation of Ukrainian students.

According to all stakeholders, preparatory classes in their current form have a range of significant problems: too many students, often different ages, no integration and no contact with „living" Polish, demotivating lack of grades, lack of solutions that enable smoothly transitioning to mixed classes.

Summary

If the students stay in preparatory classes longer than necessary, they perpetuate the separative model. At the same time, they perform well as a solution for the first period of the students' stay in Poland, providing a sense of security and enabling them to learn basic Polish. The attempts at several schools to combine preparatory classes with integration with mixed-class students in chosen classes do not work because of logistical difficulties.

Conscious and planned actions toward student integration are rare, so ethnic conflicts arise in schools.

Integration is possible by appropriately managing mixed classes or organizing special events, volunteering days, extracurricular activities, or trips. In most cases, however, no actions support integration, or these actions are superficial and done on intuition. Neither are they seen as an essential element of school or class management. On the other hand, there are cases of conflict with nationality being the cause, and teachers lack the relevant competencies to solve them. Without introducing systemic, comprehensive integration activities to the schools, there is a high risk of further polarization of school communities, conflict escalation, and deteriorating quality of education.

Learning Polish as a second language must be standardized

Ukrainian students differ in their command of Polish. The possibility of using 6 hours of extra Polish as a second language classes is viewed positively, but the potential of these classes is not fully exploited. This is above all due to the following:

- class times are difficult for the students, as this is an extra class added to their lesson plan (which results in low attendance),
- lack of suitably qualified teachers of Polish as a second language (which could reduce the effectiveness of the lessons),
- studying under two educational systems at the same time.

There is also a lack of coursebooks and didactic materials accessible to all students, as well as didactic aids for early elementary levels. Moreover, Ukrainian students are visibly overburdened by having to learn several languages at the same time, with all these classes being given in Polish.

Summary

The grading systems are no longer fulfilling their essential functions.

Teachers and administrators continue to display high compassion and desire to help. Compared to the previous year, they are more focused on going ahead with the teaching program and, in response to the needs of Polish students – they strive to level the grading standards for educational achievements and behavior. The lack of general guidelines and expectations of the principals and education authorities makes grading difficult, especially at the end of the year. In effect, the grading criteria lack transparency and no longer serve the informative or motivating role, and the grading process leads to many tensions in the educational and social spheres.

Even though some time has passed, the student's emotional needs remain unchanged.

The emotional needs of Ukrainian students are the same as during the first wave of the study (safety, coping with problems, help in the treatment of depression, PTSD, etc.). Conditions typical for refugee children from regions affected by war are rarely diagnosed. Ensuring the emotional safety of refugee students is still seen as a priority. As time passes, it is assumed that the Ukrainian students' needs are the same as those of their Polish peers. The reason for this is, among others, the lack of awareness among the teachers about the different stages of cultural adaptation and the skills relevant to identifying specific psychological problems typical for refugee students.

New emotional needs of Polish students have been identified.

The current research wave revealed new needs of Polish students in connection with the changing social fabric. Living in an ethnically and culturally diverse society evokes all kinds of emotions that they cannot name or deal with. As a result, they are channeled into aggressive behaviors. The narratives about the war and the refugees in their family homes impact attitudes toward Ukrainian students.

Cultural assistants take on many roles essential to the well-being and integration of refugee students.

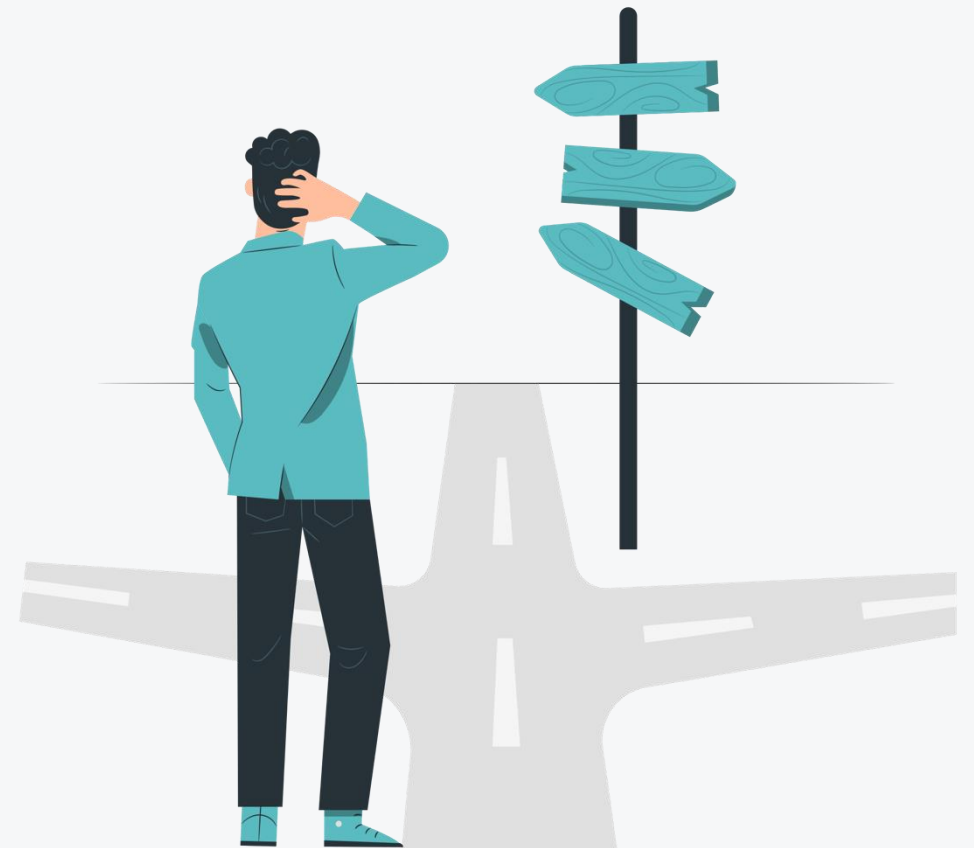
The assistants support students in their studies, care for their emotional needs, and work as interpreters in interactions between teachers and parents, to list only the most common roles. At the same time, even though there are presently more cultural assistants in the studied schools, their number does not enable complete support to the students. The assistants still lack stable employment (ten-month employment contracts being the predominant practice), lack adequate work conditions, and are not well-integrated into the faculty. All these factors hinder adequate support for the educational integration of foreign students.

Recommendations

To ensure effective educational integration of foreign students in Polish schools, the following interventions are needed:

- Standardization of integration policies and actions in the education area
- creating a system that would help administrators and teachers develop new skills relevant to working in a culturally diverse environment
- Introducing a system for monitoring teaching effectiveness
- Popularizing solutions that combat exclusion

The following slides show recommendations divided into areas in accordance with the report's structure and the integration model of the Center for Civic Education.



Recommendations. Learning needs.

	Ministry and supervisory authorities	Administrative authority	School periphery
<p>Keeping students in preparatory classes for only as long as necessary to master the basics of Polish (including the language of school education) and to familiarize them with the specificity of the Polish schools. Most preparatory classes should be limited to 15 students. Students must be allowed to participate in chosen classes with Polish students and gradually transition to regular classrooms.</p> <p>Avoid grouping foreign students in classes from multiple schools. If there are too few Ukrainian students to create a preparatory class in the school, such students should be placed in classes with Polish students and provided with additional Polish lessons per their needs.</p> <p>Avoiding the formation of so-called „foreign" classes in schools (classes with exclusively non-speakers of Polish, which then go Ahead with the regular teaching program)</p>	+	+	
<p>Introducing a system for monitoring cases when students leave the Polish schooling system (which would also study the causes) and supporting schools in counteracting this phenomenon.</p>	+	+	
<p>Developing competencies of administrators and teachers that are required to work in a multicultural, multiethnic environment, focusing on such areas as cross-cultural communication, creating an atmosphere of safety, teaching didactics in a culturally diverse class, maintaining motivation, positive discipline, conflict resolution, awareness of cultural differences. Promoting relevant knowledge among non-faculty Staff and parents.</p>			+
<p>The available offering should also include programs for developing skills in didactics, didactics in culturally diverse classes (i.e., teaching how to organize students to work in international groups or to carry out peer grading)</p>			+

Recommendations. Learning needs.

	Ministry and supervisory authorities	Administrative authority	School periphery
Developing grading skills in culturally diverse classrooms with consideration of the individual situation of refugee students.			+
Introducing grading guidelines („progress assessment", „grading on development lines") and end-of-year classification of foreign students.	+		
Individualization of the support given to refugee students in the education process should include diagnosis and additional one-on-one work with the teachers, as per the needs.	+	+	
Just like in the case of some groups of students with learning difficulties (i.e., aphasia), one must consider the possibility of giving up teaching one foreign language.	+	+	
Preparing exam sheets in three language versions (Polish, Ukrainian, and Russian).	+	+	
Ensuring Ukrainian students can access Ukrainian and Russian dictionaries during the exams.	+		
Ukrainian and Russian language versions of the coursebooks and exercise books should be available in electronic versions.	+		+
Mandatory Polish as a second language lessons until reaching a level sufficient for participation in classes.	+		
Polish as a second language classes should be given by teachers with relevant qualifications in glottodidactics, focusing on teaching the language of school education.	+		+
Preparing materials in Ukrainian and Russian, informing about the different education options in Poland/ a given city/ town with the formal requirements.	+		+

Recommendations. Emotional and social needs

	Ministry and supervisory authorities	Administrative authority	School periphery
Raising the awareness and knowledge of educators regarding different integration models (the multicultural, assimilational, and separative models), focusing on their advantages and costs for refugee students (including the risks that come when there is pressure on assimilation). Raising the skills of the faculty concerning carrying out an integration strategy that enables the individual to interact with other social groups while preserving their cultural identity.	+		+
Supporting schools in the development of programs for integrating school communities (i.e., based on the educational integration model of the Center for Civic Education)		+	+
Preserving the national and ethnic identity of refugee students by organizing classes in history, geography, culture, and the Ukrainian language at the level of the school or the administrative authority.		+	+
Developing teachers' competencies in the area of diagnosing emotional states/ the mental condition of the students.			+
Developing a system for psychological support for the teachers, providing tools catering to their welfare.	+		+
Striving to keep the students in a safe environment that they have adjusted to. Avoid merging classes during the year or transferring students to other classes or schools (unless the child's needs explicitly justify this).		+	
Availability of psychological and pedagogical assistance – hiring people from the commune who know Ukrainian (or Russian).	+	+	
Developing and implementing systemic solutions to counteract exclusion and discrimination.	+		
Expanding the inclusive education concept by adding such problems as diversity and potential national and cultural conflicts. Promoting actions supporting cross-cultural education beyond teaching about culture and history.			

Recommendations. Emotional and social needs.

	Ministry and supervisory authorities	Administrative authority	School periphery
Providing Psychological and Pedagogical Centers with diagnostic tools and guidelines (diagnostic tools in Ukrainian and/ or Russian, adapted to the children's linguistic abilities, and non-verbal tests that are not culturally biased).	+		
Ensuring the accessibility of a person who knows the language of the child's and their parent's country of origin during the diagnostic tests to children who don't know Polish to a degree that would enable a reliable diagnosis.	+		
Developing a general system for ensuring that refugee children have the support of assistants, including assuring that cultural assistants have continuous employment by the local government institutions, standardization of the assistant support, career development opportunities, and availability of psychological assistance.	+		
Determining the required proportions between the number of refugee children and the number of assistants working at a school and developing and promoting good practices for the cooperation between the assistant and the faculty.			
Preparing a resource base of verified tools for form tutors to work as advisors in mixed and preparatory classes → class scripts, worksheets, etc.	+		+
Promoting practices and procedures in the schools for directing children with special needs to the relevant institutions.	+		
Social awareness campaign aimed at supporting Polish-Ukrainian integration, dialogue, and fostering relations, fighting stereotypes.	+		
Educating parents on how to counter xenophobic and hostile attitudes. Including parents in discussions on the consequences of migration.			
Civic education should focus on matters connected to migration (explaining the phenomenon of migration and its consequences).	+		+

Recommendations. School administration and relations with Ukrainian parents.

	Ministry and supervisory authorities	Administrative authority	School periphery
Adding the subject of administering a culturally diverse school in educational and qualification courses for principals (i.e., developing competencies in facilitating cooperation between teachers and cultural assistants, planning teacher and non-faculty education, and preparing school functioning strategies).			+
Developing uniform guidelines for principals administering multicultural schools, including a strategy for admissions and class assignments.	+		
Developing a teacher competence profile in a multicultural class as the basis for supplementing teacher competencies under an external and intraschool teacher education program.	+		+
Incentives for teachers working in multicultural classes.		+	
Preparing materials in Ukrainian and Russian, informing about the educational options in Poland/ the city of residence, the formal requirements, and differences between educational systems.	+		+
Developing teacher competencies in communication with parents of Ukrainian students and raising their involvement in their children's education.			+

Recommendations from other sectors' policies that impact the fulfillment of educational objectives

Tools supporting single Ukrainian mothers to reconcile their professional careers with helping their children's education.

Raising awareness among Ukrainian parents about the costs of leading their children outside the education system or being limited only to remote education under the Ukrainian system.

Offering free Polish as a second language courses for adult members of refugee families.

Providing access to psychological support for adult members of refugee families.



METHODOLOGY

Methodology

RESEARCH SUBJECT:

Needs of school community members in a new situation: a culturally-diverse school, with migrants and refugees.

In particular the following areas:

- Didactics
- Relations between students, students and teachers, teachers and teachers, including creating an inclusive classroom and school community,
- After-school activity of Ukrainian students
- The school's cooperation with parents of children from Ukraine.

The research project received a positive review from the Plan International UK commission on ethical research.

8 CASE STUDIES

8 DYADS WITH PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN

16 DAYS SPENT IN THE SCHOOLS

164 INTERVIEWS

Approx. 280 INTERLOCUTORS

CASE STUDY (CS)

ETHNOGRAPHY

Observation, visual study, informal conversations

INTERVIEWS

School principal, teachers, pedagogue/psychologist, cultural assistants, PL and UKR students, non-pedagogical school staff, school environment: NGO (Non-Government Organizations), LGUs (local government units), etc.

DYADS WITH UKRAINIAN PARENTS (DDI)

ONLINE INTERVIEWS

Mothers and their children aged 10-17.

The sample includes:

- 3 Schools with preparatory classes
- 2 schools with "foreigner" classes
- Schools with different numbers of Ukrainian students and different experiences of admitting refugee students



	Large cities	Smaller cities
Elementary school	2 CS 3 DDI	2 CS 2 DDI
Secondary school	2 CS 2 DDI	2 CS 1 DDI

Methodology

PRE-WAR AND WAR MIGRATION

In this report, we distinguish between processes described in reference to the migration before and after February 24th, 2022. Due to lack of information on the status of the respondents, the terms "migration" and "refugeeship" are used interchangeably.

INTEGRATION MODEL

In this study, we refer to the educational integration model prepared by the Center for Civic Education <https://biblioteka.ceo.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2022/09/Model-integracji-edukacyjnej.pdf>

We applied and tested the conceptual structure of the model in the school reality – its reflected in the report's structure.



* We have chosen not to use the label "integrative class" to describe a class where foreigner students work together with host-country students, as that would confuse the reader. Moreover, due to the special meaning of the phrase "integrative class" in the Polish educational system, we have chosen to use the phrase "mixed class."

** <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka/zasady-organizacji-oddzialow-przygotowawczych>

CLASSES – PREPARATORY, FOREIGNER AND MIXED

This study refers to two models – separative and integrative (see Todorovska-Sokolovska 2009, Iglicka, Gmaj, Walczak, 2013).

In our text, we define the classes functioning in the schools as follows*:

- Preparatory classes, PC → created based on a resolution of the ministry **,
- Foreigner classes → classes for foreign children only, not preparatory classes in form, with a Polish curriculum, are homogeneous as far as age is concerned.
- Mixed/ culturally diverse classes → classes attended by Polish and foreign students

CULTURAL ASSISTANTS

For more uniform naming, we have decided to use the term cultural assistants to describe people from Ukraine who are employed to support refugee students. However, we must stress that in the publications (and in school reality), they are also referred to as foreign child/ student assistant, refugee student assistant, or Ukrainian student assistant.

LABELLING OF THE VERBATIM QUOTES

The quotes are labeled with three-part codes, where the first signifies the *type of school* (ES- elementary school, L - lyceum, TVS- technical secondary school, vocational school); the second applies to the method (i.e., IDI), whereas the third – the respondent category (i.e., UKR teach. = teacher from Ukraine).

To ensure the anonymity of the schools and participants, we have removed codes that enable identifying schools and individual respondents. For this reason, sometimes we only show a fragment of the code.

SOURCE OF VISUALS

storyset.com

UKRAINIAN REFUGEE STUDENTS AFTER THE FIRST YEAR IN POLISH SCHOOLS



CENTRUM EDUKACJI
OBYWATELSKIEJ

The situation we witnessed in the schools participating in the test is no longer a response to a crisis (regardless of whether it's more or less spontaneous).

On the one hand, the institutions have become accustomed to working with Ukrainian students; on the other hand – the students have become more used to the Polish school.

This is particularly important in schools with more refugee students and elementary schools.

In most of the schools participating in the study, regardless of any underlying tensions, the predominant sentiment is that the situation has settled down and that there's been an improvement in how refugee students function.

On one hand, the teachers have acquired new experiences in working with refugee students. On the other hand, the latter had more time to adapt to the new environment.

Compared to the previous research wave, we can see that the teachers have become calmer and feel more in control of the situation ("I'm managing well"). However, this has consequences for the refugee students. Firstly, there is more pressure on assimilation relative to what we could see in the first research wave. Secondly, students who don't integrate are excluded.

Paradoxically, the high mobility of the Ukrainians fosters a heightened sense of stability, as students who generate educational and behavioral problems often leave the schools.



*We have learned to show more understanding for the other. The previous year was an enormous outpouring of empathy but also chaos. Whereas now, **things have become calmer.** (ES4 DDI teachers)*

Back to "the normal"

2021/ 2022 was a unique year, whereas 2022/2023 was intended to be "normal," according to teachers and administrators.

Over the dozen months that have passed since the massive inflow of Ukrainian students, we have seen a change in the attitudes of teachers and administrators.

The teachers tried to return to the previously developed routines and treat Ukrainian students like the Polish ones. The faculty often used the phrase "back to the normal" – after the pandemic and the commotion tied to admitting Ukrainian students to Polish schools during the Summer semester.

It is worth noting that what is understood as "the normal" is the application of the same assessment standards for all students. It does not mean withdrawing from social assistance or no longer supporting students to learn Polish.

Teachers concentrate on the Polish students' teaching program and educational needs.

These strategies do not vary depending on how long a given refugee has been in Poland. Expectations are the same for all.

Furthermore, "the normal" is presented as an attempt at incentivizing and disciplining refugee students.

On the other hand, there were also schools where "returning to the normal" was not a topic discussed very broadly. This was because of the progressing integration of refugee students and the dropping-out of non-integrated students.



This is what I said on September the first: no more. I understand that you are in a new reality, but it's been so many months. You've gotten used to it, you know what's what, you have 6 Polish lessons per week, the resources are there. (ES1 IDI principal)

No more special treatment

Polish school communities believe that one should no longer be giving "special treatment" to students from Ukraine.

There is a strong feeling that the passage of time from the outbreak of the war surely means that the student's mental condition has improved and that their integration is advancing. It is expected that students won't have any traumas, that they'll speak Polish well, and get good grades. At the same time, there is no understanding of when these expectations are not met.

We have seen frustration and anger in many students and teachers. And we have heard stories about how Ukrainian refugees are "ungrateful," "entitled", or that they are "taking advantage" of their "privileged" position.

A radical shift has taken place: from enormous commitment ("flooding with help") to the expectation that people from Ukraine should deal with their problems on their own.

Frustration is sometimes also caused by the loss of control over the rules implemented in the schools (sometimes the rules are not always thought-through or transparent) and the lack of information on the course of the adaptation process.



"Enough". We've helped a lot already. No more hand-holding.
(TVS2 IDI teachers)

In a small-town secondary school, the faculty were pressured by Polish students and their parents to roll back rules that applied to students from Ukraine. One preference was that Ukrainian students were not required to change from their outdoor shoes to indoor shoes (sic!)



It was just teeming underneath. (IDI teacher)

We wanted to make it easier for these Ukrainian students, but it turned out that it was an own goal shot because our kids were upset. (IDI principal)



Does the "back to the normal" strategy always work?

Let us examine one example. Right after the start of the war, people's attitudes were filled with compassion. In practice, this meant the introduction of a "protection period" for the students..



*We all knew that a tragedy had occurred, these people were deprived of everything, all they had, they were torn from their safe places. We all knew that **we had to put a blind eye to certain things**, that we need to give them more time, that they won't write a whole paper in Polish right away [...] You don't have PE clothes, fine, exercise in your clothes, but then if a Polish student doesn't have PE clothes, then she gets a demerit or something (IDI principal)*

Over time, Polish students started expressing their frustration about the different criteria applied to themselves and their Ukrainian counterparts. In a school reality, this brought conflict. At that point, the teachers responded by unifying the requirements. What adds to that are behavioral problems caused by a – relatively small – group of Ukrainian female students. (In all of the quotes, refugee students are referred to in the female form of the noun in Polish).



*At a certain point, our children started rebelling, like why is it that she isn't required to have a notebook and there are no consequences, but I get an F. **They see all of that and consider it unfair.** (...) In one classroom, the girls shouted to the teacher that they [female students from Ukraine] are always allowed to do anything they want, and they get away with everything. (IDI principal)*

The decision was made consciously by the teachers and the administration. The change was not only intended to address the expectations of Polish students, but it was also to discipline a wayward group.



*At our teacher conference, we decided that **the protection period is over**, and the requirements apply to everyone. [...] you need to have gym clothes, if you don't, then you're just the same student as our kids, so you'll get a minus, or an F. [...] if there's homework, then you're supposed to have that homework in your notebook. (IDI principal)*

Uniformizing the criteria fulfilled the expectation for fair treatment expressed by Polish students. However, it failed to motivate or discipline the Ukrainian students. The change was functional for Polish school community members, but did not impact the functioning of Ukrainian students.



*This change in our approach **did not work on them at all** because these girls attend classes sporadically. (IDI principal)*



Polish school – "cooler than Ukrainian", but not without its problems

The narratives of Ukrainian students paint a mostly positive picture of the Polish school, disturbed by some reports of xenophobic incidents caused by the Polish.

From the perspective of a Ukrainian student, the Polish school is closer to a partnership-based model than a Ukrainian school. Students see the difference in the educational culture.

WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT POLISH SCHOOLS

- More openness and relations with Polish teachers are based on more kindness and partnership (i.e., one-on-one consultations with the teacher).
- **More freedom.** Polish schools are seen as more tolerant, allowing for more creativity and self-expression.
- **More activities.** Different kinds of field trips and engaging extra-curricular activities.
- **Less workload.** With less homework, students are less often expected to memorize the material. The school utilizes active learning forms.
- **Possibility** to learn Polish.
- **More individualization.**
- **Mostly a good atmosphere** (*You can forget about your problems – ES1 FGI S UKR*)
- **Well-equipped** (modern equipment)



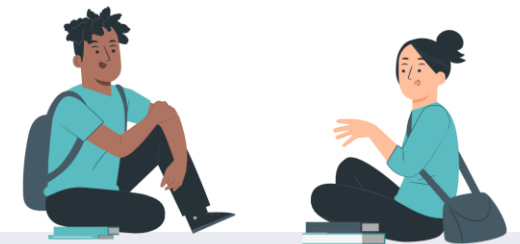
Learning here is so odd. The attitude is something else. The teacher has this magical attitude towards you, and it makes you want to ask more questions, to learn more (DDI4 female student)

I asked my children what they would like to take to Ukraine from Poland. They replied: the school. (DDI6 mother)

[Teachers] treat us humanely. (TVS1 FGI S UKR)

WHAT'S BAD ABOUT POLISH SCHOOLS

- Stress, feeling overwhelmed by the study material
- Xenophobic behaviors of Polish students
- **Difficulty learning** certain subjects (because of the challenging vocabulary)
- **Limited freedom** of movement (you are not allowed to leave school to the store during the school day, breaks are too short)
- **Cultural differences:** teachers have different approaches to discipline; as a result (according to students), there are difficulties tied to working on the lessons and solving conflicts. Students also complain about the lack of relevant action plans.



The boys in our classroom misbehave. In Ukraine, you'd go to the principal. Here, you don't know who could influence them. (ES3 IDI7 parent UKR)

There's more freedom here [...] You can open up and show who you are as a person. (ES1 FGI S UKR)

I've slipped. I was a model student in Ukraine, but my grades are much worse here. (ES4 FGI S UKR)

Ukrainian students are not a homogenous group.

REGIONAL/ LINGUISTIC DIFFERENCES

The division into East and West Ukraine translates into language differences. The majority of refugees at a school may be Russian speakers. In one of the schools, the cultural assistant estimated that only one-fifth of the students are Ukrainian speakers. Furthermore, we have seen students concealing that they are Russian speakers.



My daughter doesn't understand Ukrainian; we speak Russian at home. (ES3 IDI parent UKR).

[Respondent talking about Russian-speaking peers] I don't feel comfortable around them. (DDI3 f student)

There were Ukrainians at our school, but you could not communicate with them. On top of that, they spoke Russian, which was hard for me as I didn't know that language that well. (DDI1 f student)

It turned out they don't speak Ukrainian in Ukraine. B: When did you learn that? R: About a month ago. They haven't said anything, and I never asked. (ES3 IDI teachers)

MIGRATION PERIOD

Students from the prewar migration and those who migrated right after the war are described as better integrated, more motivated, and performing better. In the case of economic migrants, their choice of secondary school may be fully conscious, whereas refugees choose a school at random, which could translate into a sense of temporariness.



[Pre-war migrants] They are better adjusted, better integrated with Polish students, and the [refugees] are just a nightmare, zero attendance [...] They are isolated, don't look for contact with their class peers, and live in their own world, speaking Ukrainian. You can tell that they aren't united, either. (TVS2 IDI chem teacher)

Only some of the teachers realized the differences within the refugee student populations.

GENDER DIVISIONS

Play a role, but seem more a matter of specific groups of students, not a general pattern. Perhaps they also vary based on age. Teachers reported that there are "perfect pupils" who are boys and that there are also girls who cause problems (with their behavior and education), as well as the exact opposite.



ORGANIZATION: PREPARATORY CLASSES AND "FOREIGN" CLASSES



CENTRUM EDUKACJI
OBYWATELSKIEJ

The character of the preparatory classes does not help the integration of students from Ukraine.

The classes seemed like a good solution at the start of the crisis. Still, stakeholders from different schools at different educational levels that have such classes notice numerous limitations of the separative model: ineffective teaching, no integration, and no contact with "living" Polish.

CONS

- There are too many students in the classes
- Children of different ages and with various educational and emotional needs who are in the same class → learning at different "speeds."
- The lack of grades is demotivating
- No integration and no contact with "live" Polish → reduced motivation and lower ability to learn Polish
- Low motivation and poor attendance
- Students from the preparatory classes have difficulties joining the mixed classes for individual lessons
- Limited capacity to transfer students to mixed classes
- No strategies for transferring students to mixed classes
- The teaching program is selective; preparatory classes become "holding pens," where students learn little.

PROS

- Provide students with a sense of security.
- Allow students to learn the basics of language and educational terminology quickly
- Allow learning in parallel at a Ukrainian school



In their current shape, they seem like a good solution for families planning to quickly return to Ukraine (more time for learning in a Ukrainian school, making use of the day, and socializing).

Plans and reality

The strategy used by some schools, under which PC children would participate in the lessons of other classrooms, turned out impossible to realize. This is because the mixed classes grew larger (because different students from Ukraine would join them). For the same reason, students ready to leave the PCs had a limited capacity to join the mixed classrooms. They did not always know the rules for transitioning to a mixed class.

The above problems were already present in the previous edition of the research. Still, now there are very concrete effects on the children's functioning within the PCs: the children are **isolated**, we've seen instances of absolutely no contact with Polish children, with Polish being used only in exceptional situations (most often when interacting with the teacher).

At the same time, **Ukrainian students emphasize the sense of security** they get from learning in such a classroom. Some PC students would prefer not to change their situation. This shows how challenging it would be for them to feel comfortable in a mixed class.

The schools that want to or have to (i.e., following a decision of the authority) close the PC suddenly face **the lack of spaces for these students in mixed classes**. This issue mainly affects schools in large cities, with a large group of war migrants.

The directors stressed that they are powerless and have no systemic solutions to this problem.



*I have this preparatory class. 90% of the kids in that class should go to fourth grade. But I have nowhere to put them, and if I add them to the current third grades, they become classes of a minimum of 30 people! It's very difficult. **Right now, this problem is unsolvable.** We've even had ideas; we thought about who we can let through or whom we can't find room for all the children. But then new kids showed up that we needed to admit to the mass (mixed) classes. That means that some spots became blocked. (ES4 IDI principal)*

A DIFFERENT FORMULA IS NEEDED

Completely giving up the idea of preparatory classes does not seem to be the appropriate direction in schools that admit many foreign children. This would lead to learning difficulties for children who don't speak Polish and the inability to meet their emotional needs. And teachers will find it very challenging (and frustrating) to work with an overcrowded, mixed class with a significant group of Ukrainian students.

This is a recipe that leads to the exacerbation of educational inequality and polarization of the Polish and Ukrainian communities in the schools (i.e., students and parents are concerned that the level of education will decline).

Keeping the PCs could be a solution, but it should be an option for a dozen students, allowing them to participate in chosen activities with Polish students.

"Foreigner classes" are a new phenomenon

A new solution we had not seen during the first research wave is the creation of classes at a single age level comprised only of foreign children. The children are primarily Ukrainian, but other nationalities are added to these classes, i.e., Belarussians. Because students in the class are all of one age, the classes follow the teaching program. Contrary to preparatory classes, they are neither short-term nor mid-term solutions. Polish is the teaching language, and students have extra Polish courses.

The advantage is the possibility to learn more effectively (than in PC) and to learn different subjects.

The national homogeneity of these classes still results in the same problems as in the case of the preparatory classes.

The primary challenge is **isolation** – concerning social integration, as well as learning a "living" language.



*This is a significant hurdle because we're not in the classroom with Polish kids. **It would be better if we were with Polish children in the class.*** (ES3 FGI S UKR)

Foreigner classes sometimes pose **behavioral problems**. Students, as well as teachers, point out the problems with discipline during the lessons. This could be caused by the language barrier (Polish teachers are unable to communicate with the students effectively), as well as cultural differences (i.e., certain behaviors are allowed in Ukraine) and the students' attitudes and emotional problems (temporariness, difficulty adjusting to a new environment).

Ukrainian or "foreigner" and preparatory classes generally have a negative image in the schools. The reserved and unfavorable attitude is seen in the language used to describe such classes. Often, they are labeled "ghettos," groups for "rude kids" that nobody wants to work with.



*I don't like 7G. It's that Ukrainian class with some added Belarussians; they are just uncultured, rude, impudent, **they're just given a place to pass the time...** I told myself that I won't bend over backwards. I work with the students who really work and try hard.* (ES IDI teachers)

Polish teachers working in foreigner classes experience high stress and frustration due to their educational and behavioral challenges. They also feel alone in this situation.



***Nobody appreciates** the daily effort put into working with that class. Sometimes, I'm so tired that I forget my name. And it's not like they'll ever have good grades.* (ES1 IDI teachers)

LEARNING NEEDS

Learning at a Polish school – opportunities and challenges

Regardless of the individual attitudes and predispositions, it seems that the students with a higher chance of learning effectively:

- know Polish, including the language of education;
- attend classes that follow the standard Polish teaching program (ability to study different subjects);
- attend classes held by teachers that consider the specific nature of a multicultural school (i.e., group work, didactic materials that help learn complex STEM vocabulary).

Students from Ukraine struggle the most with learning:

- the Polish language (especially literature)
- foreign languages: German, English (likely because they are overburdened by learning foreign languages, as they state often)
- history (complex vocabulary, no knowledge of the history of Poland)
- math and other sciences (in this case, they may have individual problems that they also struggled with in Ukraine)



*When learning history, you work with a source text. **You read it and seem to understand, but you don't understand the main point.** Biology is also very hard. Chemistry is fine, but biology is very different; you can't understand some words; you ask your classmate, and she explains one word, but then another new word comes up, and you're lost. (ES3 FGI S UKR)*

Motivations to learning

Motivation is an exceptionally individual trait. Nevertheless, there are some recurring patterns. These apply above all to the idea of one's educational or career path, but they are also influenced by actors from the close environment: parents, relatives and peers.

We revealed another motivation, a much-expected one – the lack of any alternatives.



STUDENTS' MOTIVATIONS

- Wanting to continue education in Poland
- Career- > wanting to find a "good job" or working in a specific occupation
- Worrying about having to repeat a year
- The support and involvement of the parents
- Role of the relatives and peer group

The students see benefits offered by education in Polish schools, such as learning Polish and integrating into Polish society. They also value that they can receive a Polish – as they call it, a European graduation diploma from a secondary school or University. They know that Ukrainian high school diplomas are recognized in Poland, but this does not always apply to University degrees (just like in the EU).

To students from Russian-occupied territories or cities destroyed in the war, there may not even be an alternative – they must stay in Poland.



*When they put their mind to it, **some girls' grades are excellent**, much like the normal [Polish] kids would; there's no difference when we look at maths. (TVS1 IDI math teacher)*

B: Why do you want to learn?

*U: I want to be admitted to a high school. Definitely. The **best high school possible**. (ES3 FGI S UKR)*

*[B: What makes you want to study?] I don't want to **repeat the year**. (ES3 FGI S UKR)*

***We don't have anywhere** to go back to. (LO1 FGI S UKR)*

Demotivations

Several factors negatively impact the involvement of Ukrainian students in learning in Polish schools.

- Wanting to return to Ukraine and her educational system;
- A sense of temporariness, uncertainty about the near future;
- Not understanding what they need to graduate from a Polish school for;
- Simultaneously studying at a Ukrainian school;
- Class downgrade: some students are put into lower-level classrooms they are older than the Polish students;
- Economic situation;
- In the case of secondary school students, they want to become independent start working;
- Parents are not involved and not supportive;
- Not knowing Polish well;
- Being behind the program, on account of having to flee their home country and the pandemic before that;
- The teaching level of some subjects is poor.



*I would say that many of the students were **forced by the situation**, the war. **They don't want to be here**. They don't want to learn and don't feel like learning Polish. (ES4 IDI pedagogue)*

*If a child comes here believing they will stay here for good or just do the best at the moment, they fit in well. But these technical school girls (...) it's like they were here temporarily and would leave soon. **Mentally, they are not in Poland at all**. (TVS1 IDI history teacher)*

*I spoke with some of the parents, and the students **are allowed by the parents to do that**. It's like they were told - „We're going back to Ukraine anyway, so I won't tell him to study.” (ES4 IDI Polish teacher)*

*It's not easy learning in that preparatory class. The level of math is **really low**. (ES4 FGI S UKR)*

*People who want to work here, sure, they study. But the others, **some just squandered a whole year**. What do you want me to say? That's the truth. (ES2 IDI early elementary teacher)*

*I don't study now. **I've already had this in Ukraine**; I know all these things. (SP 3 FGI S UKR)*

Three students and their motivations

MAKSYM, elementary school student

In Ukraine, Maksym was a model pupil. After the war, he came with his parents to [name of city] and started attending elementary school, fifth grade, a mixed-type class. Right now, he's in sixth grade.

He picked up on Polish very quickly, and his grades were good. He is popular in his class; his classmates gladly helped him at the start. His teacher gave him vocabulary-learning flashcards, which also helped.

He wants to become a doctor; he plans to attend an excellent high school in Poland and med school.



TANYA, student at a technical secondary school for hairdressers

She is turning 18 in three months. She has eight siblings. Part of the family lives in Warsaw, and others live in [name of city]. She completed 11 grades in Ukraine and then took a year in a gastronomical college (post-secondary school equivalent). She left Ukraine in March 2022. In the first half of the year, she was not continuing her education in either of the two educational systems. In the meantime, she had just learned of the schooling requirement for people under 18 in Poland, and she started looking for a school – because you can't just sit idly in Poland. She came to the school spontaneously in August and was surprised to learn that she was admitted. She doesn't like school or hairdressing.



I'd rather pay for a private course than learn here for four more years!

She wants to go to work, but she doesn't know what kind. Much like her other friends, she's planning on dropping out and going to Warsaw to work as a beautician.



KATIA, a student of a technical secondary school for hairdressers

17 years old. Left Ukraine in March 2022. First, the whole family went to the Podhale region. She went to school there and learned Polish, then she's been in [name of city] since the Summer vacation. She also studies remotely in a Ukrainian school, where she just finished the 10th grade.

Katia feels well at the school. She takes part in various school events (singing recitals). As time went by, however, she has regressed: the leader of the Ukrainian group has convinced her to join her, and she's now one of the rebelling and challenging students.

She wants to be an actress and sees hairdressing as a hobby. We know from conversations with her mother that Katia plans to drop out of both schools.

Her mother is telling her to finish both the Ukrainian school (maybe they will go back) and the Polish one – to learn a trade.

Black cat – white cat

The teachers, especially those working in elementary schools, divide students into „model refugee students" and negatively perceive students not involved in their education.

The teachers' tendency to perceive students in this dichotomic manner may indicate an impact of modeling.

Teachers link the students' attitudes to their personality traits and overall mental condition.

It is most likely that the differences between Ukrainian students' attitudes to learning in Polish schools could be a response to refugeeship: being forced to leave their original environment and move to another one.

Students either put all their energy into integration and starting a new stage in life, or they cling to the life they had lost – in denial of their situation. This denial is often linked to antisocial behaviors, withdrawal, apathy, or depression. As the teachers point out, these problems affect especially the more senior students. Younger children can adapt and learn Polish better.

Ukrainian students are described very positively or negatively (nevertheless, the criticism is often followed by understanding). As much as the modeling process is explained well in academia and applies not only to refugee students, the teachers' attitudes in the study indicate a firm conviction regarding the soundness of their „diagnosis."

This is concerning, as modeling has a substantial impact on the course of a student's educational career. It may also indicate that there is a stereotype (also found in the previous wave) of a refugee student as someone subordinate, disciplined, involved in learning, and grateful for support. This stereotype may contribute to a negative perception of students who don't fit this expected pattern.



*We could see two groups: kids who wanted and tried so hard and were doing great. And then another group that came here to wait it out, to survive, that's the group we're struggling hard with. **What's missing is this center.** (ES2 IDI principal)*

*The thing with our Ukrainian children is that **there's no middle ground.** They are either introverted and causing trouble, or they really put their mind to it and work hard, suitable to their age. But some are here only to get by – I'm here, so I just need to sit this out. (ES1 IDI teacher4)*

Educational successes of students from Ukraine

We found numerous examples of an individual approach to Ukrainian students, not just concerning grading but also supporting their education. This is not systemic, however, and depends solely on the teachers' attitudes.

WORKING HARD FOR SUCCESS

In many of the schools, teachers and administrators recall the educational successes of Ukrainian students, who, they say, must have worked harder to achieve them than their Polish peers. Such instances show that refugee children can overcome determinism and thrive in new environments. But they also seem to remind descriptions of Bourdieu's „wonder" children: students that go beyond the deterministic paradigm but still function in a deterministic system :



*They have normal coursebooks notebooks, write in Polish, study, and pass. They don't always get straight As, but we don't give them special treatment. Indeed, we are softer on their grades, as we have to; you can't do it otherwise. Last year, this girl was given an award for her performance and a gift... She was surprised, but I told her that she earned it because **she had worked so hard**. (ES1 IDI principal)*

An English teacher in secondary school will be teaching a student in Summer, so that she can improve her final grade.



*She joined our English class with zero prior knowledge of English and she was going to fail. She wants to continue learning in our school. It was impossible during the school year, because the girls had extra Polish classes. (...) So we decided that I'll give her a barely passing grade, but **she has to work with me in Summer**. (TVS1 IDI16 teacher)*

THE SUCCESS OF THE STUDENT AND TEACHER

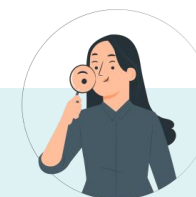
Teachers support talented, hard-working, dedicated Ukrainian students.

We should point out the danger of teachers putting too much pressure on the students. Teachers want their students to be better, or at least as good as the Polish.

The teachers' motivation is the willingness to help students achieve educational success (understood as having good final grades), as well as the need for gratification for their hard work (a „reward" for being a subject or classroom teacher working with foreign students).



*When our teacher said that Sasza needs to have nothing but straight As at the end of the school year, or else she would call his dad... I thought to myself – **poor Sasza**. (ES FGI S UKR)*



It is widely believed that the language barrier has declined compared to the previous year.



The educational success of Ukrainian students and their relations with the Polish students depend on whether and how quickly they will learn Polish.

Ukrainian students vary in how they learn Polish. Some are fluent, whereas others don't know any Polish after a year in Poland. Such students address teachers and Polish students in Ukrainian, hoping they would be understood. The command of the language depends on personal predispositions, family plans, education plans (will they stay in the country, what education path will they pick?), or the parent's attitude to their children's education. The critical factor remains learning in a mixed classroom, ensuring constant language exposure.

Teachers see a positive correlation between attendance at Polish classes and language skills and the ability to connect with peers and educational performance. They also stress that children from early school education learn the language faster.

Students, parents and teachers about learning Polish



Anastasia came to us in January, which wasn't long ago. She knew no Polish. **And now, she can even talk about Greek myths in Polish.** She makes errors, of course. [...] Even when she makes mistakes, I don't need to guess what she was trying to say; she can still convey the meaning. (L2 IDI teach P2ndL)

The most important point was that the school started teaching Polish – which is excellent, **as the kids could develop their language skills.** (ES2 IDI1 parent UKR)

They're no longer afraid of talking... [student's name] has improved. She's more confident. (...) I thought there would be many problems with the vocabulary, but not really. Recently **this one friend (Ukrainian) asked me what condensation means** [laughter]. (L2 FGI S PL)

Let me give you two examples [from one class] that are entirely different. Marysia used to be in a preparatory class, she learned Polish well. Now **she speaks so well**, I understand her. Sometimes she confuses the words though (...) Then another example is Nikita. **You can't communicate with him.** He's just... He's not that outgoing. (ES4 FGI S PL)

They are making significant progress. It's not the Polish lessons, but the situation, **the fact they need to manage in a foreign country with a foreign language.** (TVS1 IDI viceprincipal)

We have a student who's been here longer, but he has two older friends who just came after the war. And **he stopped using Polish** because he joined these two. Before he had these friends, he was trying, pushing himself. Now, he stopped hanging out with the Polish kids. (ES4 IDI teacher)

The available number of Polish lessons is sufficient, but they are not fully used

There is a commonplace belief that there is a sufficient number of additional Polish lessons (actually, it is thought that there are too many lessons for some of the students) for children to learn the language at a level that enables smooth communication and learning. Teachers spontaneously discuss the positive effects of the student's participation in these classes.

Unfortunately, a significant group of students from Ukraine don't make use of the available lessons. In many schools, attendance in Polish as a second language classes is low*, and teachers feel helpless when it comes to encouraging students to participate. Not all parents acknowledge the significance of the problem. The primary reason for students' low motivation is that they are not planning to stay in Poland. Another reason for low attendance is that the lessons are voluntary.

This situation negatively impacts not only the students „skipping" the classes but the school community as well: it makes class integration or offering lessons more difficult. The low involvement of refugee children frustrates teachers, some of the Polish students, and their parents.



Why do we do that for them, why do we give them that? I feel so sorry that these free lessons... We could be giving so much to our children... For example, we can't afford a school speech therapist or other things our children need. And they [students from Ukraine] don't attend the classes. (ES3 IDI teacher)

* Estimated attendance on Polish as a second language classes made by principals and teachers ranged from 30% to 50%.



Barriers to effectively learning Polish as a second language

THE PLACE OF POLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN THE LESSON PLAN

Finding room for additional Polish lessons in the lesson plan is a challenge. The classes take place early in the morning or at the end of the day.

In one of the schools, a single group of students was often taught by two different teachers due to logistical reasons.

It is also challenging to create groups on the same education level, or for all to be the same age.

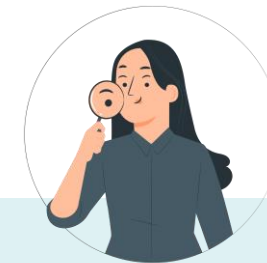
Attendance requires determination. Overburdened by their many classes, the tired students often skip lessons (especially true for seniors).



*Finding a teacher with so much time, six hours for one group, that's just impossible. So you try to make it work, two hours with one, then two hours with another, it's all **mix and match**. (ES4 IDI principal)*

*The six hours [of extra Polish] is a good idea. But in the technical school classes, when you've got 12 kids, then you need to create a cross-class group from them. **Logistically, it's just tough** because they start at different times, and some miss two days of school in a row. These kids are all on different levels. Because L. speaks excellent Polish, he suddenly has to work with kids who can't speak a word. (TVS1 IDI viceprincipal)*

***I won't get up at 5 in the morning for a Polish lesson that's not mandatory.** (TVS1 FGI S UKR)*



In one of the schools, the 7th grade students agreed with the teachers to swap one PE class for a Polish class.

In another school, participation in Polish as a second language classes counts toward the semester and final grades.



*They know [parents and kids] that it **counts towards their grade**. If the child attends the classes and tries hard, they'll be assessed differently than a child who does nothing. (ES2 IDI teach P2ndL)*

Barriers to effective Polish as a second language learning

TEACHERS LACK GLOTTODIDACTIC PREPARATION

Not all of the teachers of Polish as a second language are qualified in this area. Having relevant qualifications is optional.

Administrators of schools with many refugee students had to provide teachers of this subject; their targeted education was a secondary aspect.

Only some (teachers and administrators) know that teaching a language as a foreign language has its specific character, which shows in the quality of the classes. In the meantime, teaching Polish to foreigners requires very concrete linguistic, pedagogic, and didactic-methodological competencies.

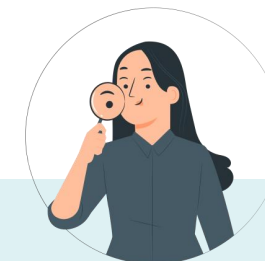
The teachers who completed courses (significantly longer or completed post-grad courses) appreciate how their competencies developed in this area and list specific examples of how this preparation impacted their work and the sense that they are offering „better quality teaching" compared to what they had been doing before.

BENEFITS OF TEACHER EDUCATION

In one of the cities, the local government funded post-grad courses in Polish as a second language, teaching to all willing teachers. One teacher – a graduate of that course, stressed how helpful it has been to how she’s planning the classes and the methods she’s using.



Thanks to the course, I can tell if a coursebook is good. I know what you should watch out for (...) I'm also working on wording my instructions to use the most straightforward words possible. (IDI teacher)



In another school, additional Polish classes are given by the school pedagogue. She completed a course in Polish glottodidactics organized by one of the publishing houses.



The course has given me so much, especially as I'm not a Polish philologist, and had no idea how to do it from a methodological perspective. The principal assigned me as a Polish as 2nd language teacher, assuming that I can do it, because I speak Polish. (IDI pedagogue)

Barriers to effective Polish as a second language learning

DIFFICULTY PLANNING CLASSES

Because the groups are so diverse with respect to age, motivation levels, and skills, but also due to the unpredictability of the class attendance → teachers struggle to prepare a flexible script that would enable achieving lesson plans.

LOW ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE CLASSES

Some students complained that the teaching style is not interesting.

POLISH LITERATURE AND HISTORY INSTEAD OF POLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Sometimes Polish as a second language teachers simply teach the Polish curriculum.

NOT FOCUSING ON THE LANGUAGE OF SCHOOL EDUCATION

Not all schools focus on teaching vocabulary relevant to education and specific subjects.

MORE PRACTICE NEEDED

Students from the preparatory and foreign classes in secondary schools state that they cannot practice the „living" language in direct contact with their peers from Poland. This could be taking place, i.e., in mixed-nationality lessons. Mixed classes with many Ukrainian students are also not conducive to „practicing" language.



We need more practice so that we can have conversations with our Polish peers. (LO1 FGI S UKR)

Moreover, the students stressed that the ability to use language in daily life improves when you socialize outside the school.

THE TEACHER EDUCATION OFFERING DOES NOT TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE SPECIFICS OF CERTAIN AGE GROUPS

The teachers who identified this challenge had reservations about the available offering, as it needs to consider the methods for early elementary education.

LANGUAGE AS A TOOL FOR STRATIFICATION

Some students attend Polish lessons outside the school – some parents sign up their children for additional courses and private tutoring. These students usually perform better on tests than other Ukrainians, which indicates another level in which the refugee community is fragmented.

NO COURSEBOOKS

Problems with the availability of coursebooks were reported, especially publications intended for early elementary education.

It was also stressed that it is impossible to provide coursebooks to all students: no funding to buy paper versions for all students and limited capacity to use electronic versions, i.e., due to lack of equipment.

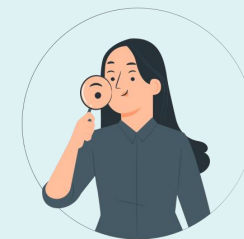
The problem of „excess“

In most schools, the students and teachers alike draw attention to the issue of having to learn many languages simultaneously: Polish, English, and an extra foreign language, but the two latter are taught in Polish. This represents twice the challenge. Moreover, we must remember that many students also learn in Ukrainian schools and are generally in distress about the war.

Students' narratives frequently focus on the problem of learning foreign languages in Polish and that they need to function in many languages simultaneously. This applies in particular to Russian-speaking students.



German, English, Polish, then also Russian and Ukrainian... And your brain turns it all into mush. (ES1 FGI S UKR)



In the case of students for whom Ukrainian is not their first language, being overburdened may lower the competences in language learning during their education. A student from the Russian part of Ukraine, who was proficient in Ukrainian by learning at school, is now seeing his Ukrainian competence decline.



I can't speak Ukrainian anymore. I remember I used to speak it well and without an accent (ES1 FGI S UKR)

„I don't understand, I give up"

A multi-cultural school or a school of assimilation?

Teachers find it challenging when students communicate with one another in Ukrainian.

This creates a sense of lack of control, frustration, and even anger. There is an apparent shortage of tried action plans.

The teachers' reactions vary and fall into a spectrum, from trying to communicate to disciplining, or forbidding Ukrainian altogether.

This shows a powerful tendency for assimilation.



*Obviously, Ukrainian students won't speak Polish to one another. **And sometimes, when they address me, I say I don't understand, I give up.** Then they try to tell the thing in Polish. And we try to find some understanding. (TVS1 IDI6 teacher)*

*They speak Ukrainian in my lessons. When I told them off for it, they were upset and would ask why I was not allowing them to speak Ukrainian. **It's just that I don't know what they are saying** if they aren't saying something about me. (TVS2 IDI form tutor)*

*It's irritating when some of them have this insolent facial expression when they say, „I don't understand," with no effort. So I'm supposed to be learning now? [...] We sometimes talk with the other teachers and say **that we don't know if they are arguing or swearing because we don't understand all the words.**(ES3 IDI teacher).*

***I would like for speaking Ukrainian to be banned at school.** This is a Polish school, and they should speak Polish even to one another. Sometimes, there are situations when they argue, and I have no idea what they are saying. They could be insulting one another or me. Such a ban would be better for them. I feel uncomfortable when I don't understand what they are saying. (ES3 IDI teacher)*

*This teacher said we won't be able to speak Ukrainian to one another next year. And we already had to switch from Russian to Ukrainian. So it's going to be only Polish now? **I remember this lesson about how Prussians annexed Poland, and these Germans banned Poles from speaking Polish. And now we're going to be banned from speaking Ukrainian?** I understand it's all because she thinks we're saying something terrible. (ES3 FGI S UKR)*

Teachers' strategies and needs

The presence of Ukrainian students in mixed classrooms and teaching in foreign/ preparatory classes is **very challenging**; they also don't see **any benefits** of the new situation (besides general statements such as „we've learned more about Ukraine“).

From the teachers' perspective, an essential condition of educational integration is for Ukrainian students to learn Polish, adjust to the norms of the Polish school, and learn the basics of the teaching program.

The teachers don't feel prepared to work with a nationally diverse class. The predominant belief, however, is that the **issue is the language barrier**, not the **lack of relevant professional competencies**.



I like how they work; I see some of them for extra school classes (for Polish and Ukrainian students). Every Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, I would show up one hour before my lessons. (ES1 IDI teacher)



Out of the whole classroom [25 people], only six people gave me their Polish exercise books for grading. If they are supposed to learn writing, they should all have their coursebooks and exercise books. (ES3 IDI teach P2ndL)

Most teachers still **want to support** Ukrainian students in learning. Above all, they enjoy working with active students involved in learning.

There is low awareness of the costs that students (and the school community) have to incur as a result of learning in two educational systems.

Another challenge is also **student rotation**. The sense of temporariness lowers the motivation of teachers to become more involved in working with students from Ukraine.

There is a lack of **didactic materials** for working with students in the foreigner/ preparatory classes and mixed classes (no exercise books/worksheets), some still need utensils (pencils, crayons, etc.)

Teachers' strategies and needs

TEACHERS OF THE MIXED CLASSES

- Are focusing on going **Ahead with the teaching program** and the educational needs of Polish students.
- People who create a learning environment that enables students to **actively acquire knowledge and learn through experience** consider such an approach valuable when working with a nationally diverse class (i.e., working in pairs and teams, peer assessment, working through projects). In such a space, Ukrainian students find it easier to acquire knowledge and skills.
- Ukrainian students are **simply another group with special needs** – teachers feel they should make working with them more individualized but have no space for that (the special needs of Polish children, program, etc.).

TEACHERS IN FOREIGN CLASSES

- Experience **frustration** → and feel that their effort in teaching is not achieving the desired results.
- **Feel underappreciated** by the administrators and other teachers.
- They find working in the preparatory classes challenging – teaching in an **age-mixed group**.



TENSIONS

Taking on the role of the person evaluating and enforcing the completion of tasks when working with children who have experienced war takes an emotional toll on the teachers.

They feel **they have wasted their energy** when the students, often without warning, change their residence or return to Ukraine.

Success (despite having a challenging class) is understood as having a group that performs well (as measured by the grade average or good behavior) and recognition from the administrators and other teachers.



I need to brag now; Ivan has a 5.8 average. And today, Maksym received an award for that contest at town hall. (ES IDI form tutor of a foreign class)



I sometimes get this sense of failure or unfulfillment because when you get a class with only Polish kids, it's easier to do your lessons. And with these children, I sometimes feel clueless, or simply stupid, because there's so much more I'd like to do. But there are some things you can't fix.

(ES1 IDI teacher, 3rd grade)

GRADING

Ukrainian students and their parents declare that they understand the Polish grading system.

Schools still need guidelines on how (and for what) to grade Ukrainian students.

NO HELP HAS ARRIVED

The hope expressed widely and loudly in the previous research wave that the new school year would bring substantial support from the Ministry of Education, including clear guidelines on grading, turned out to be unfulfilled. The Ministry has not respected the pleas of the administrators or teachers. Schools had to act on their own.

NEED FOR EQUAL STANDARDS

The time that has passed since the refugees arrived has contributed to them adjusting better to the school reality and achieving satisfactory results. In the first months, the grading of Ukrainian students was more lenient (of educational achievements and behavior). Still, this school year, the „back to the normal" idea means that many teachers try to grade Ukrainian students the same as Polish ones.

In many schools, the equalization of standards was a process that extended over time and varied depending on the subjects and individual attitudes of the teachers. The end result is only sometimes satisfactory, however.



Ukrainian students were treated with more leniency in geography classes – they were allowed to use their phones or notebooks on tests. At least in the 1st semester, not so much in the 2nd one. (TVS2 FGI S PL)

In practice, teachers still often use different grading systems for Ukrainian and Polish students and communicate that to the Polish students in various ways

These are usually individual practices; no uniformity is agreed upon during teacher conferences. The differences between the subjects depend on the teachers' attitudes, especially their tendency to utilize the assimilation model.

How do the teachers act?

- They give Ukrainian students additional information when testing their knowledge; they allow them to use other aids (i.e., translator applications)
- They use their criteria for grading students with a poor command of the language and who have experienced war
- They lower the standards to motivate students from Ukraine and to satisfy their emotional needs.



These requirements are set as low as possible so that the child can participate to some degree, go to school, and socialize. (ES4 IDI assistant)

We are more lenient on Polish classes. (L2 FGI S PL)

The biggest difficulties in grading students from Ukraine are seen in subjects such as Polish and history due to the requirement for proficiency in Polish and awareness of the historical context. On the other hand, art classes and physical education are easier when it comes to grading.

The narratives of some respondents show that they are departing from a unifying language of lowering requirements and moving towards individualizing the grade. In some cases, criteria were explicitly set for individual students, i.e., because of their achievements in the Ukrainian school.

We have seen many examples of individual approaches to the Ukrainian students, not just concerning grading but also supporting their educational process. This was usually not systemic but depended on the teachers' attitudes.



*We don't give them special treatment. Indeed, **we are more lenient in grading**, as we have to, as you can't do it any other way. (ES1 IDI principal)*

*[the grading system] is **tailored individually**. We never use the expression „more lenient.“ That would take away their dignity. We always say that everyone has their own capacity and is different. We instead say that „we adapt“. It's not that they are given fewer or easier things. They could have a video in Ukrainian. But in some subjects, there's no difference at all, i.e., in math. (LO1 IDI principal)*

*As for history, we lower the requirements to fit the capabilities of these children. They should learn the basics. **We don't want to force them to become Polish, to learn Polish history...** They have their history and need to know that history in Ukrainian. Geography is a very general subject, so there are no issues there. History and Polish are the hardest nuts to crack, as it is tied to the specific nature of our identity as Poles. (ES1 IDI principal)*

Why do teachers find it challenging to equalize the grading standards?

Ukrainian students are varied in their level of knowledge, their skills, and command of Polish.

Ambiguities – teachers don't know how to grade students when dealing with a subject that requires complex vocabulary (i.e., physics) or how to grade Ukrainian students for Polish grammar). Teachers also try to grade the effort students put into their work.

There are no systemic solutions – across the country, local governments, or specific schools. In the schools participating in the study, teachers were given freedom concerning grading. Sometimes, there were different grading criteria within one subject or classroom; sometimes, specific teachers set these individually.

Not all of the teachers can cope with the tension that comes with giving negative grades (or enforcing the completion of assignments) to students who have been through horrific war experiences.



*Legal restraints are in place because you don't have a separate system for grading children from Ukraine. Because of that, we're driven by the general principle and grade them like our kids... Only we all keep in the back of our heads that these kids have it more complex and need our help. Because of that, **we all changed these criteria for the children from Ukraine, even though it's a bit illegal.** [...] We all appreciate the child's effort in the work. I remember this one boy – if I were to grade him for his knowledge, I'd give him a C, but I give him a B because I see his effort. He works 2-3Times harder than a child with no language barrier. (ES IDI principal)*

How am I supposed to give them an F, knowing what they've gone through, having heard these stories about their grandpa being shot or their school being bombed. It isn't easy. (ES1 IDI teacher)

The grading system lacks transparency, requiring clear verification and guidelines on a systemic level.

LACK OF TRANSPARENCY

As much as the one-to-six scale grading system is easy to understand for Ukrainian students and their parents, the non-transparent grading criteria keep generating problems. Therefore, the tensions between students based on grading are due to more than just the diversification of standards. The grading strategies lack transparency, and the teacher's criteria are not always known to all. Students are often not informed about the rules. Some teachers don't see why they should „explain themselves," or they feel the students can „figure it out on their own."

All parties involved say that grading criteria are neither fair nor transparent.

SENSE OF UNFAIRNESS

Grading is a sensitive topic, which often evokes a sense of unfair treatment in Polish students.

Furthermore, the students seem polarized on the matter. The double standards mainly were seen as unfair (students would relate to educational and behavioral aspects) and often sparked conflicts. Still, some voices indicated that foreign students need to be supported as they don't know the language.

Ukrainian students feel uncomfortable both when they are (according to them) graded better than the Polish students or when their grades are lowered (they mentioned situations when they received lower grades than their peers, despite having the same answers, or their grade was lower with no explanation).



*In our school, Polish students complained that the Ukrainian girls **don't have to do anything**, and they still pass the subjects. (TVS1 IDI teacher)*

*This one girl had her nails done; they were long, and **there were no complaints; nobody** said a word. If my nails were that long, I'd be in the principal's office in a heartbeat. (ES2 FGI S PL)*

*When there's a test, I usually approach them and explain things, then I also lower the criteria for them, as their [Ukrainian students'] level is just lower by nature. **Other [Polish] students don't know about it**, so they don't protest. (ES4 DI teachers)*

*I recall this one situation on a test when one of the Ukrainian girls gave back a test; the teacher looked through it and helped her out. **It's just not fair that they won't help us and they are helping them just because they are from Ukraine** (ES2 FGI S PL)*

*In their case [students with a poor command of Polish], the grades should be a bit different because we learn a chemical reaction, whereas the Ukrainians **need to know a chemical reaction, then also what it's called in Polish, and then they need to remember all of that**. That means they have twice as much to study. (L2 FGI S PL)*

Specific example from one of the schools

Peer grading

An elementary school teacher introduced the peer grading system. This increases student participation and serves as a test of in-class relations. The teacher prepares a grading form, which is filled out by every student, by grading their behavior and classmates' behavior. The same form is filled out by teachers working with this class. The teacher gives final behavior grades based on that.



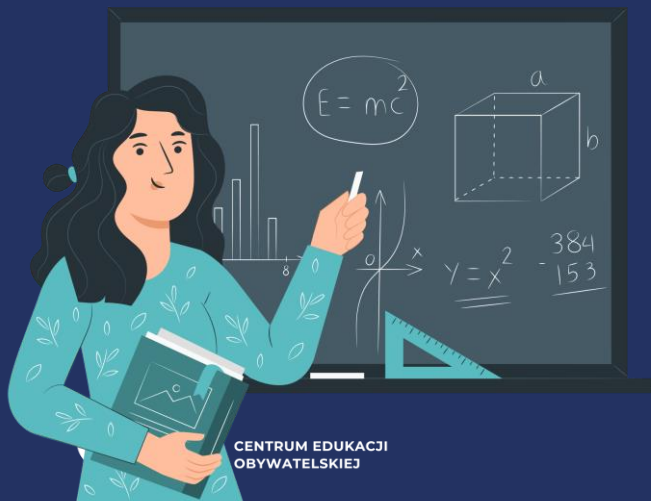
*[Students] Receive a grade form in a Google file and need to grade their behavior and the behavior of all of their classmates. **This gives me a complete picture** of how the kids think about themselves and each other; then, the same goes for the teachers; they get the same grade form. (ES1 IDI teacher4)*



Grade repetition

We identified three different approaches to how Ukrainian students were given final grades at the end of the year:

- Final grade given according to the same rules as with Polish students;
- Avoiding grade repetition;
- Seeing grade repetition as an opportunity to learn the language better;
- Passing/ failing expresses the school's helplessness in working with a „problem" student.



The schools predominantly strive to avoid keeping Ukrainian students in the same grade for another year. This is due to the following:

- Compassionate attitude of the teachers, concerns about the negative consequences of making the student repeat a given year (emotional cost, losing motivation for learning), the belief that students need a sense of success;
- Helplessness in the face of students' lack of involvement;
- Ambiguity of the legal norms and concerns about the educational board intervening.

The only cases where students **were kept in the same grade for another year due to language competencies** would happen only in the first three elementary school grades. Administrators and teachers justified these decisions by explaining they were concerned the students would find it too hard to switch to subject-specific teaching in grade four.

Passing/ failing is also tied to the problem of helplessness about „problematic," uninvolved students. It becomes a „tool" for motivating (passing to the next grade) or solving problems (grade repetition) with older students who don't know the language and are uninvolved.



*It's good that these students fall under the schooling requirement, but **failing them and keeping them for another year doesn't make sense; what good will that give? Repeat the grade, and then what?** (ES2 IDI teacher)*

*Unfortunately, the authority supposed to support us does not do that (...) **At the last meeting, we clearly expressed the lack of legal grounds for failing a child from Ukraine.** The curriculum states that the child needs to communicate in their native language. And that language would be Ukrainian. That means that the child meets that requirement (SP IDI principal)*

*In the 1-3 elementary grades, it was not a problem to keep the kids in the same class for next year [...] That's because the older kids are more aware of what they want; they did not want to lose another year (...) 3 people repeated the third grade [...] Then there's a problem **with this girl, I need to keep her for another year because nothing's changed** [...] She doesn't understand that she has to learn Polish. She still has some years to spare [...] she should be in third grade, **but if she stays for another year, she'll be fine and make it.** (ES1 IDI principal).*

The outcome of the pass/ fail decision reveals tensions between teachers and administrators, which are tensions between different attitudes toward refugee students.



*There's a big problem [with students who don't want to learn]. There are no guidelines from above on what we should do with such a student. And these **decisions are made by the teachers more than the principals**. Sometimes, I think that if a teacher made a strict decision to fail a given student, **I don't know how the principal would respond. I think she would ask the teacher to pass that student.** And I believe [...] that student won't manage in a higher grade. [...] (ES4 IDI teacher)*

*My friend, a teacher from another school, failed a student from Ukraine, but the parents appealed to the board, and **they sent this inspection to the school, and the school was instructed to adapt the requirements** to every child separately. [SP IDI principal]*

The eighth-grader exam



The opinions of administrators and teachers about the end-of-elementary-school exam stretched from enthusiasm and pride about the results to a sense of failure because of the lack of involvement of students who were not planning to stay in Poland.

UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE FORMULA

What was a significant hurdle for the schools was the uncertainty as to the formula of the eighth-grade exam for Ukrainian students.

LINGUISTIC INCONSISTENCIES

Respondents complained about errors in the translation of the exam sheets and the inconsistency linked to students being prepared to take the exam in Polish. Still, in the end, it was all done in Ukrainian.

LOW AVAILABILITY OF DICTIONARIES

There aren't enough Ukrainian-Polish and Polish-Ukrainian dictionaries in the market. This is a general issue, but it has implications for the exams: Students are theoretically allowed to use dictionaries, but providing them is a problem. In one of the schools, Ukrainian students were given Polish-Russian dictionaries instead.



*The exam... **We knew they would fail Polish**, as it's impossible to expect otherwise. Although one of the girls got 30%, we were shocked. Then, math and English – 100%. Math is international, and so is English. The instructions were in Ukrainian, so they got it done. (ES1 IDI principal)*

*Some of the boys say they **don't have to study anyway** as they will leave and won't be taking that end-of-elementary school exam. (ES2 IDI teacher)*

*We make it easier so they can pass the exam and make sure to have all the adjustments so they can go on. We don't want to be an obstacle in their decisions because **we don't know, and the kids don't know what happens next**. (ES4 IDI principal)*

*The girls take extracurricular classes. They weren't pleased about the exam sheet, as **they said they would have to switch now**. They wrote their papers in Polish, but the instructions and texts were Ukrainian. I think they forgot that they should change things because, i.e. in Ukrainian, there's no word for an adjectival attribute, and there was a question about that in the test, ... (ES3 IDI principal)*

The exam as „emotional abuse“

Respondents pointed out that the lack of time for sufficiently learning Polish is a factor that makes it very difficult, or impossible, to succeed on the exams. This is also seen in the previously quoted statements of the principals, showing that the Ukrainian student scoring 30% was an exception.

The poor scores, especially compared to Polish-speaking students, could be demotivating. The system is at fault, not the students and their competencies.



*Some of the children that were admitted to the eighth grade don't have any chance of passing. It's terrible. Books that you can't read in a year without knowing Polish. Or math, which is international, but all the geometry names are different! It all looks very different. **The biggest issue is the language barrier.** And the source texts are often written in old Polish. Sometimes, I can't understand what a lot of these poems are about. (ES4 IDI cultural assistant)*

*I'm afraid these kids will become discouraged when they see **their points and results.** Some of the kids were good students in Ukraine. The line I hear the parents say most often is that they can't recognize their child. Their child used to be a great student and a leader in the classroom, but now, after coming here, their self-esteem has suddenly plummeted because they see they are worse than others. (SP IDI cultural assistant)*

Learning and teaching needs



TEACHERS

Working with a nationally diverse class, especially :

- Communication with students
- Creating a safe atmosphere
- Work methods
- Keeping students motivated
- Maintaining a positive discipline
- Awareness of cultural differences
- Conflict solving
- Grading
- Awareness of modeling processes
- Teachers of Polish as a second language and foreign languages: glottodidactics, teaching Slavic groups
- Bridging the cultural gaps

They want to be appreciated for their hard work

Noticing their successes in their work with refugee children



UKRAINIAN STUDENTS

Mastering the Polish language to a degree that enables smooth communication and learning at a Polish school (language of school education)

Making up any „gaps in the teaching program" and support in learning chosen subjects

Achieving educational success that fits their capabilities

Support in choosing the future academic or professional path

Receiving effective feedback that helps you learn

Grading criteria enable evaluating the educational progress in a given subject, considering being a foreigner.

Understanding the Polish cultural and educational context

Ability to communicate in their native language, share their culture, preserve their cultural identity



POLISH STUDENTS

Transparent and fair grading criteria for Polish and Ukrainian students

Effectively acquiring new knowledge.

Effectively preparing for external exams.

COMBINING TWO SYSTEMS

Simultaneous learning at a Polish and Ukrainian school depends on the family's migration strategy and the students' rational calculations.

THE ONES WHO ARE STAYING

Regardless of the war's future course, the decision to stay in Poland contributes to giving up remote education in Ukraine. However, age-based differences are apparent.

Students of the **senior secondary school grades choose to continue learning remotely:**

- They are using the knowledge they have gained thus far and don't need to learn anything more from the Polish curriculum;
- They are still one year Ahead – the educational cycle in Ukraine is 11 years. That way, they can apply to University more easily (or at least faster). Some acquire secondary Ukrainian education to start working as quickly as possible.

THE ONES WHO ARE COMING BACK

To the younger children learning remotely, Polish school first provides care facilities. The educational dimension (at least from the parents' perspective) is secondary. This gives rise to significant problems tied to satisfying the schooling requirement and learning. For parents of younger children, socialization, and integration are separate motivations.



Functioning in two systems simultaneously is a **massive burden** on the students. On top of the time spent in Polish schools, they have 3-4 hours of online classes (in the case of synchronic education), their work (with asynchronous education), and homework.

The excessive material for learning, the technical limitations (access to a computer with Internet access), **and the problematic learning conditions (i.e., no room)** are sometimes why they choose not to simultaneously learn at a Polish and Ukrainian school.

Parents and their motivations

Just like with the students, the parents' motivations are also diverse. Some see attending a Polish school similarly to their parents as a gateway to a good University education or career.

They also want their children to attend a Polish school as it:

- Allows socializing with their peers;
- provides a place where they are cared for
- Raises their language skills;
- Helps grow their soft skills such as communication, group work, and boosting social confidence;
- Education is a value upon itself (not all)



*We stayed with online **education only to finish these grades in the Ukrainian system**, so things are clear once we return to [name of city in UKR]. Why did we choose to send the child to a Polish school? It's valuable; our son is very self-reliant in communication. The online Ukrainian school – I want him to graduate from the 1-4 elementary grades there, and here, I just want him to socialize. This is crucial after the pandemic and the war. (ES2 IDI parent UKR).*

*I **needed time to work remotely** in Ukraine. Up to that moment, children should develop and communicate, so I decided they're going to a Polish school. [DDI6 mother]*

*[Respondent had to go to work, and children stayed alone at home.] As a result, we decided that the kids would go to a Polish school. [...] The **opportunity arose**, and we used it [DDI2 mother]*

Learning in two educational systems



[...] [name] did not want to move to that foreigner class, because she's taking the ZNO now, and their learning program is much harder, because they are keeping up with the Polish program and she said she won't manage learning simultaneously at the Ukrainian school, mastering so many difficult things from the Polish liceym



*Attending both schools is better, provided it's not elementary school... **Because the older you are, the harder it is to manage the workload.** But for the younger kids, this is a new experience, new connections, a new culture. (DD18 mother)*



(...) the war is not going to continue forever. Once it ends, we can return to Ukraine and the purpose of that system is so that I don't have to go through the whole level again, but to finish certain classes, maybe to pass some exams. (ES4 FGI S UKR)

The challenges of learning in both systems

MASSIVE WORKLOAD – STUDYING²

Especially in the more senior years. It isn't easy to make the lesson plan work so that you can fit into both schools.

Students have no time for other activities – pursuing their interests in extracurricular activities, socializing with their peers, and finding their place in the local community.



It's challenging to reconcile learning at both schools. The lessons in the Polish school start at 10. But my daughter also starts Polish lessons earlier. She returns at 4-5 PM, sometimes later, and starts her Ukrainian online classes. [DDI5 mother]

*When Dima attends the Polish school, he can't participate in the online classes in Ukraine. The Ukrainian teachers had extra courses with them on the weekends so that they could stay in touch. But as time went by, **this became harder**, even if he respected his teacher so much. The distance makes a difference. [DDI4 mother]*

LOWER QUALITY OF ONLINE EDUCATION

Noticed by the parents and teachers. Requirements are lower, attendance suffers, the form is not engaging, parents struggle to give support and teachers rotate. Parents say outright that students use extra help when taking tests online.

Learning in a Ukrainian school, regardless of the possibility of staying in touch with the Ukrainian community and continuing the education there, comes with all the shortcomings of remote education; on top of that, it's organized by the institutions of a country at war.



*The classes are half empty [...] from the start of the full-scale war, and the teacher was changed three times. They come and go; there **needs to be stability**. (DDI7 mother)*

*It isn't easy to oversee my son's online education. I think that he does everything asked of him, but does he understand what he's doing, or **just repeating things automatically**? (DDI5 mother)*

WHEN IS IT EASIER?

Combining the two systems is not much of a burden for the younger students and children learning in the (Ukrainian) remote mode.



They were only tired during the exam period, two weeks at the end of the school year (DDI6 mother)

The reduced requirements in the Ukrainian school mean combining learning in two systems is more accessible but also reduces the quality.



*We were learning in the Ukrainian school, but it was not proper learning; we were more focused on the Polish school. And we had to take tests at the end of the year. To pass, we just opened the e-books checked all the answers, and that was it. **That Ukrainian school is just a formality** (DDI3 student)*

Summary: strategies for learning in the Polish and Ukrainian education system at the same time.

Two key factors that differentiate strategies:

- Age of the students, being in the last or penultimate grade of a given educational level.
- Migration plans of the family

In the case of younger students, or students in classes that don't end with an exam, having good grades in both schools is possible only in the remote school.

Others prioritize one of the systems. The decision as to whether that would be the Polish or Ukrainian system depends on:

- Migration plans
- Integration level
- Student's age
- Having special educational needs

Older students/ students in grades that end with an exam focus on the Ukrainian school, regardless of their migration plans and integration level. Exceptionally talented and well-integrated persons are an exception.

The costs of learning in two systems simultaneously:

- Students feeling overburdened (in the case of younger students – this also applies to their parents)
- Not participating in extracurricular classes, including Polish as a second language classes
- Fewer integration opportunities
- When they focus on the Ukrainian school – reduced quality of education
- When they focus on the Polish school – extending the education cycle



EMOTIONAL NEEDS

The needs of Ukrainian students remain same as before

Teachers see an improvement in the mental-emotional condition of the students. They associate that with integration, better command of Polish, and the passage of time since the events in Ukraine.

We hear more often that the situation is calmer and more stable.

However – despite the passage of time – some students still require specialized psychological and therapeutic support, or students struggle with difficult emotions.

Some students from Ukraine still feel very anxious; they don't feel safe in an environment that is still new. Some have moved many times in Poland.

The concerns about their family staying in Ukraine constantly keep the students' attention focused on the war.

In the visited schools, there were children from Ukraine who experienced the following (sometimes experiencing multiple of these):

- The death of a family member or a long time apart
- Suspicion of PTSD,
- Signs of depression (or diagnosed depression),
- Withdrawn, apathetic, isolating themselves from their surroundings,
- Questioning the reality they see themselves in (rules at school, social norms)
- Displaying social maladaptation to the new environment
- With special needs, i.e., environmental limitations, health problems, language barriers, ADHD, dyslexia
- With various kinds of disabilities



„TAKEN AWAY" FROM A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Students from Ukraine attended a mixed class for a year and came to integrate with the class. This school year, a preparatory class was created (by the authority of the local government), and all Ukrainian students were put in that class without any warning.



My son took it badly. He was crying at home that he'd lost his friends (ES IDI parent)

DEPRESSION AND ISOLATION

An elementary school student struggled to learn at the Polish school and fell into depression. The school was unable to help.



(...) after a week, we took her back to 7th grade because she said she was not coping and couldn't understand anything. And then she stopped going altogether, as she was depressed. Her mum was working, and she just locked herself in, was afraid. She didn't attend any school; she just could not take it. We tried motivating her; there was a psychologist, but nothing helped. Maybe if we had a translator or psychologist who speaks Ukrainian. We lack such personnel. (SP IDI principal)

More examples from schools



*If they get worked up, they just start thinking in their way. At that point, I had no idea if it was my question or what the problem was because they didn't tell me anything but **shout** to another person in a language I didn't understand. (ES3 IDI teacher)*

We were talking about nuclear weapons during this one lesson. And they [Polish students] were sitting there laughing. They don't know what it's like [...] because they never experienced war. (L2 FGI S UKR)

*At first, everyone said we're not chipping in [for gifts from Ukrainian kids], but then the parents felt ashamed because at the start of the year, it was Boy's Day, and our Polish kids received lollipops and other gifts. I said this didn't seem right and **used my money to buy gifts** for the Ukrainian and Polish kids. (ES1 IDI early elementary teacher)*



RUSSIAN CRIMEA

One of the classrooms has a map (Erasmus+ materials) where Crimea is not shown as the territory of Ukraine.

Ukrainian students were upset. Apparently, they asked the teacher to do something, but she never did. The map is still hanging there.

RUSSIAN FLAG

There was a Russian flag hanging in the Russian language classroom. A Ukrainian student tried to tear it down. The teacher intervened – he tried to explain during a one-on-one meeting that he should not be doing that. Nothing else happened. The Polish students seemed not to understand the motivation of their classmates.



I remember this Russian flag hanging in the Russian classroom. A Ukrainian student wanted to take it down. The teacher explained that it was just a flag and that he didn't need to tear it down. We partially understood, but you know, it's not like the whole Russian nation is to blame for the war. (TVS FGI S PL)

New needs of Polish students.

It seems that in the previous school year, the Polish students were cared for well regarding coping with the fears and emotions due to the outbreak of war.

The students are currently concerned about what their lives/ their families' lives will look like in a multicultural country. This is expressed through stories about the entitled Ukrainians or the fact that Ukrainian dominates the streets, etc.

Students feel many emotions in connection with the current social situation, many of which they cannot recognize or deal with. Emotional regulation problems manifest themselves in nervousness, verbal and physical abuse.



*All in all, when I look around, and based on some Ukrainians I know living in Poland, **they think they are better** because they came here, and they are not. (TVS1 FGI S PL)*

***They get everything.** I asked a boy from another class [from Ukraine] where he bought such sports shoes. Cool ones he had, I liked them. He said that he didn't buy that there is such a place in the city, if you show your passport from Ukraine you will get them for free. This is a bafflement. (ES FGI S PL)*



Change in the emotional security strategies

Providing a sense of emotional safety to Ukrainian students is considered a priority in all schools participating in the study.

Because of the time that has passed since the start of the war, people increasingly assume that the Ukrainian students' needs are no different than the needs of Polish students.

In the meantime, many feel alone in the school communities. This was particularly apparent in the Ukrainian students' reactions to the presence of a Ukrainian researcher.



*This is **the first time someone has sincerely talked to us and asked what we think about things that matter to us.** [to the researcher] (FGI S UKR)*



OFTEN

HOW DO SCHOOLS ENSURE EMOTIONAL SAFETY OF STUDENTS?

New students are being introduced to the school and class.
→ tour of the school, meeting the classmates.

Possibility to talk to an adult who speaks Ukrainian or Russian (including the cultural assistants).

The support of a **cultural assistant**.

Material support for the students and their families
→ donations, buying school utensils, etc.

Symbolic support in the school environment, i.e., posters with slogans expressing support for Ukraine, flags in the corridors, bilingual signs;

Classes with psychologists or pedagogue

One-on-one consultations with a pedagogue and / or psychologist

The role of the buddy program

Talking about emotions regarding the war in the classroom

RARELY

WHAT DOES NOT FAVOR A SENSE OF SAFETY OR STABILITY OF STUDENTS FROM UKRAINE?

- Transferring students from one class to another (within the school or to other schools)
- Vague criteria for passing to the next grade
- Children having to repeat a grade
- Lack of sensitivity to cultural and historical contexts in the school community

WHAT DOES NOT FAVOR A SENSE OF SAFETY OR STABILITY OF STUDENTS FROM POLAND?

- Xenophobic narratives in their parental homes
- *Fake news* and various stories heard from friends about the behaviors of people from Ukraine
- Communication in the media
- Direct experiences (of violence from Ukrainian students, Ukrainian language being very common in public places).

Teachers don't feel prepared to work with emotions.

Similarly as during the first research wave, teachers show a high degree of understanding of the difficult psychological situation of Ukrainian students and – much like one year ago – they lack the proper skills to work with these challenges.



I'm not prepared for this. I would like to have someone to help me in this area. To tell me how to talk, how to get through to that mother, so that she wants to open up so that she shares something about her child... Maybe that child had problems at the previous school; we don't know that either. (ES2 IDI form tutor).

Teachers act on intuition in their contacts with Ukrainian students. They are often unable to diagnose the mental condition of the students, and they admit they lack the relevant skills.

Three problems are of concern:

→ Many teachers **feel that the students with the most severe problems** (i.e., PTSD, depression) are **sporadic cases** in their schools, and they are specific only to the first weeks or months after the war broke out. This does not indicate that there is no such problem, but rather the lack of sufficient competencies for diagnosing such situations.

→ **Learning about diagnosing emotional states/ the mental condition of the students is not considered a priority**, especially in the case of teachers who are not form tutors of classes with Ukrainian students.

→ Some teachers **believe that educating themselves in emotional support would be the same as preparing to offer specialized support**, which is not their role.

NEW CHALLENGES FOR THE FORM TUTORS

Updated scripts are needed when discussing specific topics in the lessons.



*How do I talk to them about children's rights if all their rights were taken from them? Children can't understand that. How do we talk about friendship if their best friend is in Ukraine. Whatever subject I touch on, the main thing that comes out is that they had left their childhood behind in Ukraine. I **struggled so hard with it; discussing these subjects is challenging.** (ES3 IDI form tutor)*

TEACHER WELFARE URGENTLY NEEDED

We must also emphasize the importance of taking care of the welfare of the teachers. The experience of the pandemic and the war in Ukraine equals experiencing constant changes tied to many negative emotions, uncertainty, massive effort, and frustration. This is especially relevant in the case of teachers working in foreigner classes, preparatory classes, and the form tutors of mixed classes – they are exposed to high stress and are underappreciated for their efforts.

What are the obstacles to providing emotional support to children and youths?

COMPLEXITY OF THE CASES

It makes it harder to diagnose and to seek psychological support. Teachers struggle to distinguish the children's mental problems from adaptation difficulties. Moreover, the latter seems to be used to explain the student's issues and, as a result, block the way to professional support.

NOT KNOWING THE CHILD'S HISTORY

Not having access to prior diagnoses and not knowing how the student functioned in the Ukrainian school ² may be the reason for behaviors presently interpreted as adaptation problems.

CONSULTING A PSYCHOLOGIST IS NOT COMMON PRACTICE

Some students who used the help of specialists were made fun of by their Ukrainian peers.

NOT KNOWING WHERE TO DIRECT THE CHILDREN

Regardless of the high level of understanding of the unique situation of Ukrainian children and their families and the resultant psycho-emotional needs, teachers are only sometimes fully aware of the available sources of specialized support or the relevant procedures in the event of more severe problems with the students. Even in schools with posters about available external support, many teachers were unaware of such options.

NO EXTERNAL SUPPORT/ NO SYSTEMIC SOLUTIONS

In case of difficult situations (i.e., poor attendance, students showing signs of dyslexia), there is no plan of action for the student. Sometimes, the school would receive a notice that the local Psychological and Pedagogical Clinic would not issue a document attesting to the student's dyslexia.

TEACHERS FEELING FRUSTRATED AND DISCOURAGED

Another challenge when addressing the emotional needs of students is not just the lack of competencies but also the frustration and discouragement of the teachers tied to the feeling that the Ukrainians are ungrateful.



What are the obstacles to providing emotional support to children and youths?



*I can see that she's a smart child who quickly gets the language but has clear signs of dyslexia. But without the proper paperwork, he can't get all the help dyslexic children usually get. Not only are these children traumatized, but they can have a whole range of different learning difficulties. **And all of that is often just labeled under adaptation difficulties or war trauma. And many children could be on the autism spectrum. This is an enormous problem.** (ES4 IDI cultural assistant)*

*Some children are still alone on their breaks; they **don't feel comfortable in their class**. Sometimes, we approach them and ask if they need help. But they should go to a psychologist or pedagogue. (ES3 IDI non faculty staff)*

***At first, we did everything possible to make them feel well; that was a priority. We approached them often and helped.** Now (...) we experience many unpleasant situations. We do so much, but then a student says, „This school doesn't allow us to do anything." Gosh, we have so many things in place for their safety, and we try to implement these things, and they see them as punishments. It brings us down. **It's like these children were saying, „Give us everything".** (ES3 IDI teacher)*

*We tried to refer the student to a pedagogue clinic so they can get a diagnosis, because the mum said that the child sits at home and doesn't want to go to school (...) And I just can't... **There are no procedures for this. What we do is that such children choose to only study remotely in the Ukrainian online school.** One boy (...) we were doing so much to make him eager to come to school (...), but he put on weight, and he had this mental block about his appearance. And then his mother, I think she's in [name of city], but she left that child in a boarding school; I don't know what else happened. (ES2 IDI principal)*

Students' emotional needs and the required skills of the teachers



TEACHERS

- Learning more about long-term changes regarding the functioning of refugee students.
- Improving skills in such areas as conflict resolution, antidiscrimination actions, and diagnosing the students' emotional states.
- Need for appreciation
- Realizing how much success they've already had working with refugee children.



UKRAINIAN STUDENTS

- Physical and emotional safety
- Support in dealing with trauma and emotional problems.
- Need to function comfortably in a multi-cultural environment.
- Having someone they can trust
- Need for self-esteem (in the new/ foreign environment).



POLISH STUDENTS

- Physical and emotional safety.
- Naming the difficult emotions connected to the presence of people from Ukraine in Poland.
- Fear of the „others," worries about what Poland will look like in future
- Regulation of emotions
- Need for equal/ fair treatment in a multi-cultural group.
- Need for freedom in establishing new relations (choosing who they want to be friends with).
- Need to function comfortably in a multi-cultural environment.

Specialized help, especially psychological support, is limited.

Students of all nationalities have limited access to the school psychologists because these specialists have limited working hours in school. Using such assistance is more difficult for students from Ukraine as they don't speak Polish fluently.

School psychologists often don't take any actions to support Ukrainian students because of their language limitations – they don't feel competent enough. From their perspective, professional and effective work with the child is impossible without knowing the language.



- The school psychologist would show up **only when someone did something wrong** or if they behaved oddly.

- Our pedagogue shows up **only for advisory classes**, really rarely, only when she has something to communicate. (ES3 FGI S UKR)

*I work with emotions. Even when I tried using translators, the result was just poor. The translator is just so dry. And I try to say things using my emotions or accept what the child says. Then, many times, it would turn out that the child didn't understand what the translator was saying; it was the same the other way around. **It was very tough on me trying to support these children.** (ES3 IDI psychologist)*



Compared to the previous wave of the study, availability of specialized support outside the school has improved to some degree, mostly in the large cities.

Apart from very few exceptions, in the medium and smaller cities, specialists who speak Ukrainian or Russian are available online, for a fee, or not at all.

THERE IS NO SPECIAL TRACK FOR SPECIALIST SUPPORT

It seems that – as during the first wave of this study – schools are trying to adapt existing solutions to Ukrainian students: the form tutor diagnoses a need and informs the specialists at the school. The difference compared to Polish students is that a cultural assistant is involved here, provided that there is one at the school. In most cases, she acts as the interpreter. Some schools had assistants with some preparation in psychology; in one school it was a Ukrainian psychologist.

HELP FROM NON-SPECIALISTS

The problem is that psychologists are unprepared to work with children who have experienced war trauma or are functioning in a multicultural environment. The language barrier further exacerbates this. In effect, children receive psycho-emotional support from non-specialized faculty. Cultural or linguistic proximity is more important.

LONG WAITING AND DENIALS

Respondents mentioned one case when the school cooperated with a Psychology and Pedagogy Clinic, which offered „emergency" assistance to Ukrainian children. Still, the waiting time was very long, and the results were uncertain (such institutions sometimes refuse to issue learning difficulty certifications to foreign children).

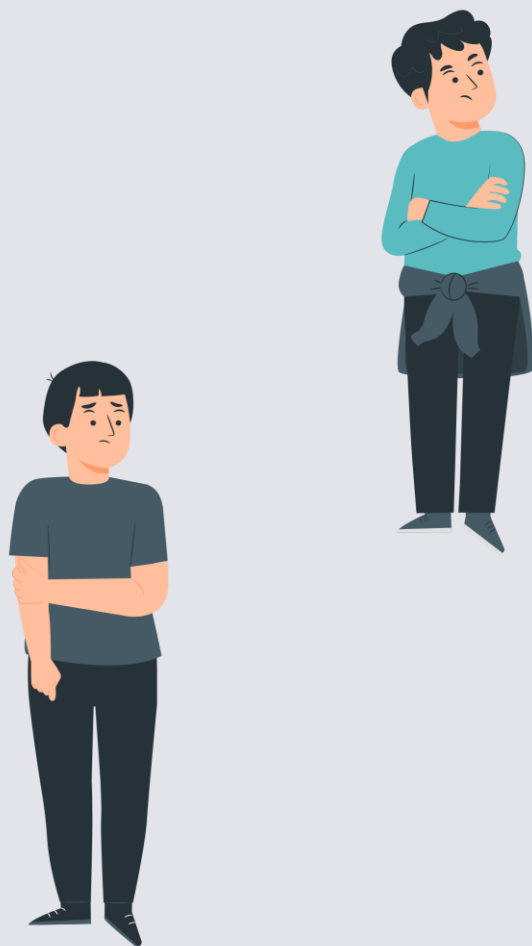


*There is a massive problem with the psychology centers issuing opinions or diagnoses. One student was suspected of dyslexia – I set up an appointment in that clinic with the mother's consent. The wait is 4-5 months. They told me at the start that they cannot even issue a paper that he's even suspected of dyslexia, **as he is a foreign child and they are not allowed to.** (SP IDI cultural assistant)*

When specialized assistance in Ukrainian is available...

In the schools with faculty capable of providing psychological support in Ukrainian, many students would use their assistance (some regularly).

This makes for an interesting contrast with what schools without Ukrainian-speaking specialists stated – namely, they did not need nor were interested in any support from psychologists.



CHALLENGES

Cultural assistants often act as de-facto Ukrainian-speaking psychologists. **However, this is an informal role.** This had many consequences: the vagueness of tasks and possible actions, the uncertainty of employment, and uncertainty when interacting with parents or other teachers.

People from Ukraine offering psychological support to students **were not adequately introduced to the rest of the faculty based on their role.** This caused misunderstandings and sometimes even conflict.

There were no action plans or strategies for communicating the role in the school.

Not all students were aware of the possibility of using such support. The best-informed students were the ones studying in preparatory classes or foreign classes.

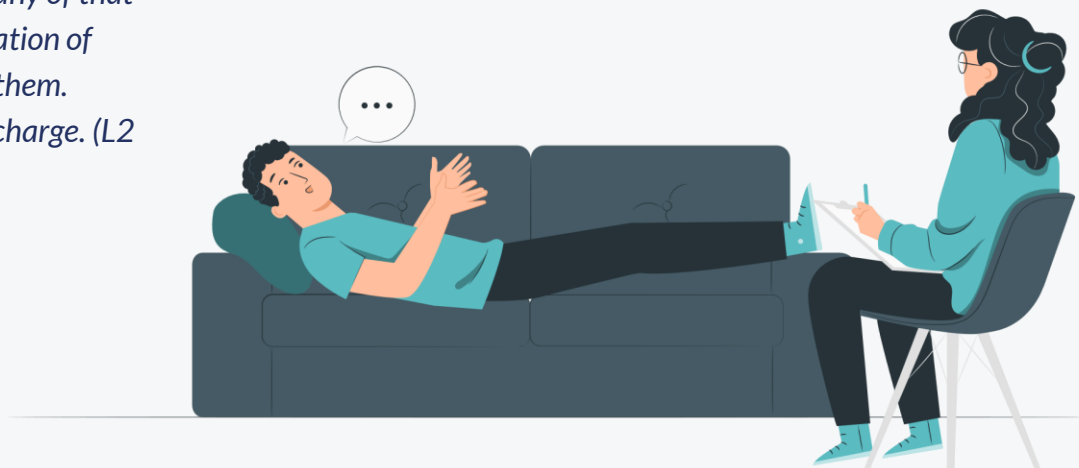
There was **no place for meetings** that would provide the necessary discretion.

People performing this role **do not receive any specialized assistance.**

When specialized assistance in Ukrainian is available...



I reached this point when I finally realized that I am emotionally incapable of working with the children. I am just frustrated and burnt out. At home [in the Ukraine], I could meet with my friend, go on walks, or to the sauna, all of which helps. I can't do any of that here. On Facebook, I found a foundation of Ukrainian psychologists and wrote them. They gave me five meetings free of charge. (L2 IDI assistant)



Her presence [the assistant acting as psychologist] helps. It was so strange that nobody would go to the psychologist at first. And now, whenever there's a problem, they say they want to talk to a psychologist. And the assistant talks to them for one hour. It also helped their education. I can see it in the kids from my class. This boy didn't want to talk; he only did written exercises. But he opened up after the assistant met with him a few times. I don't know any Ukrainian kids who would go to a Polish psychologist. (L2 IDI teacher)

SOCIAL NEEDS



CENTRUM EDUKACJI
OBYWATELSKIEJ

Apart

The study reveals a clear picture of two nationalities functioning in the school environment apart instead of together.

This kind of relationship (or the lack thereof) equals indifference to the other side. This is a dangerous situation and can lead to further segregation, reinforcement of stereotypes, and increased conflicts between students of different nationalities.

APART IN THE SCHOOL SPACE

Students of mixed// Polish and preparatory/ foreign classes spend their breaks in different areas (i.e. corridors on different floors). Sometimes students from the Polish/ mixed classes had breaks at different times than the preparatory or foreign classes. In two schools, some students and parents were not aware of the existence of a preparatory/ foreign class in their building.

APART IN THE CLASSROOM

Students share desks with people of the same nationality, they spend time in separate groups that are nationally homogeneous. „International relations" (or even friendships) do exist, but it is not the dominant pattern.



*At first, **we tried to connect**, but it was difficult. We started with a field trip, and the teacher would make them join the Polish kids. In my group, though, one Ukrainian preferred to work alone rather than with us. They don't sit with us on the breaks either; they go somewhere, all six of them, and **you don't have any opportunity to get to know them.** (L2 FGI S PL)*

*B: Do you talk with them [the Ukrainian students?] R: No, they **have a world of their own.** (ES1 FGI S PL)*

[Eight-grader] They don't know how to address or chat us up. They don't know how to approach us because we don't speak Polish that well. (ES4 FGI S UKR)

***We don't know** these other students, the Polish ones. We don't know what they think of us; **I don't even know if we would find common ground** or anything to talk about. (ES3 FGI S UKR)*

You barely see them because they sometimes attend classes and sometimes don't. They are quiet, always sitting at the front; they don't talk to us and don't want to connect. (TVS1 FG U UPL)

Connecting in a nationally diverse environment

DIFFERENT PHASES OF THE RELATIONS

From the viewpoint of the Polish and Ukrainian students, their contact with the peers can be divided into two phases:

„The beginning" (first weeks and months in the school) – At this phase, they were very reserved; students from Ukraine felt lost, uncertain, and somewhat socially withdrawn.

„Now" – they have gotten to know each other better, and the relations have improved. The Ukrainian students' knowledge of Polish significantly contributes to improving the relations.



INITIATING RELATIONS IS CHALLENGING FOR TEACHERS

Teachers continue to try and encourage the students to connect, but such attempts are opposed by the Polish and Ukrainian sides alike (it seems like fake, insincere communication with peers).

Sometimes, the teachers serve as the model for positive interactions.



The teachers would ask us about our lives in Ukraine, how we were doing in school, what subjects we had... After that, the Polish students were interested in talking to us. (L2 FGI S UKR)



NEGATIVE, UNAPPEALING IMAGE OF UKRAINIAN CLASSES

Ukrainian classes are perceived as „loud," „trouble-making," and „not respecting social norms." Respondents used a polarizing „us-them" language. The rare meetings with Polish students and the lack of planned community-building initiatives widen the gap further.

If Ukrainian students behave aggressively, are not involved in schoolwork, and are a numerous (or visible) group, their image is projected upon the whole Ukrainian community at the school.



One mother (of a Ukrainian student) just came to me and asked how she was supposed to reply to her son, who approached her and asked, „Mum, are all of us Ukrainians like that?". He was so upset with these other Ukrainian children who were misbehaving. (ES3 IDI teacher)

When are they together?

IN MIXED CLASSES

When there are individual students from Ukraine there.

Students are naturally „thrown" into cross-cultural interactions: working together on lessons, socializing on breaks and field trips, and interacting with Polish teachers.



It helped. You quickly get into the Polish environment whether you want to or not. (ES1 IDI parent UKR1)

*We have **Polish best friends, some of whom are from other classes.** (ES1 FGI S UKR)*

*When picking players for the teams during PE, the Ukrainians **are never the last to be picked** in our class. (L2 FGI S PL)*

The mixed classes in schools with many Ukrainian students become increasingly diverse nationally. In one such class, Ukrainian students constituted over 1/3 of the class, contributing to separation.

ON SCHOOL EVENTS

School-level or multi-class events, such as contests, cultural events, volunteering, student body activities. However, these opportunities are rare.

ON EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

In this edition of the study, it was reported more often that students from Ukraine participated in extracurricular activities. Once again, sports and art classes are a recipe for successful integration – working together, with the non-verbal character of the work alleviating the language barrier.

ON FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are an opportunity to spend several days together, so bond spontaneously. Students also appreciated one-day outings, i.e. a movie theater trip. In both cases, there is a financial barrier – not all students from Ukraine take part in these activities.

SUPPORT IN BEING TOGETHER

In some schools, the teachers listed the following actions as very helpful.

- The Together in the Class Program of the School with Class Foundation
- UNICEF Open School
- The Culture Suits Me Project
- Course on peer relations organized by the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Warsaw touched on relations in multicultural groups.
- Courses on multi-culturalism organised by various entities, i.e., Teacher Education Centers



Case from a school



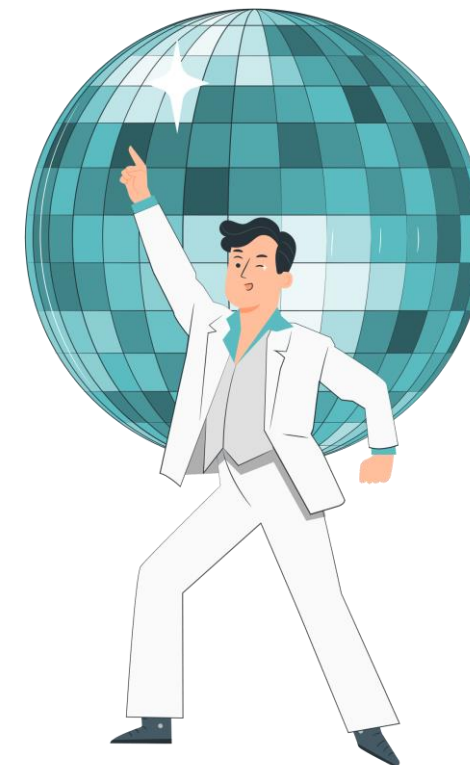
TRIPS AND DISCO NIGHT AT A HIGH SCHOOL

Ukrainian students from the preparatory class of one of the high schools spoke with enthusiasm about a field trip they had.

On the other hand, they did not seem to like the disco night organized at the school because of the different contexts that the students grew up in. Ukrainian youths do not understand many elements of Polish culture (usually Polish pop culture).



The culture is a barrier. They have different jokes and memes that we don't get. You must understand everything if you want to integrate with a given community. And not everyone wants to help you. (LO FGI S UKR)



In the school

Planned team-building actions were primarily conducted in the previous school year, chiefly in the first weeks after the war broke out.

Perhaps such events are organized more seldom now because, in a multicultural group, they are associated only with the presentation of various kinds of customs and because this formula has exhausted itself.

The feeling we identified in the previous research wave, that „children will come together on their own," is still prevalent in the schools.

At present, **there is no trace of any school-wide community-building initiatives.**

Attempts are made to include the students (and parents) in activities for the school community under whatever practices exist in a given school. However, this mainly applies to the students in mixed classes.

In some schools, respondents state bluntly that they are now not distinguishing people from Ukraine in any particular way (the reason: so they don't get different treatment and also not to „upset" the negatively inclined).

Planned actions for community-building in youths and for sparking interest in cultural diversity **are still being undertaken in specific classes and subjects** based on the initiative of a given teacher.

It needs to be stressed that it happens sporadically for such community-building activities to be organized by trainers – specialists from outside the school. The reason is probably the belief that there is no need for supporting team-building at the school.

SCHOOL SPACES FOR INTEGRATION

- **The library** – organizing events in the library or the library as a meeting place
- **The common room**
- **School sports field and gymnasium**
Team sports – the language barrier is not as visible in sports,
- **School corridor**



What helps integration?

- Working in mixed groups during the lessons (and mixed groups carrying out projects outside the classroom), cyclically drawing places where students would sit in the classroom
- Project work
- Students going out together after the classes (to the movie theater, to walk around the area)
- Several-day trips – spending time together, with planned team-building activities (i.e., workshops)
- Participating in extracurricular activities, especially sports and art
- Students from Ukraine joining activities that have been part of the school tradition for years (i.e., participating in the annual talent show, helping the local animal shelters)
- All kinds of spontaneous, grassroots meetings/ student initiatives
- Younger age of the students (younger children connect with their peers more spontaneously, and have fewer prejudices)
- Not having many Ukrainian students in one class



What hinders integration? Barriers?

- Physically isolating students from the mixed, preparatory, and foreigner classes
- Having many students from Ukraine in one class
- Polish students adapting nationalistic, bigoted narratives
- Youth slang
- Using different criteria when treating Ukrainian and Polish students (even when this is done „in good faith“)
- Teachers believing that integration will happen on its own
- Insufficient competencies of the teachers when it comes to working with a group (conflict solving, watching out for discriminatory behaviors, etc.).
- Students and teachers feeling too anxious to talk about sensitive matters („I’d rather not ask“)
- Adaptation problems of Ukrainian students due to the experience of migration (depressed mood, withdrawal, self-isolation, low motivation).
- Not knowing the cultural contexts, not being sensitive to the values of the other side (i.e., Ukrainian students not showing up for the movie about the patron of the school)
- Ukrainian students not participating (regardless of the reason) in additional activities, trips, or community-building workshops

Integration activities - practices

ANNUAL COMMUNITY-BUILDING TRIP

One school organized its second, several-day-long integration trip for the students.

VOLUNTEERING

Ukrainian students joined a student volunteer group with a long tradition at the school. The group cooperates with the local branch of the Caritas charity and helps people in the homelessness crisis (making sandwiches together)

STORY TIME

Students from an older foreign class read stories to fourth-graders.

SOCIAL SPACE

Adapting the school corridor – creating a place to meet.

CHESS TOURNAMENT

Polish students organized a chess tournament in the library of one of the secondary schools. Polish and Ukrainian students participated.

ORGANIZERS

Students from the foreigner class in an elementary school were responsible for co-organizing a school event – „Days of color"- about wearing chosen colors of clothes on specific days. They informed the classes about the rules and wrote down who was dressed (there were prizes at the end).

The other classes started noting our class. (SP IDI form tutor)



INTEGRATION OUTDOORS

We do these survival trips. In the woods. Great for getting to know the others. You just use your Instinct, and you need to communicate. (ES1 FGI S PL)

NEW MEMBERS OF THE STUDENT BODY COUNCIL

The supervising teacher of the student body council in an elementary school invited students from Ukraine (including from the foreign class) to join the council's work—assigning them specific tasks, for example, working on the school paper. That issue came out with a „Ukrainian insert."

WORKSHOPS ORGANIZED BY PROFESSIONALS

Fourth graders have participated in workshops on integration and expressing emotions in one elementary school for years. Moreover, the cultural assistant holds Social Skills Classes.

UKRAINIANS IN THE CLASS COUNCIL

In several schools, Ukrainian students were elected into their mixed class council. One boy was made class president. Responsibility = trust = appreciation = presence and visibility in the group.

Attitudes of the Polish students

The initial desire to help and support the peers from a worn-torn country is no longer commonplace.

Many students count people from Ukraine among their friends. As far as individual relations are concerned, they are open and friendly. They do not treat Ukrainians any different.

However, there is also an apparent attitude of hostility to the generalized Other. During the interviews, many Polish students spoke unfavorably about Ukrainian students, labeling them as „entitled”, „lazy,” or „taking advantage of the situation.”

In the schools participating in the study, we can observe a complete spectrum of attitudes of Polish students, from being kind and supportive to indifferent, „passing each other by”, to outright hostility.

INJUSTICES

We identified cases of different peer conflicts between students from Poland and Ukraine. What is their most common cause?

- The already mentioned sense that Ukrainian students are being favored by the teachers (grading standards, school rules, i.e., use of mobile phones, etc.).
- Ukrainian students using various means of assistance differently than was intended (i.e., they use their phones to cheat on tests)
- Personality traits

In the meantime, adult members of the school community believe that the conflicts between the children are primarily due to ordinary peer animosities (i.e., „stealing” a boyfriend) or personality differences and are not driven by ethnicity (even in the presence of xenophobic narratives). Ignoring such behaviors may exacerbate the perpetuation of stereotypes and divisions.

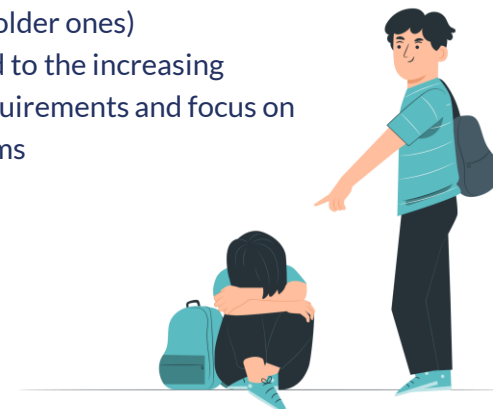


I don't think the issue is the lack of acceptance of children of different ethnicities. Which doesn't mean there are no conflicts between Ukrainian, Russian, and Polish children. But we don't think it's driven by nationality, but misunderstandings. (ES4 IDI principal)

WHAT MAY LEAD TO CONFLICTS?

Teachers list:

- Narratives in the students' families
- Developmental differences. Having children of different ages in one class is a challenge for the teachers.
- The age of the children. Antagonistic attitudes worsen as the children get older (much weaker in the younger classes, stronger in the older ones) and may be tied to the increasing educational requirements and focus on grades and exams



Xenophobic and conflict behaviors

INSTIGATORS CAN BE FOUND ON BOTH SIDES; THE DIFFERENCE, HOWEVER IS THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

We heard reports of Polish-Ukrainian conflicts instigated by both sides. However, these conflicts are very disproportionate. Ukrainian students are more frequently the target of xenophobic and discriminatory behaviors than the instigators.

This difference is best seen when we examine the problems students report to their teachers and pedagogues. When Polish students turn to them for help, they mostly complain that Ukrainian students are treated better, that they are abusing their „privileged position," and voicing their dissatisfaction about the proposed integration. Ukrainian students, on the other hand, more often reported cases of verbal and physical abuse they experienced.

Some also stated that these problems improve as Ukrainian students acquire a better command of Polish.

OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL

The narratives reveal worsening frustration and explicitly xenophobic attitudes among some parents and local communities. Ukrainian students also have to frequently deal with discriminatory, nationalistic behaviors out of school – on one of the FGIs, nearly every member of the 9-person group was able to recall a situation that happened to them when an adult Pole approached them and insulted them, referring to their ethnicity or the fact they were using Ukrainian or Russian.



Xenophobic and conflict behaviors



B: Don't you think that perhaps some people respond unpleasantly, because they are reserved or because of their harrowing experiences?

*U [Nearly unanimously] **That may have been true at the start.** But now? It can't be the case given how much time has passed since the war started. (ES3 FGI S PL)*

*My son sometimes hears hurtful comments from Polish students when playing football – „**Go back to your country, go home.** (ES3 IDI R)*

*Right, I know it's hard to experience war. We've had our share of wars, and now they have their war, but **when we needed help, nobody offered us any.** And when they need help, everyone is suddenly there giving a hand. (TVS1 FGI S PL)*

*I want to communicate with them [peers from Poland]. **But how do I do that?***

I can't just come over and ask, „Hi, want to be my best friend?" It's not like they are five. It's easier for five-year-olds. [DDI Parent and student]

*You sometimes have situations when [Ukrainian] students are being victimized; there are cases of rude jokes. **Not a week goes by without some difficult problem occurring in this class.** (ES2 IDI teacher aid)*

*You can't say that it's just the Polish kids who are bad. These kids from the third grade get in my face and shout Russian... I translate what they say, and **it's nothing pleasant.** (FGI S PL)*

*I asked them during the advisory class to talk about their Christmas celebrations, but **they seemed disinterested.** They didn't want to do Secret Santa. They just said it's not their custom and didn't take part, except for one boy. (TVS2 IDI teacher)*

*The class complained to me about the girls from Ukraine. They said they don't like Ukrainians, that there's no good Ukrainian. **I try to nip it in the bud,** but it's deeply rooted. I'm afraid to say the word. But they are so anti. I even see it in the lessons because the boys tease each other or talk about how Ukrainian girls work and so on. They've had like three months in our school, and they decided, and we can't cure that now. They start with this antipathy; that's the worst. (TVS1 IDI teacher)*

Conflicts within Ukrainian student groups

Teachers and students also draw attention to the conflicts within the group of Ukrainian students.

The pre-war divisions among the Ukrainians linger despite being concealed under the shared war experience.

The most common reason for the conflict is speaking Russian, but there are also other subjects coming up, such as their fathers fighting on the frontlines or when someone's whole family left Ukraine (which is seen as „desertion”).

Problems are exacerbated in the preparatory classes and foreign classes.

The teachers are often helpless in these situations, as they don't speak the language well enough.



*One girl, a Russian speaker, is from Kharkiv. She often hears from others: „**What kind of a Ukrainian are you if you speak Russian?**”. There was a case when someone cut her hair in class. And they drew a swastika on her head. So, she came to us (psychologist and pedagogue. (SP DDI PED)*

*I don't think I understand everything, but they are swearing at each other badly, **humiliating one another**. I recall they were poking fun at one of the kids because their father was beating him? They are cruel to each other. (...) It seemed like they were also warring with each other. Enormous levels of aggression. (ES3 IDI teacher)*

Teacher preparation

Many teachers can't respond adequately to the challenging crises. At Times, they accidentally escalate the conflict with their actions (i.e., telling Polish students how they were disappointed about their attitude toward Ukrainian students or holding up Ukrainian students as an example).

Even in a school with a long history of working with refugee children, an open and multicultural school, the teachers seem to lack deeper insight into Polish-Ukrainian peer relations.

There is also low awareness of the available options for supporting the integration of students from Ukraine (i.e., via the offering of NGOs).

NO INTERVENTION OR NO FEEDBACK FOR THE STUDENTS

Students (Polish and Ukrainian alike) recalled conflicts when the teachers failed to react, even when they were directly asked to intervene.

There were also cases of students being unaware that the adults had intervened in any way.



*We kept bringing this problem to our form tutor, but **she did nothing**. And he kept hurling insults at us, not just about Ukraine, but also about my mother. I didn't feel like going to school. **I stayed at home for a week**, pretending to be sick. Then he just calmed down. (ES1 FGI1 S UKR)*



*(UKR students) use nasty words; they insult us. We talked about it with our form tutor. Things have improved, but it still happens. Nobody tells our teacher about it anymore, as **he won't do anything about it**. (ES2 FGI S PL)*

THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO

The students' attitudes are often formed by their families. Teachers feel helpless in this situation.



*Do you want me to tell the kid that her parents are wrong? **I can't do that!** We try to do things our way. (ES3 IDI teacher)*



A STORY ABOUT A HISTORY LESSON

This is how students recall an incident in a mixed class involving a Ukrainian female student and her Polish male classmate.



*This classmate sitting behind her in history class started talking about the war and pretended to speak Russian. **She started crying. And the teacher did nothing.***

We came over to hug and cheer her up, and the teacher told us off, not that boy. I told that boy that what he was doing was wrong, that he was making her feel sad, and that he should stop. Then the teacher told me to leave the classroom. I left. Later, I approached the teacher and apologized for my behavior, but I believe it was wrong of the teacher not to react. (FGI2 S UKR)



MISHA'S STORY. THE GROUP STANDING UP TO XENOPHOBIA

A Polish student with Asperger's was teasing his Ukrainian classmates. Whenever he saw them, he would shout „Glory to Russia!" and „Poland for the Polish!" and insult their families. He was picking on Misza, in particular, who took it hard. He stopped going to school, pretending he was ill. The attempts to resolve the conflict on the class level did not bring any results. The principal intervened, and the student was given a demerit. However, the critical element was the reaction of the rest of the class. They stood up for the children from Ukraine and went against the aggressive Polish student. This proved to work: the student stopped teasing the Ukrainians. Misza is presently working with the school psychologist.



Misza: *It's not an isolated case. Some Poles have that attitude. You explain things, you show them pictures of cities in ruins in Ukraine, and **they still don't believe you.*** (FGI S UKR)

ANYTHING IS BETTER THAN BEING A BOT OR A SNITCH

Resolving student conflicts is difficult because they are reluctant to share their troubles with the faculty.

Pawel attends school with his younger sister, who goes to third grade. Two Polish male students insulted her for being Ukrainian on the school's sports field. When Pawel approached them and asked for an explanation, **they showed him an offensive gesture that meant, „You're a bot" – „You're a loser, you're weak"**. Pawek did not share this situation with the teachers.



*In Ukrainian schools, peer problems must be resolved among ourselves without involving the adults. It's similar in Polish schools: notifying the teachers could mean exclusion from the group. **For example, the biggest problem now is being called a snitch.*** (IDI psychologist)

THE STORY OF MIKOLAJ. NO HAPPY ENDING.

Mikolaj is a boy that Polish students bullied: they teased and laughed at him. The teacher caught them in the school restroom, taking pictures of Mikolaj. She asked all of the people involved to a meeting. Because the teacher asked them, the instigators apologized and promised to „look after Mikolaj" (!). The teacher acted in good faith; she lacked sufficient skills to resolve the conflict differently. Her solution did not work.



*Mikołaj was so anxious about school that he didn't want to go anymore. **So he stopped.** Some Polish kids develop this anxiety because of their classmates. But he experienced many such situations. On the other hand, he wasn't doing anything at school when he was showing up. He didn't even go to the additional Polish classes.* (IDI teacher)

Social needs of students and the required competencies of the teachers



TEACHER COMPETENCIES/ ATTITUDES

- Realizing the need for and the benefits of cross-cultural and anti-discrimination education
- Ability to manage an ethnically diverse class
- Ability to prevent discriminatory actions and to respond to such cases
- Conflict resolution skills
- Focus on supporting vulnerable students



UKRAINIAN STUDENTS

- Need for a space/ an opportunity to create new friendships (in and out of school) for day-to-day interactions
- Learning and understanding the Polish cultural and educational context
- Desire to share their own culture and preserve their cultural identity
- Processing the cultural differences, especially those that hinder their integration and use of various forms of support
- Support from people with integration and multicultural education skills (i.e., assistants)



POLISH STUDENTS

- Naming the difficult emotions linked to the presence of people from Ukraine in Poland, regulating their emotions
- Need for fair/ just treatment in a multicultural group.
- Need for freedom in creating new peer relations (choosing who I want to be friends with)
- Being able to function comfortably in a multicultural environment.

PARENTS OF STUDENTS FROM UKRAINE AND THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE SCHOOL



CENTRUM EDUKACJI
OBYWATELSKIEJ

Life situation

Many war migrant families struggle with material difficulties. Their situation depends on:

- whether the whole family or just one parent migrated (especially the mother)
- the status and wealth they previously had in Ukraine
- how quickly they had to leave Ukraine
- whether they had come to Poland before and whether they know the language
- their gender (women have fewer and less-paid jobs)
- professional competencies
- the contacts they have in Poland.

Outside of the big cities, the job market is small and offers primarily low-paid jobs for men; Ukrainians face various forms of discrimination and exploitation in the job market. It is challenging to reconcile the role of a parent with a career. Some were forced to move many times.

Families are also diverse based on their cultural, social, and economic capital. Some people experience a class downgrade, negatively impacting their financial and emotional situation.

Parents emphasize that their priority is the welfare of their children. Sometimes, the decision to stay in a given place is made based on how their children feel.

Housing and material conditions also vary in the families, which translates into the ability to provide the children with proper conditions for studying. One of the families lived in a hostel with no computer and a kitchen on the upper floor. The student had to do his homework in the school common room. We heard similar stories on multiple occasions.

People from Ukraine also expressed gratitude to the Polish for the help they gave, especially in the first weeks after the full-scale invasion.



Life is difficult, but it's not more difficult than in Ukraine. At least we're not on the streets. (ES1 IDI parent UKR1)

*There are many jobs in Poland, but **no jobs for women** in this town. I'm here because my son likes it here and he likes the school. The younger one has also gotten used to his preschool. I would have left for a big city long ago if it were just me. (ES1 IDI parent UKR1)*

*We can't afford to go out for pizza or anything of the sort. We only **buy the essentials**. (ES1 IDI parent UKR2)*

The situation of the families of Ukrainian students

TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES

Wartime migrant families from Ukraine are often transnational in character:

- predominantly mothers taking care of the children by themselves
- the families are divided because many fathers and adult brothers can't leave Ukraine
- the grandparents often stay in Ukraine due to difficulties with mobility
- there are instances of informal partnership relations and families being patched together
- there are also cases of guardianship, i.e., when an older, adult brother is taking care of his younger siblings.

Because of the complicated family situation and material problems, parents are not always able to actively participate in the education process of their children and stay in contact with the school.



Many Poles think that we're living here for free. This is not the case; it hasn't been for a long time (...). I'm not one of these people who want to be someone's burden. Back when I had no job, I would ask people for help to secure the welfare of my family. But since I got a job, I don't ask for anything. (ES1 IDI parent UKR1)

Someone has to explain to these young people that we didn't come here voluntarily for a good life. We're not here either to make life harder for the Poles. We live honest lives; we work and send our kids to school – like all the other ordinary people. (TVS1 IDI parentUKR1).

Whatever I can buy by myself, I go and buy. Some people fled areas directly affected by war; they need material help more than I did. (ES1 IDI parent UKR3)



SENSE OF DIGNITY

Ukrainian parents talk about a sense of their dignity. They want to be perceived just like the other regular residents of Poland: they work, rent apartments, and send their kids to school. They don't want to use welfare if they don't have to.

LACK OF UNDERSTANDING

Students and parents from Ukraine often face a lack of understanding of their situation from the Polish. They stressed that they were not in Poland because they wanted to; they were fleeing war.

What do the parents of Ukrainian students think about the Polish school?

Parents appreciate the cooperation with the form tutors; they feel sufficiently informed on what happens at the school.

They appreciate the help in non-school-related matters, such as help finding specialists, i.e., speech therapists, or extra classes for the children. They often recall the moment right after the war broke out; they remember meaningful pro-Ukrainian gestures, i.e., making a tinsel in Ukrainian colors.

Their contacts with the school are usually limited:

- They maintain relations with chosen people, most often the form tutor. Interactions sometimes take place via the cultural assistant (or another person who speaks the language)
- They are invited to parent conferences, but sometimes, these are meetings just for the group of parents from Ukraine.
- They have access to the electronic grade register, but they don't see it as a natural communication channel with the school and use it rarely as a result (they are not in the habit of doing so)

WHAT IS THE POLISH SCHOOL TO UKRAINIAN PARENTS?

An opportunity to socialize and integrate in a Polish environment

Younger children – a place where they are given care

The opportunity to learn Polish.

An opportunity for education (however, this is not an opinion shared by all).



Cooperating with the Polish school is challenging

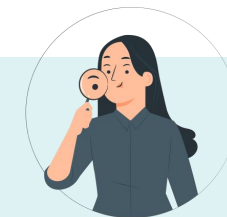
Some parents actively cooperate with the teachers to support their child; a smaller group is involved in school life, joining parent committees and helping organize school events. We must remember that a significant share of Ukrainian families are divided; women working full time and taking care of their children by themselves, with varying language skills, find it challenging to participate actively in school life.

WHAT HELPS COOPERATION?

- Presence of Ukrainian workers (or people who speak Ukrainian) in the school: psychologists, teacher aids, cultural assistants, non-faculty staff.
- Giving space to the Ukrainian parents, being mindful of their limitations and needs (i.e., having a cultural assistant present at class meetings or making sure someone translates if needed)
- Polish teachers and parents being open to new communication channels (Ukrainian parents may prefer that)
- Ukrainian parents remaining open to learning about new communication solutions used in schools
- Inviting parents to co-create class and school events



I organized parent conferences for Ukrainian parents and explained about the system in Poland, the grading, the electronic grade book. (ES1 IDI principal)



EXAMPLES OF ACTIONS THAT HELP COOPERATION

ONBOARDING FOR THE PARENTS. A meeting for Ukrainian parents, when they are introduced to how the Polish school functions and the education culture.

REPRESENTATIVE. In one of the schools, the mother of a Ukrainian student is a member of the school parents' council, representing Ukrainian parents.

GROUPS ON MESSENGER APPS. Ukrainian parents are members of parent groups on a popular messenger app, which facilitates connections and reaching key information (language barrier is less of an issue)

VIBER GROUP. After many problems contacting the parents (who probably have lower digital competencies), the school created a group on Viber, where the assistant shares all information from the Librus system.

FORM TUTOR'S PHONE NUMBER. Form tutors exchange phone numbers with the Ukrainian parents. They text or call regarding essential matters.

Cooperating with the Polish school is challenging

PASSIVENESS, INDIFFERENCE, WITHDRAWAL

Teachers and administrators stress that many parents exhibit a passive attitude in contact with the school, can't be reached, or don't cooperate to resolve their child's difficulties. We must not forget the group's specific nature, however: regardless of the actual motivation/ lack of motivation for more involvement, their status as war refugees makes these processes much more difficult. Furthermore, just like with the Polish parents – the involvement declines at higher education levels.

WHAT HINDERS COOPERATION?

- A sense of temporariness: Some parents block all contact with the school, believing they are soon going back to Ukraine
- Isolating parents from Ukraine (i.e., separate parent conferences)
- Language barrier (both sides are served)
- The parents' worktimes
- Not being aware of or not knowing how to use electronic grade books or other communication channels used by the school (FB Messenger, What's App), preferring other channels (Viber, Telegram)
- Differences in educational cultures (the role of the parent is different in the Ukrainian school)

RELATIONS WITH POLISH PARENTS

It is worth noting that Ukrainian parents don't meet with or maintain relations with Polish parents even if their children attend mixed classes.

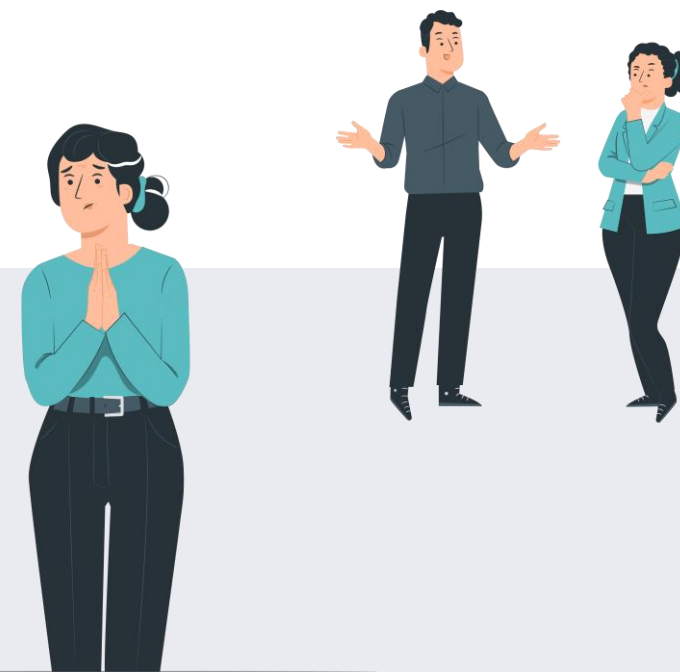
They don't always see each other at the parent conferences. When they do, there are no interactions between them. Teachers also don't create a space for integration.

Both groups seem disinterested in the contact but don't complain about an explicit lack of understanding or conflict of interest.



*We can't reach the parents at all; **they don't show up** for the parent-teacher conferences, don't pick up our calls, or reply to messages sent via Liburs. There was one mother that we were in touch with regularly, but she left. (TVS1 IDI principal)*

*I went to that parent-teacher meeting but **was completely invisible**; I just tried to understand what was expected of me. The parents in Poland are not very outgoing; they don't try to interact – I'm nearly sure that if a parent was joining our class in Ukraine and he was just sitting quietly, others would approach to have a chat (ES2 IDI R UKR3)*



Recognizing the differences between the systems

Ukrainian parents express a need to understand the differences between the Polish and Ukrainian education systems.

PARENTS' NEEDS

Understanding the role of behavior in the grading system. In Poland, a student's poor behavior may lead to expulsion or the family being assigned an education supervision officer.

Many Polish students have a disability certification. In Ukraine, however, there is still little awareness of the special learning needs of some students.

Polish schools may refuse to allow students to pass to the next grade. The rules behind that are not always clear to the parents.

In Polish schools, you can make mistakes and not know things. Ukrainian students are often afraid to participate and speak up during lessons, as they are afraid to make mistakes. Parents could be reinforcing that attitude.

Preparatory classes should give numerical grades to the students. They motivate the learner and inform them of their progress.

Parents express a need for more extracurricular activities taking place at the school.



I'd like something to be going on in the school so that he can do something interesting after the after-school care. So that he can grow and have an exciting time. I'm calmer when he's here, under the supervision of the school. (ES2 ID1 parent UKR)]

ADMINISTERING A CULTURALLY DIVERSE SCHOOL



CENTRUM EDUKACJI
OBYWATELSKIEJ

Schools do not have systemic administration of the presence of students from Ukraine.

The scale of the inflow of students from Ukraine to Polish schools after February 2022 surprised everyone. The situation was incredibly challenging for schools, which previously had almost no foreigners. However, even the schools that already had migrant students had to face various new difficulties.

One of such difficulties is the meeting of different education cultures: the role of school education in child-rearing, the parents' attitude to school, and how students perceive school.

According to teachers and principals, Ukrainian students often differ from Polish students. This is, among others, due to the different rules governing Ukrainian schools, the sense of temporariness, and the current living situation of the parents.

As a rule, principals manage a multicultural school ad hoc, responding to challenges as they appear – without applying any top-down strategies. Some schools, however, have a system for managing chosen areas (most often with respect to assigning students to specific classes).

This situation is influenced by:

- insufficient regulations provided by the ministry and administrative authorities
- the rotation of students from Ukraine
- the diversity of the educational and integration challenges depending on the subject
- changing / sudden decisions of the administrative authority (i.e. requirement to formulate a preparatory class), principals are not always invited to participate in decision-making
- new challenges arising, i.e., concerning relations between students
- attitudes of the teachers and students.



*Every school manages on its own, and the principals are also doing it on their own because even if I offer help, like a training session or a meeting, or we analyze things. The board discusses some problems, in the end, the teachers go to these classrooms and face these problems, I'm not there on the lessons. **We are all at the receiving end.** (ES1 IDI principal)*

Admissions and class placement

The principals' basic tool is placing students from Ukraine in classes. After consulting the administrative authority, principals decide to form preparatory classes or – in a vast majority of the cases – assign students directly to mixed classes. Besides the objective criteria – such as the size of the classrooms or class size limits – the key factors when placing students include the student's age, their command of Polish, and the number of Ukrainian students who are already in a given class. Directors approach these factors in different ways, and their choices directly impact the speed with which foreign students adapt, their progress in learning Polish, and their integration with Polish students. At the same time, due to the rotation of students from Ukraine, the situation is often so dynamic that the principals have no room for maneuvering and place the students wherever there are still free spaces left.



The school had to be ready to work in a multicultural environment. It's not like anyone asked us about it... The kids are here, so we have to admit them. (ES2 IDI teacher)

Class placement strategies. Cases from schools



SCHOOL IN A SMALL CITY

Students are placed in mixed classes to avoid the isolation of the preparatory classes.

In our city, they picked several schools (...) for assigning students to the preparatory classes. According to the people in charge, the experience was negative; it created these ghettos. It did not serve its purpose (...) We admitted them straight to the classes. (IDI principal)

Students were placed in the classes based on age or perhaps to a class one year lower. Therefore, a child who went to second grade in Ukraine was placed in first grade in Poland. The principal placed several students from Ukraine in one class.

One class had eight children from Ukraine (1/3rd of the whole class). Teachers report teaching and behavior problems due to the upset proportions. The difficulties are also proven true as several children had to repeat the year.

SCHOOL IN A LARGE CITY

The school has a pro-integration and inclusive policy for admitting students experiencing migration; the strategy assumes placing small numbers of foreign students, at best 1-2 people, in Polish classes.

Students were placed in the classes based on their age.

Despite these assumptions, the school also opened a preparatory class with students aged 14-18. There was no other choice but to create such a class: other secondary schools in the city would not receive students from Ukraine.

The school works with many external institutions. Thanks to this, the students often go on field trips and participate in various workshops. The goal of these trips is to learn about the history and culture of the region and to help the students socialize.



We prefer natural integration. We didn't want a scenario with so many traumatized children in one class. But there was nothing we could do. Things would have been better if all the other secondary schools took the same level of care for the people that come to them. (IDI principal)

Different areas of managing a nationally diverse school

VALUES

Besides two exceptions, the schools participating in the study don't have a clear policy regarding diversity to promote equality, inclusion, and respect for differences. The teachers' narratives do not reveal any common values that would be reflected in the idea behind the school's functioning, and that would be implemented via specific actions.

COOPERATION OF THE TEACHERS

It was rare for teachers to cooperate in planning and fulfilling education processes in the context of the students from Ukraine.

Every teacher develops solutions for working in a multicultural environment based on their experiences and sensitivities. There is practically no exchange of knowledge or experience between the teachers.

Having experience with working in a multicultural environment is not perceived as an institutional resource.

Whenever there were instances of cooperation, they applied above all to the collaboration between Polish teachers and teachers of Polish as a second language (agreeing on the subject of the lessons and areas that need improvement).

Discussions in the broader teacher group, on the whole faculty or teacher team level, focus on specific, individual cases. Often, they center on responding to crises.



It must have been April when that incident happened in one of the classes; the girls there yelled that everything was unfair. From that moment on, we decided at the faculty meeting that the protection period is over, and the requirements are the same for everyone. (IDI principal)

EDUCATION PRACTICES

In teaching practice, the actions are based on specific teachers' individual instincts and sensitivities. During the interviews, this would manifest as examples of personal practices without referencing standard procedures or strategies.

It is worth noting that school principals consider such a model of action sufficient.



*I developed my own methods, and I do what I do. I signed up for all these Facebook groups to see how other teachers manage in other schools (...) **We had no special training sessions** that would make anything easier for me. (ES4 IDI teacher)*

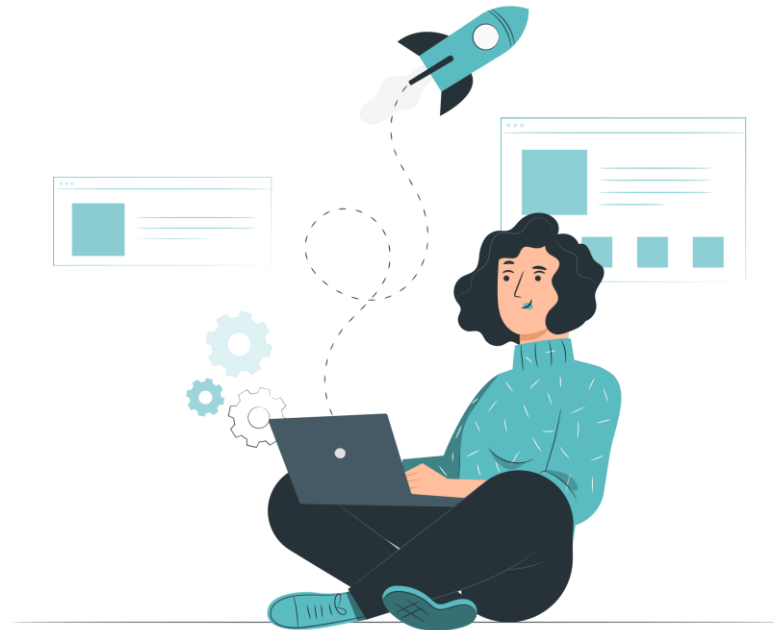
Different areas of managing a nationally diverse school

TEACHER TRAINING

Teacher education regarding working with students who have experienced migration is not considered a priority. The principals would recommend valuable training sessions or courses in some schools, but there was never a thought-through or planned career path.

It needs to be noted that principals and teachers need to be made aware of the development needs linked to managing a culturally diverse school (examples would include skills at integrating a class community or didactics in a multilingual class).

The data shown in the earlier sections of this report indicate a need for developing teachers' competencies concerning multicultural education, not only for the welfare of the foreign students but also for the Polish ones and the working comfort of the teachers themselves. As there is mostly no awareness regarding the need for teacher education in this area, effective communication should focus on concrete competencies and refer to the challenges the teachers face in their daily work.



COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

There are no guidelines on the school level on how to involve the Ukrainian parents in the school community and how to make sure they have access to crucial information on their children's education. In this respect, every teacher works independently.

COOPERATION WITH THE SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT OF THE SCHOOL

Different examples were listed of using out-of-school resources – schools would use public Teacher Education Centers, NGOs, libraries, and other local government institutions.

They also used Poland-wide programs (i.e., the School with Class Foundation, UNICEF)

What are the challenges facing the principals?

BURNOUT

Principals are aware of the complexity of the tasks linked to administering a multicultural school, and teachers have many various assignments, which causes fatigue and a sense of being alone in the face of challenges. Moreover, there are also worrying signs of burnout among the teachers and administrators.

NEED FOR FINANCIAL GRATIFICATION

Principals emphasize that teachers should receive higher compensation and bonuses for undertaking additional educational challenges, such as teaching children from Ukraine. The current rewards, which depend on the available funds of the local governments and external sources, are insufficient.

TEACHERS ARE RELUCTANT TO TRAINING

The weary and frustrated teachers are unwilling to grow their competencies in working with a culturally diverse class. This is also due to the sense that the situation is temporary and the uncertainty of whether the knowledge and skills will be used.

STAFF SHORTAGES AND LESSON PLAN „GYMNASTICS“

We only have a limited number of teachers, but we still manage to offer extra 6 Polish lessons for so many children in a week. We cannot make it work in the plan, nor do we have teachers who can work 6 hours with one group. (ES4 IDI principal)

The extra 6 hours of Polish for foreigners resulted in Polish teachers having no more time for catch-up classes for Polish students with learning difficulties. And, it is unfortunate that we are offering this assistance to Ukrainian children, and they often refuse to take it. [ES4 IDI principal]

STAFF SHORTAGES AND LESSON PLAN „GYMNASTICS“

There is a problem with the admissions of Ukrainian children to Polish secondary schools. The schools refuse to admit children from Ukraine, fearing their exam results would worsen and that they would fall in the school rankings.

GRADING

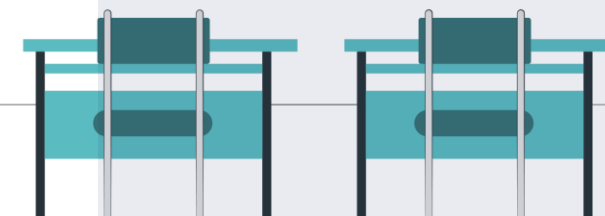
See → [GRADING](#)



*I see that **many people are almost burned out or are already there**; this even applies to young teachers. We just soldier on, but things are always wrong. I don't know what we're supposed to do for someone to notice and tell us that we're doing a great job (ES1 IDI principal)*

***Students from Ukraine are a challenge as well.** Even though we usually work with problematic youths, here we're dealing with the language barrier, so it's tricky to get through to the Ukrainian students. (TVS IDI teacher)*

*I called my colleagues from other schools; they told me that they have no free spots and can't admit anyone (...) I know a school that could take in some kids to help, but **they need to maintain a high level and won't.** (ES IDI principal]*



Cultural assistants still play an important role, but no systemic, sustainable solutions were introduced with respect to their employment or work organization

The presence of assistants is helpful to students in understanding the new educational environment, helping communication and integration.

What do the assistants do at the school?

- They act as interpreters, not just of language but also of Polish culture and customs
- They support students in studying (i.e., help prepare for a test)
- They mediate conflicts (between students, parents and students, Polish parents and Ukrainian parents, etc.)
- They have extracurricular activities (developing interests, integrative)
- Depending on their qualifications, they act as school psychologists
- They give lessons in preparatory/ foreign classes (formally, they are hired as teacher aid or administrative staff).

What are the key challenges and needs that go with this role?

Lack of stable employment. The assistants are hired by NGOs or schools in the form of teacher's aids – with meager pay and short-term contract that expires in the Summer. → leading to stress and uncertainty, which may impact their capacity to effectively help students and foster long-term relations with students and teachers.

One challenge from the perspective of school management are the **formal-legal barriers, which make it impossible to hire** teachers and specialists from Ukraine without formal recognition of their diploma.

Low status of the assistant in the school. The teachers do not treat them as equal partners and rarely consult them. Assistants are physically separated from the faculty – and usually don't have their place in the teacher's lounge.

There are too few assistants to the needs (in schools with many Ukrainian children).

Sense of loneliness, lack of emotional support. Assistants often need to face difficult experiences and the experiences of their students.

Inadequate work conditions. Lack of any space that would ensure that students referring to them for help would have a sense of safety and intimacy.

Organization of Polish as second language – a puzzle for the principals

The Ministry of Education allocated additional funding for Polish as second language lessons for students from the wartime migration – 6 hours per week. The program is helpful and fulfills its purpose, but its organization poses many difficulties. The most severe include the teachers' capacities and creating an optimal lesson schedule.

Finding Polish as a second language teachers is not easy. Usually, this job goes to Polish philologists – under their employment contract or for additional pay. However, they are limited as far as time is concerned.

Polish as a second language classes take place at the expense of other lessons – i.e., additional lessons for Polish students that these teachers could be giving.

It is usually impossible for students to have these lessons with the same teacher. For example, in a tiny elementary school, Polish as a second language is taught by five people working with a single group for 2-3 hours a week. This creates difficulties concerning communication between the teachers: students complain that they go through the same topics twice.

Because there are children from different classes in these groups, it becomes difficult to set lesson dates and times. In effect, lessons often occur at 7 AM or late afternoon, which negatively impacts attendance.

Because of the requirement for these classes, they are also taught by teachers without special preparation in this area. The quality of the classes suffers, and the teachers who completed post-graduate courses in glottodidactics complain that their diplomas appear unnecessary.



Multicultural school management practices. Examples from schools.

SCHOOL LEVEL

- Placing a small number of foreign students in mixed classes.
- Personally introducing the new children and their parents to the school: showing the building layout, explaining the rules, talking about the grading system, etc (when giving this information, it helps to use the help of a Russian teacher or children from the pre-war migration).
- The organization of school teams charged with working with foreign students. The teachers in these teams prepare materials and training regarding the teaching of children experiencing migration
- Organization of workshops and community-building games for the students
- Cooperating with external institutions: making use of the offering of training for teachers and extracurricular activities for students.
- Intra-school workshops provided by teachers who work with migrant students

- Cooperating with cultural assistants and Ukrainian teacher aids
- Cooperation between Polish as a second language and regular Polish teachers
- Cooperation with the school pedagogue and psychologist
- Assigning Polish students as buddies for Ukrainian students. This helps them learn faster about the rules of the Polish school and provides form tutors with more information on the new students.



CLASS-LEVEL

- Assigning Polish students as buddies for Ukrainian students and organizing work in mixed groups.
- Placing students in classes to keep age cohesion

One thing I can't stand is putting older kids in younger classes. I think integration is more important than preparing for exams. These kids that are 14, 15, or 16 are put in the lower grades, and that's the biggest hurdle to integration. Not only are they traumatized, taken god-knows-where for reasons completely unknown, and they don't accept the situation, and then this young person with a natural sense of dignity, who cares so much about adulthood, they are suddenly put in a class with the little children. (LO1 IDI principal])

- Cooperation within class teams

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We are a Polish non-governmental organization committed to supporting schools. Our mission is to provide them with inspiration to adopt innovative teaching methods and introduce significant social issues to their work with youth. Every year, we cooperate with 40,000 teachers and headteachers from 10,000 schools across the country.

We successfully help schools implement effective teaching strategies. Students become more engaged in their education, develop a deeper understanding of global issues and learn how to take action.

Our initiatives include:

- educational programs for teachers and headteachers, aimed at addressing current challenges,
- workshops for school boards, student councils and headteachers, to develop new skills,
- an accredited center for teaching excellence,
- an educational publishing house.

We are the largest educational NGO in Poland, operating independently as a public benefit organization under Polish law.

Since we were founded in 1994, we have been repeatedly awarded for our activities and achievements, including the honorary badge "For Merits to Education" of the Ministry of National Education and the title "Pro Publico Bono Institution".

Our partners include: the Polish-American Freedom Foundation, Poland's Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, the European Commission, as well as companies Google, ING Bank Śląski, mBank, Cartoon Network and Credit Suisse.

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