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Cultural Diversity in Polish Schools – Teachers' Perspectives

Qualitative survey report

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Executive Summary

This report is based on quantitative research conducted among teachers on a nationwide sample of schools between May and June 2024.

The study involved 3,081 school staff members, including 2,869 teachers from 325 schools. The resulting findings provide a basis for drawing conclusions about the population of teachers in half of Polish schools who have contact with foreign students, primarily from Ukraine.

Teachers' attitudes towards cultural diversity

According to the results, the vast majority of teachers expressed openness towards cultural diversity and hosting refugees. Their attitudes were influenced by factors such as the length of professional experience, the intensity of contact with foreign students, and the type of school they work at. While teachers supported hosting refugees in Poland (79%), the majority of them (55%) believed this should be a temporary measure until the refugees can return to their home countries. Only 24% of teachers were open to allowing refugees to settle permanently in Poland, and 6% opposed hosting them altogether.

A significant majority of teachers expressed openness to integrating students from Ukraine into the Polish education system. Three out of four teachers (75%) supported the enrolment of refugee children from Ukraine into Polish schools. Teachers from vocational schools are the least likely to express a positive opinion on this matter (their response rate drops to 72%).

The teachers' attitudes changed significantly when the question concerned integration of all foreign children into Polish schools. In this case, the support dropped to 56%, with teachers in general and technical secondary schools being more sceptical about this issue (50–52%) than those from primary and vocational schools (58%).

Positive attitudes to hosting refugees by Poland and admitting refugee students into Polish schools were strongly linked to teachers' professional experience. Younger teachers with less experience (fewer than 10 years) were more sceptical about Poland as a host country and refugees in Polish schools. Differences in opinions between teacher groups ranged from 5 to 10 percentage points.

Most teachers saw cultural diversity in the classroom as an added value. As many as 83% agreed that it fostered the development of civic awareness, and 69% recognized its positive impact on students' empathy. They generally agreed that the presence of foreign students provided an opportunity to broaden perspectives on the world and one's own culture (84%) as well as to reduce stereotypes and prejudices among student community (69%).

At the same time, teachers identified challenges associated with teaching in multicultural classrooms and assessed the impact of cultural differences on the teaching process relatively negatively. For instance, 74% indicated that cultural diversity made lessons more difficult to conduct, and 36% noted that it hampered the discussions on controversial topics during the lessons. Nearly two-thirds believed that the presence of foreign students slowed down the pace of lessons (63%) and created difficulties in preparing all students for exams (60%). This trend was particularly strong among teachers in general secondary schools and primary schools, who most frequently highlighted these challenges (65% and 60% regarding the pace of work, and 50% and 60% regarding exam preparation). **Less experienced teachers and those teaching a high number of foreign students (over 50) were more negative about effects of cultural differences.**

It is worth noting that, in the ICCS international research, carried out in March and April 2022, teachers from other countries more frequently highlighted the benefits of cultural diversity and were less likely to report its negative effects.

The language barrier was by far the most frequently identified challenge in working with foreign students (74%). Other significant issues included assessing and grading students (48%). Less than 40% of teachers highlighted the need to adapt teaching methods to the needs of new students, address their psycho-emotional needs, or manage issues related to low attendance and high turnover among students of different nationalities.

Teachers' competencies for working with multicultural classrooms

When asked about different competences required for teaching in a culturally diverse classroom, teachers overwhelmingly recognized all of them as important, with 79% to 93% (depending on the specific competency) providing positive responses. The most frequently highlighted competencies were class integration (93%), identifying students' psycho-emotional needs (92%), and adapting teaching methods (90%). Teachers with more intensive contact with foreign students were more likely to emphasize the importance of adapting teaching and assessment methods to accommodate a multicultural classroom. Teachers working with over 50 foreign students most often describe these competencies as important – 93% with regard to teaching methods and 90% to assessment methods.

Although 86% of teachers reported having worked with foreign students, 60% described their experience as limited or almost negligible. Only one in 17 stated they know how to work with a foreign student. Greater contact with this group tends to correlate with a more positive self-assessment of teachers' experience. However, this trend changes among those teaching over 50 foreign students – only 20% declare that they know how to work with this group of students.

When we asked teachers to assess their own competencies required for working in a multicultural classroom. The vast majority rated all of them positively – depending on the competency, 66% to 79% positive assessments. The competency ranked lowest in importance – knowledge of how migration experiences can affect learning – was also the area where teachers felt least competent. In this category, 22% gave negative responses, and 12% answered 'hard to say'.

Primary school teachers rated their preparedness higher than their colleagues in general secondary schools and technical schools, likely due to more frequent contact with foreign students at the primary level.

While greater contact with foreign students generally correlated with a more positive competency self-assessment, one exception was observed. Teachers working with the largest number of such students (more than 20) were more likely to rate their competencies negatively.

Teachers' Professional Development for Teaching in a Multicultural Classroom

The majority of teachers reported that they developed their competencies related to work in multicultural classrooms primarily through their own resources and efforts (87% reported self-study). The second most popular form of professional development was participation in webinars (58%), followed by workshops or courses (40%). Longer forms of support, such as postgraduate studies, were not interesting for teachers (95% had not participated in them, and 81% indicated they would not want to do so in the future). However, nearly one in five teachers (19%) stated they were not willing to participate even in shorter forms of training, such as webinars (this figure rose to 29% for in-person workshops and courses).

Teachers in primary schools were those who most frequently engaged in professional development, followed by vocational schools' teachers, while teachers in general secondary schools and technical schools participated the least. Primary school teachers not only attended in-person workshops and courses more often, but also expressed a greater willingness to participate in such forms of professional development in the future.

Most teachers were satisfied with the support they had received in recent years – 69% stated that professional development support was entirely or fairly sufficient. At the same time, many of them (71%) expressed a desire for further professional development.

Teachers, when asked what could help them in working in multicultural classrooms, still most often pointed to teaching materials such as lesson plans, textbooks, and worksheets (45%). They also highlighted the need for support from specialists (34%) and intercultural assistants (27%). This suggests that teachers were more inclined towards forms of professional support that are less demanding of their time and effort, preferring ready-to-use resources that alleviate their workload. Training and workshops were ranked in the middle of the list of preferred support forms (18% of responses), with many other forms of support being more highly valued by teachers. The demand for workshops, training, and consultations with specialists was more commonly expressed by secondary education teachers, particularly those in vocational and technical schools (28% and 30%, respectively).

1. Introduction

In light of demographic and migratory changes driven in part by the escalation of the war in Ukraine in 2022, schools in Poland have become spaces where cultural diversity is an everyday reality. While Polish schools – especially those located in large cities – had some prior experience in educating foreign children, there were relatively few of them across the country. In most of the cases this experience involved educating migrant children and less frequently children with refugee experience.

The arrival in 2022 of a large number of children and adolescents fleeing the war in Ukraine significantly altered this situation, particularly in terms of scale. Before the escalation of the war in Ukraine, the Polish education system accommodated approximately 48,500 foreign students, whereas by the beginning of the 2022/23 school year, this number had risen to 222,500¹. At the end of 2024, there were 152,000 refugee students from Ukraine in schools and kindergartens, along with approximately 51,000 migrant students from Ukraine, making them the largest group of foreign children in schools.²

The enrolment of such large number of new children into the Polish education system was a great success for the entire school community. It brought significant changes to schools and has permanently altered the social context for all students. It has also impacted the teaching staff, who took on the responsibility of accepting so many new children into their schools and classes. Numerous good practices and collaborative experiences have been developed, and many friendships have been formed – both between Polish and Ukrainian students and between their parents and teachers.

At the same time, this situation remains a challenge and requires both the education system and school

staff to adapt to the new reality. This includes above all managing multicultural schools and classrooms and operating within an education system where students of various national and ethnic backgrounds, from diverse cultures, and often with difficult, even traumatic war-related experiences, are permanently present. To tackle this effectively, teachers and headmasters need new skills, attitudes, and strategies, to adapt the teaching process to meet students' diverse needs and support social integration of all school community.

With this report we aim to summarize the experiences of teachers in Polish schools working in multicultural environments - reflecting on them from the perspective of time and lessons for the future. Within the research we sought to better understand how the post-2022 experience of teaching refugee students has impacted them. We look at teachers' attitudes, competencies, as well as the challenges and needs they identify in teaching in a multicultural environment. We also examine the effectiveness and scope of using various forms of professional development in working with students with migrant backgrounds and reveal what support teachers consider as lacking.

The report analyses differences in teachers' attitudes and opinions based on the type of school, length of teaching experience, and intensity of contact with foreign students. It includes not only a diagnosis of the current situation but it also formulates recommendations to support teachers in their work and to indicate directions for developing the education system in the context of multiculturalism.

This is one of the first reports to adopt the perspective of teachers. Existing studies have highlighted the multidimensional nature of foreign children's presence in Polish schools but have primarily focused on the

¹ Report of the Supreme Audit Office (Najwyższa Izba Kontroli) Based on SIO Data, 5 March 2024

² Link to the new enrolment report

perspective of students – examining their integration and well-being in schools. This report presents the voices of teachers, whose experience of working with foreign students provides valuable insights and observations. We hope that, as part of the ongoing process of creating cohesive systemic solutions, this report will serve as a valuable source of information and an effective tool for developing evidence-based policies on integrational education.

The report is structured as follows: the next two chapters include a description of the research

methodology (Chapter 3) and a detailed profile of the study group (Chapter 4). Then, the report presents the research findings in three key areas: Chapter 5 explores teachers' attitudes toward multiculturalism in schools, Chapter 6 focuses on teachers' perceptions and self-assessment of competencies required to work in multicultural classrooms, and Chapter 7 discusses teachers' experiences and needs in terms of professional development of these competencies. The final chapter presents recommendations based on the survey conducted.



2. Research Methodology

This report summarizes the findings of a quantitative survey conducted among teachers working with foreign students in the Polish public education system.

The primary aims of the research were: 1) to explore teachers' attitudes towards diversity and multiculturalism in the classroom, and 2) to identify the support teachers need to enhance their competencies and to work effectively in a multicultural environment.

The study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are teachers' attitudes towards cultural diversity in schools?
2. How do teachers assess their own preparedness to manage and integrate multiculturalism in the classroom?
3. What competencies do teachers require to manage multicultural classrooms?
4. What support do teachers currently use, and what additional support they need to manage multiculturalism in the classroom?

The research was conducted between 15 May and 21 June 2024, using an electronic survey questionnaire (CAWI). It encompassed public primary schools, general secondary schools, technical schools, and first- and second-degree vocational schools (excluding special schools and schools for adults). The survey was designed and conducted by Ecorys on behalf of CEO, while the analysis of the results and the report presented here were prepared by CEO experts.

Sample Selection

The sample included 682 randomly selected schools to reflect the distribution of all schools in Poland, stratified by voivodeship (administrative region) and school type.³ The survey invitation was sent to schools and their principals, with a request to share it with the teaching staff. The sampling process involved two stages: stratification by region and school type in the first stage, and cluster sampling at the school level in stage two.

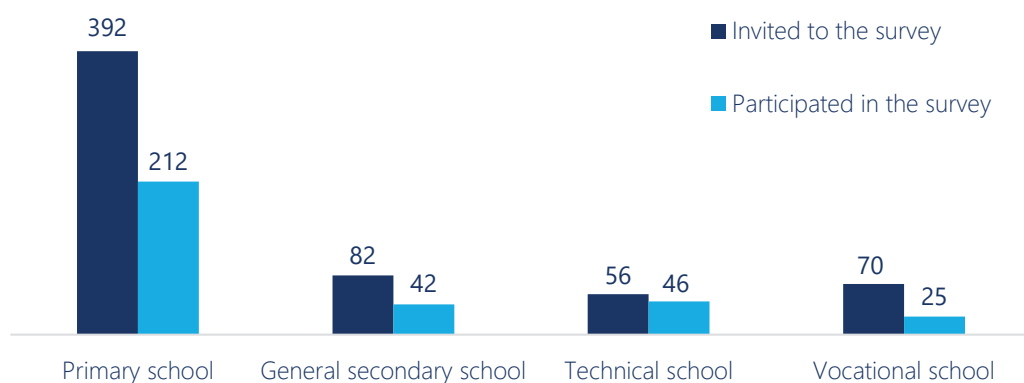
Additionally, the study design incorporated stratification based on voivodeships. This means that the number of responses gathered from each voivodeship was proportional to the number of teachers employed in public schools of various types within those regions. The detailed sample structure, broken down by voivodeship and school type, is available in Appendix 1.

At the end 325 schools participated in the survey, so the overall response rate at the school level was 47.7%. The response rate varied by school type: 82.1% for technical schools, 54.1% for primary schools, 35.7% for vocational schools, and 25.6% for general secondary schools. Among 325 schools participated in the survey 65.2% were primary schools, 12.9% general secondary schools, 14.2% technical schools, and 7.7% vocational schools.

School type	No. of schools in the sample (invited to the study)	No. of schools surveyed
Primary school	392	212
General secondary school	82	42
Technical school	56	46
Vocational schools	70	25
TOTAL	682	325

³ Including 392 primary schools, 164 general secondary schools, 56 technical schools, and 70 vocational schools.

Number of schools participated in the survey



The resulting sample structure reflects the distribution of school types across voivodeships in Poland. [Appendix 1, Table 1&2]

Data were obtained from half of the approached schools (48%) and these were mainly schools that had experience with teaching foreign students. At the national level the Educational Information System (SIO) data indicates that students from Ukraine are present in more than half of Polish schools.⁴ It means that the findings provide insights into the population of teachers in roughly half of Polish schools particularly those with experience working with foreign students with migration or refugee backgrounds, primarily from Ukraine. Schools without foreign students practically did not participate in the study, despite the research team's efforts to invite all types of schools and teachers, regardless of their experience in teaching foreign students.

It was assumed that up to ten teachers from each school would respond to the survey, but at the end the average number of respondents per school was nine, of whom 93.1% were teachers. According to data from the Central Statistical Office (GUS), the estimated population of teachers working in public schools is approx. 387,100 individuals. Considering the number of teachers employed in various types of schools,⁵ the number of responses collected allowed the calculation of a maximum estimation error of +/- 1.8%.

Data analysis

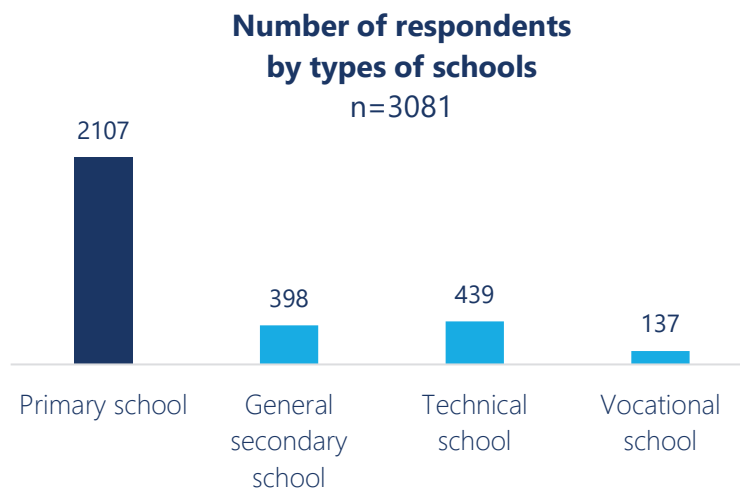
The findings presented in the report are based on descriptive and cross-sectional analyses. For cross-sectional analyses, the non-parametric chi-squared test was used, or, depending on the distribution characteristics, the parametric one-way ANOVA (analysis of variance) or the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test. The report highlights relations for which the probability of committing a Type I error was 5% or lower. All calculations were performed using SPSS v. 29.

⁴ CEO & UNICEF enrolment report: *Paulina Chrostowska Refugee students from Ukraine in the Polish education system, April 2024*.

⁵ Statistics Poland (GUS), *Report: Education and Upbringing in the 2023/2024 School Year, Table No. 7 Teachers*

3. Respondent profile

Altogether, 3,081 pedagogical staff members from 325 public schools across all levels of education participated in the survey. The average number of respondents per school was nine. The sample comprised 2,869 teachers (93.1% of the sample), 121 specialists (3.9%), 69 school principals and deputy principals (2.2%), and 19 teacher aides (0.6%) [Appendix 2, Chart 1]. Three respondents did not specify their function.



The respondents were predominantly from primary schools (68%), followed by general secondary schools (13%), technical schools (14%), and vocational schools (4%).

This report focuses primarily on the results for surveyed teachers, who are the main subject of the study. The main characteristic of this respondent group is as follows:

- **Subject teachers were the largest subgroup** (2,535) of surveyed teachers (2,869). Slightly more than half of all surveyed teachers (54%) served as class tutors, including those working in preparatory classes (less than 6% of primary school teachers had preparatory class experience). [Appendix 2, Table 1].
- **The majority of surveyed teachers (89%) worked in schools located in urban areas.** This could stem from the fact these were teachers working with foreign students – and the number of foreign students in large cities is higher compared to rural areas.
- **The teachers were highly experienced:** over half had more than 20 years of teaching experience, and 80% had been working in the profession for over 10 years [Appendix 2, Chart 2]. This structure of the teachers' group reflects the characteristics of teachers' population in Poland – as an experienced, but aging part of the working population⁶.
- **A significant proportion of surveyed teachers (80%) were proficient in at least one foreign language** at a communicative level. More than half spoke English, 36% Russian, 2.5% Ukrainian, and 15% spoke other Western languages (such as German or French).

⁶ [Young people in democracy. Results of the International Civic and Citizenship Study 2022 \(ICCS 2022\). Polish country report](#): p.178: As many as 79% of eight-grade teachers in Poland are 40 years old or older, and 40% are over 50. A comparison of the data between 2022 and 2009 shows that we have an increasing proportion of older teachers; for example, there has been more than a doubling of the proportion of teachers between 50 and 59 years of age. (...) In this context, it is not surprising that as many as 85% of the teachers surveyed in Poland have been working in the profession for at least 10 years.

The overwhelming majority of surveyed teachers (98.2%) claimed to teach in schools with students from other countries, mainly from Ukraine (89% indicated the presence of refugee students from Ukraine and 48% spoke of the migrant students from Ukraine, who arrived in Poland before 2022). Only 7% said that there were refugee students from other countries than Ukraine (with refugee status or in the procedure). [App. 2, Chart 3]

The vast majority of surveyed teachers (86%) had direct experience teaching foreign students. In the 2023/24 school year, 74% taught refugees from Ukraine, 39% taught migrants from Ukraine, 26% had experience teaching students from other countries - mostly migrants (22%), though a small proportion (5%) taught refugees from countries other than Ukraine (5%). [App. 2, Chart 4]

The largest group of foreign students from countries other than Ukraine taught by the surveyed teachers were from Belarus and Russia (63%). Other significant groups included students from Europe, North America, and Australia (39%), but teachers also indicated having worked with students from more culturally distant regions of the world - Asian countries (22%) and African countries (4%). This is consistent with data from the Educational Information System, which identifies children and

youth from Belarus, Russia, and Vietnam as the most numerous groups of foreign students in Polish schools, apart from Ukrainians.⁷ [App. 2, Chart 5]

However, the experience of teaching foreign students was not solely a direct result of the escalation of the war in Ukraine in 2022. Two-thirds of the surveyed teachers had worked with foreign students before 24 February 2022. Half of these had taught students from Ukraine, and 29% had experience teaching students from other countries. [App. 2, Chart 6]

While surveyed teachers **had experience teaching foreign students, these interactions were generally limited in scale:** nearly half taught up to 5 foreign students in their classes, and another 26% taught up to 10 foreign students in total. This indicates that, although many teachers have had some contact with foreign students, these experiences often involve only small numbers of students. [App. 2, Chart 7]

The same is true for class tutors. Slightly more than half of the **class tutors had students from Ukraine in their classes (58%),** but these were usually small groups: 44% of class tutors reported having one to three such students per classroom, and 10% – having four to six such students. [App. 2, Table 2]

⁷ CEO & UNICEF enrolment report: *Paulina Chrostowska Refugee students from Ukraine in the Polish education system, April 2024.*

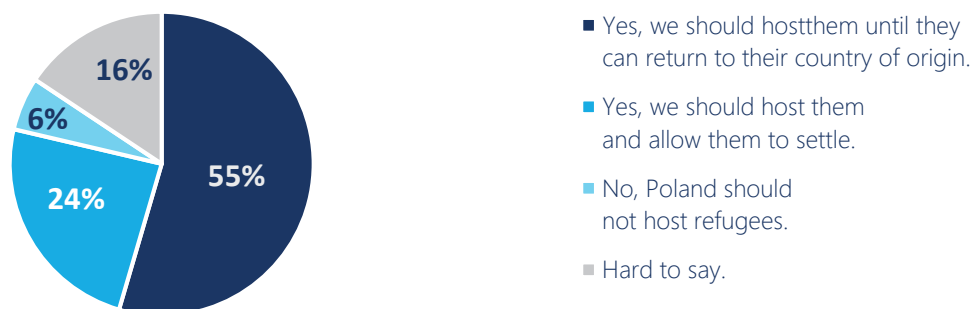
4. Teachers' Attitudes Towards Cultural Diversity and Foreign Students in Polish Schools

Poland as a Host Country for Refugees

The surveyed teachers largely expressed tolerant attitudes towards hosting refugees. Nearly 80% believed that Poland should host refugees, though the majority (55% of the sample) stated that this openness should be limited to the period until refugees can return to their country of origin. Slightly less than one-quarter expressed full openness, indicating that Poland should create opportunities for refugees to settle. Notably, one in six teachers (16%) had no opinion on the matter, while 6% rejected the idea of hosting refugees entirely.

In your opinion, should Poland host refugees from countries affected by armed conflict?

n=2869



Teachers' attitudes towards hosting refugees significantly correlated with their seniority (and thus their age). The shorter the teacher's experience, the less open they were to hosting refugees. The highest percentages of those opposing the idea of Poland being a host country (11%) and those undecided (22%) were observed among the youngest teachers (those with less than 10 years of experience) [Appendix 3, Chart 1]. The relationship between seniority and attitudes towards hosting refugees was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

Attitudes to hosting refugees are associated with the intensity of contact with foreign students.

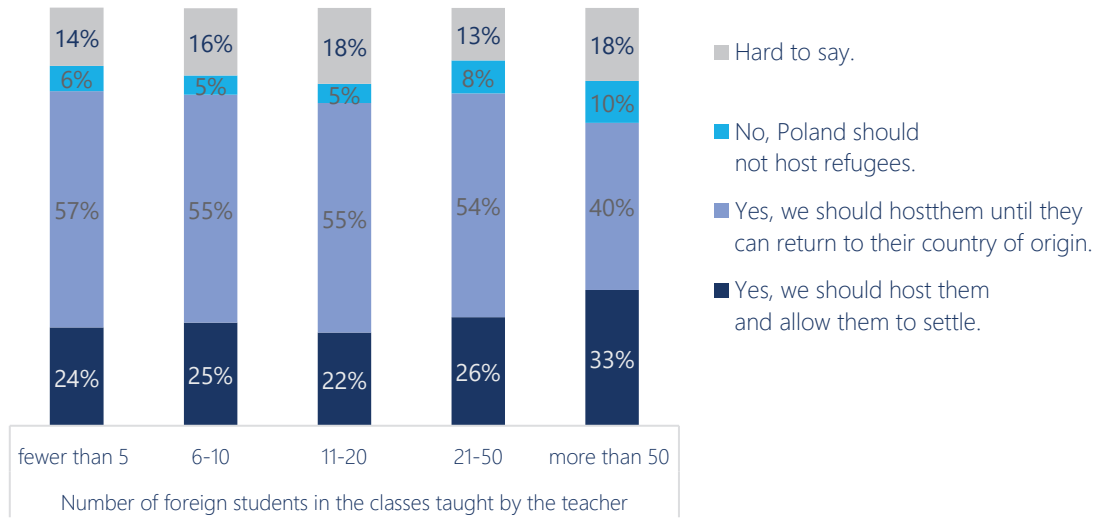
Teachers who worked with larger numbers of foreign students were less tolerant compared to those with sporadic contact. Teachers with more experience also tended to express less definitive attitudes, with a higher proportion answering, 'hard to say'.

However, there were two exceptions to these general trends:

- Teachers who worked with 21 to 50 foreign students showed attitudes of openness as often as those with the least experience (80%).
- Among teachers working with 21 to 50 foreign students or more, the percentage advocating full openness (hosting refugees and enabling them to settle) was the highest – 26% and 33%, respectively.

In your opinion, should Poland host refugees from countries affected by armed conflict?

n=2869



At the same time, **the most experienced teachers (those who worked with over 50 foreign students) showed the strongest polarization in their attitudes.** In this group, as many as 10% opposed hosting refugees, and 18% declared lack of opinion. These tendencies suggest that greater experience with foreign students leads to both increased openness and greater polarization of views. The relationship between the intensity of contact with foreign students and attitudes towards hosting refugees was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Teachers' attitudes towards Poland hosting refugees show little variation based on the type of school in which they work. The differences are most evident among vocational schoolteachers – this group had the highest percentage of undecided respondents (18%), and the overall proportion supporting the hosting of refugees was lower than in the entire sample (75% compared to 79%). At the same time, vocational schoolteachers were the most likely to advocate for creating opportunities for refugees to settle (32% compared to 24% in the entire sample). However, it should be noted that these correlations are not statistically significant. [Appendix 3, Table 1, Chart 2]

When asked specifically about hosting refugees from Ukraine, the responses were similar to those regarding refugees in general. 79% of teachers believed that Poland should host refugees from Ukraine. However, one in five teachers either opposed this or were unable to express an opinion (21%).

Should Poland host refugees from Ukraine from areas affected by armed conflict?

n=2,869



Openness to refugees from Ukraine was more common among teachers with longer professional experience than among younger teachers. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience and those with 10 to 20 years of experience were more likely to oppose hosting refugees from Ukraine (9%) and more likely to express indecision (16–20% selecting the answer: ‘hard to say’) [Appendix 3, Chart 3]. This relationship is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

The lowest percentage of support for hosting refugees from Ukraine was found among teachers in vocational schools (77%), a group that also includes slightly more undecided individuals compared to teachers in other school types (16%). However, these correlations are not statistically significant, and the vast majority of teachers across all school types expressed their support for hosting refugees from Ukraine (ranging from 77% to 81%) [Appendix 3, Table 2].

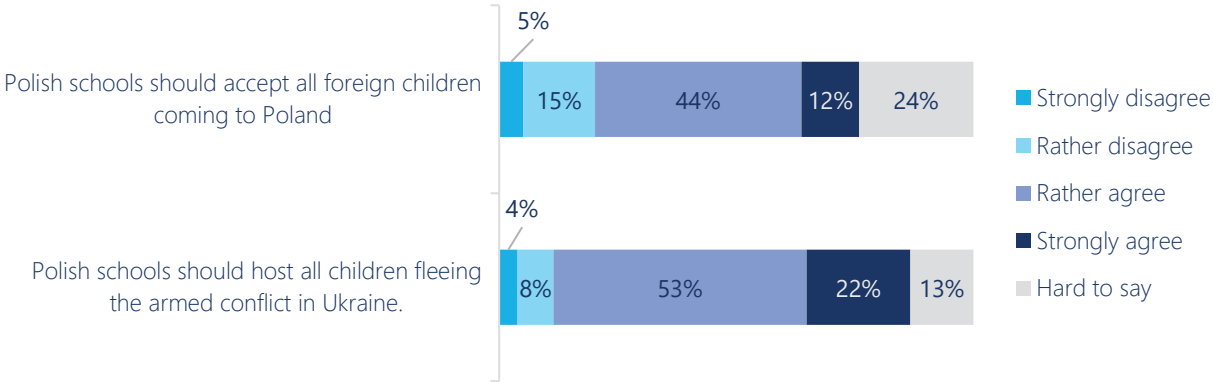
Compared to national surveys conducted by the Centre for Public Opinion Research (CBOS)⁸ on the Polish population, the surveyed teachers showed more favourable attitudes towards hosting refugees from Ukraine. Among general population, 54% respondents supported Poland’s hosting of refugees from Ukraine, while 38% opposed it (data from June 2024). This difference may be attributed to the teachers’ direct experience of working with foreign students. Interestingly, the national survey showed a much lower proportion of undecided responses compared to the teachers’ survey. This discrepancy could result from the ‘good respondent effect’. Teachers may feel compelled to present themselves in a positive light, making it harder to express strong opinions on such a sensitive topic. As a result, they may be more likely to choose neutral or ambiguous responses, such as ‘hard to say’.

Acceptance of Refugees in Schools

When the question of refugees is shifted from the national to the school level, the responses become less positive. The percentage of teachers supporting the acceptance of refugee children from Ukraine into Polish schools dropped slightly to 75%, compared to 79% when asked about the national situation. At the same time, the proportion of teachers expressing negative views on the matter increased to 12%, compared to 7% in the national context. Moreover, **openness decreased significantly when teachers were asked about accepting all foreign children into schools.** In this case, acceptance was visibly lower, with only 56% of teachers supporting the idea, while one-fifth opposed it, and nearly one-quarter remained undecided.

Accepting foreign students in Polish schools
n=2,869

To what extent do you agree with the following statements:

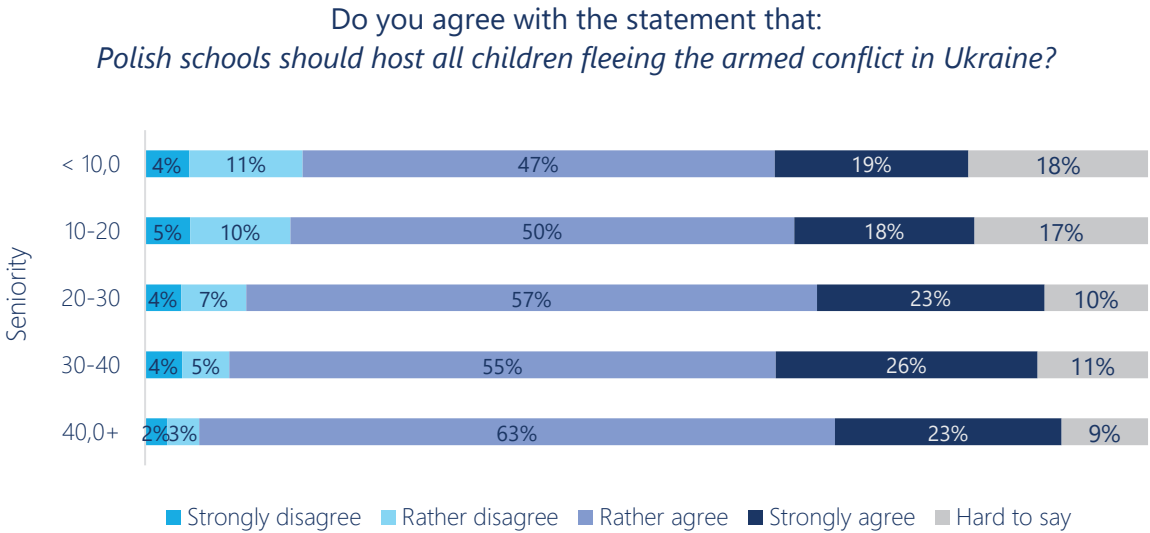


⁸ CBOS, *O wojnie w Ukrainie i granicy. Komunikat z badań nr 67/2024* [On the war in Ukraine and the border. Research communication no. 67/2024], July 2024; Fig. 2: In your opinion, should Poland host Ukrainian refugees from conflict areas? Data as of June 2024: 16% - definitely not, 23% - rather not, 40% - rather yes, 14% - definitely yes, 8% - hard to say.

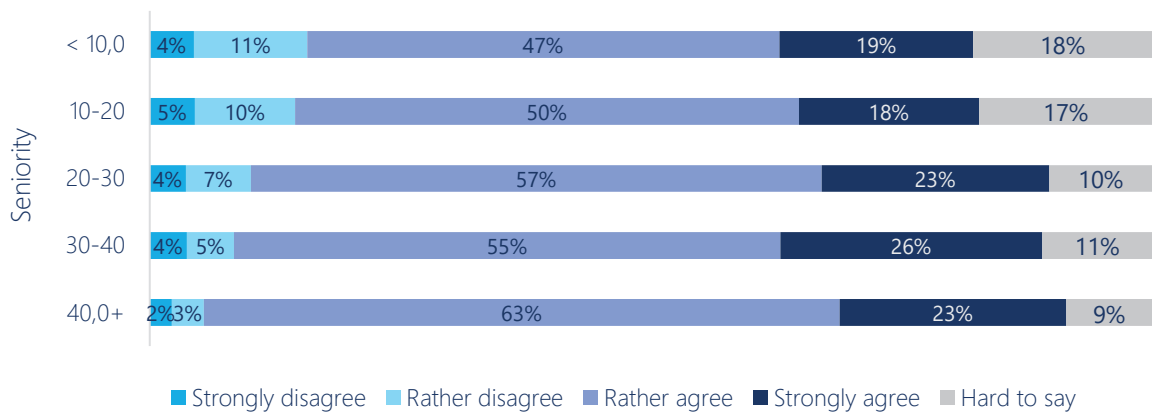
Responses varied depending on the type of school in which teachers worked [Appendix 3, Table 3]. **With respect to children from Ukraine, the lowest percentage of negative responses was observed among primary school teachers** (11% answered 'strongly disagree' or 'rather disagree'). The lowest level of positive responses was recorded among vocational schoolteachers (72%, compared to 75% in other school types), along with the highest proportion of undecided responses (15%). The relationship between school type and attitudes towards accepting students from Ukraine by Polish schools is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Acceptance of foreign children in general was most strongly supported by primary school teachers, with the highest proportion of positive responses (58%) and the lowest negative responses (18%). General secondary school and technical schoolteachers were the most sceptical, with the highest percentages of undecided ('hard to say') responses, the most negative views, and relatively fewer positive views (50–52%). Interestingly, vocational schoolteachers expressed positive views as often (58%) as primary school teachers [Appendix 3, Table 3]. The correlation between the type of school and the attitude to accepting foreign refugees by Polish schools is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

Teachers' opinions on accepting both students from Ukraine and other countries varied by the length of their teaching experience. Teachers with less experience were more likely to express negative opinions (15% for Ukrainian students and 23–25% for other foreign students). The less experienced the teacher, the more likely they were to be undecided. The correlation between teachers' seniority and their attitude to accepting foreign students (including Ukrainian students) by Polish schools is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$ with respect to students from Ukraine and $p < 0.05$ with respect to foreign students in general).



Do you agree with the statement that:
Polish schools should host all children fleeing the armed conflict in Ukraine?



The intensity of contact with foreign students is not significantly related to attitudes towards accepting refugees in schools ($p > 0.05$).

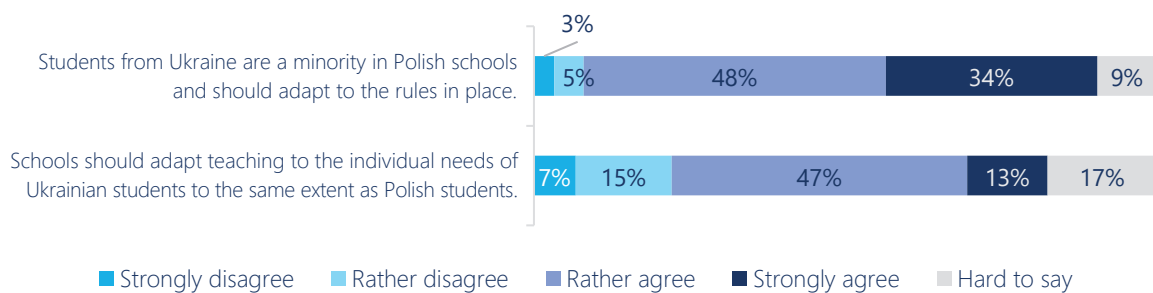
These findings suggest that tolerance and openness towards accepting refugees among teachers decreased when the issue was considered from the school perspective – the environment in which they work, and which directly affects them. Openness also diminished in relation to foreign students other than refugees from Ukraine (due to the specific context in Poland, teachers had less contact with foreign students from other countries).

Who Should Adapt – the School or the Student?

When asked **about adapting the functioning of schools to accommodate students from Ukraine**, 82% of teachers stated that refugee students, as a minority, should adapt to the rules already in place in Polish schools.

Adapting the school to the presence of students from Ukraine n=2,869

To what extent do you agree with the following statements:



This belief was strongest among general secondary school teachers (86%), while teachers in technical schools were more likely than their counterparts in other types of schools to oppose this view (13% compared to 8% overall) [Appendix 3, Table 4]. Expecting students from Ukraine to adapt to Polish school rules was also more frequently and decisively expressed by less experienced teachers, with 40–42% selecting ‘strongly agree’ [Appendix 3, Chart 4]. Both correlations are statistically significant (school type: $p < 0.05$; length of teaching experience: $p < 0.001$).

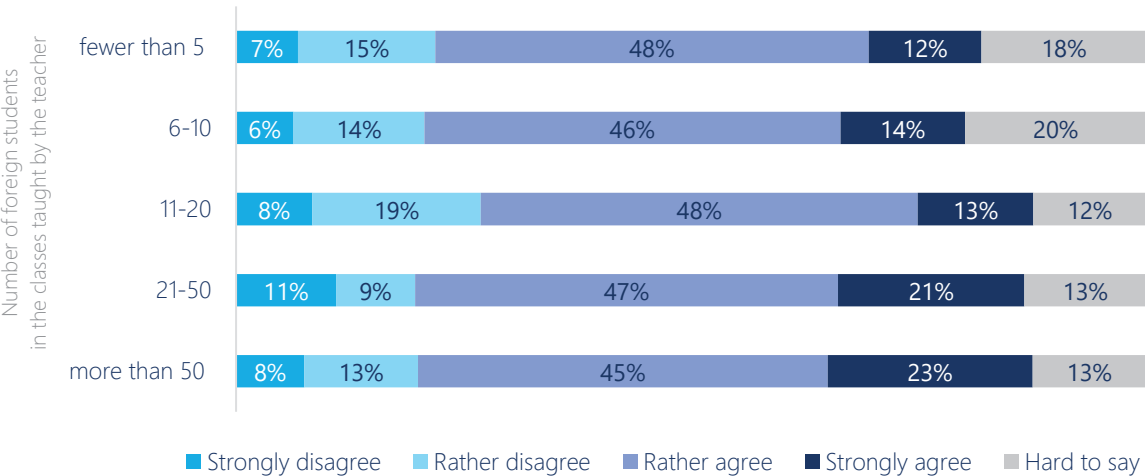
The greater the intensity of teachers’ experience with foreign students, the more likely they were to expect students to adapt to the school’s rules. Among teachers with the greatest experience of working with foreign students (teaching more than 50 foreign students), 90% supported the view that minority students should adapt ($p < 0.05$) [Appendix 3, Chart 5].

At the same time, nearly one-quarter of all teachers (22%) disagreed with the idea that **schools should adapt teaching practices to the needs of students from Ukraine to the same extent as they do for Polish students.** Fewer than two-thirds of teachers (60%) supported individualizing teaching for students from Ukraine to a similar degree as for Polish students.

Primary school teachers were more likely to support this approach (63%), while general secondary school, technical school, and vocational school teachers showed lower levels of acceptance (54% positive responses) and higher levels of disagreement (27–28%) [Appendix 3, Table 4]. Teachers with lower levels of seniority were also less open to this idea: among those with less than 20 years of experience, rejecting individualized teaching for students from Ukraine was more common (26–27%) than among their more experienced colleagues. [Appendix 3, Chart 6]. Both correlations are statistically significant (school type: $p < 0.05$; length of teaching experience: $p < 0.001$).

The intensity of teachers’ contacts with foreign students influenced their attitudes towards school adaptations resulting from the presence of Ukrainian students. **Teachers with moderate contact with foreign students (teaching 11–20 such children) were the most opposed to addressing students’ individual needs in the teaching process (27%).** In other groups, the percentage of teachers rejecting this approach was similar, ranging from 20 to 22%. Teachers with the most experience working with foreign students were the most supportive of addressing individual needs (68%), compared to 60% among the least experienced. These differences are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

To what extent do you agree with the following statement:
Schools should adapt teaching to the individual needs of Ukrainian students to the same extent as Polish students?

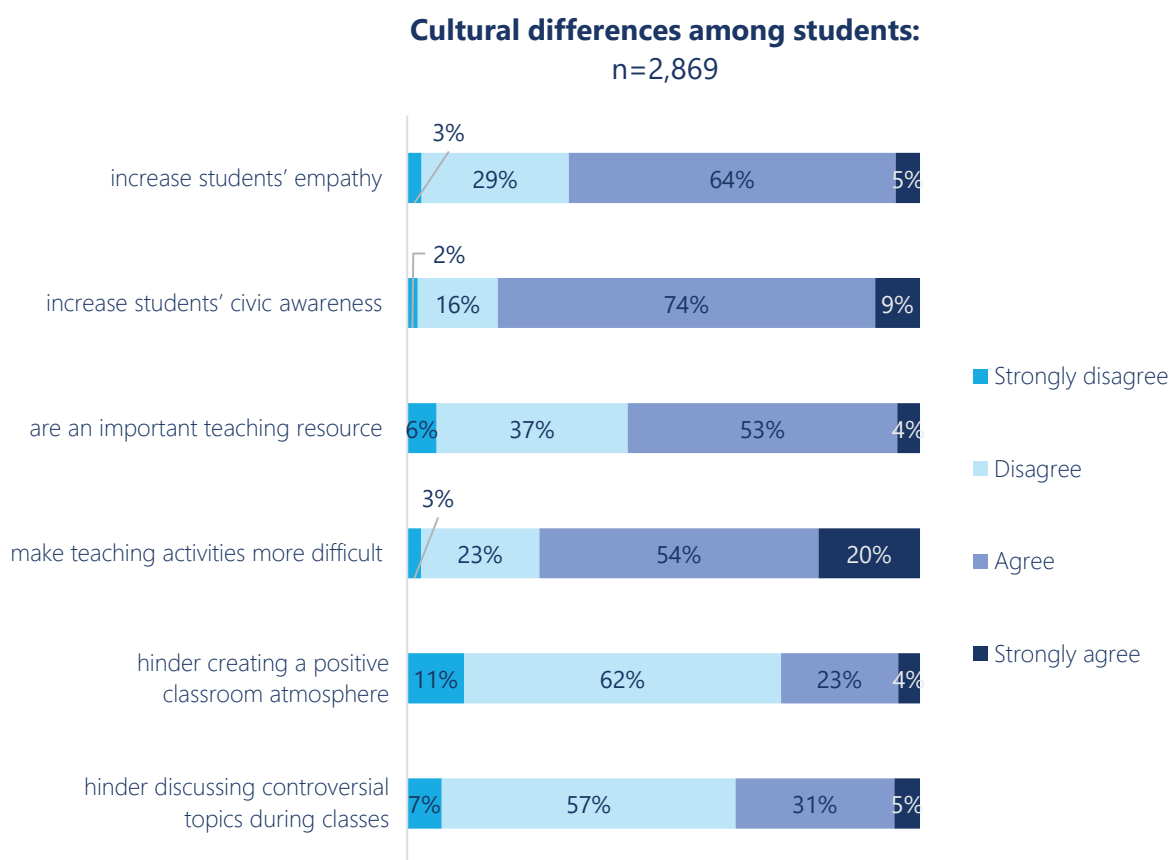


Consequently, although teachers generally held positive attitudes towards accepting refugee children in Poland and into Polish schools, this support declined when the discussion shifted to implementing changes in teaching practices and general functioning of the school. More teachers found such solutions hardly

acceptable. The reduced willingness to embrace such changes may stem from a lack of knowledge, skills, and limited experience in addressing the challenges of working in multicultural classrooms.

Cultural Differences Among Students – Resource or Challenge?

The surveyed teachers more often perceived cultural differences in the classroom as an opportunity rather than a challenge. Among them, 83% agreed that cultural differences promoted greater civic awareness, 73% believed cultural diversity among students did not hinder creating a positive classroom atmosphere, and 69% indicated that cultural differences fostered increased empathy among students. As for the challenges associated with teaching in multicultural classrooms, **73% respondents reported that cultural differences between students made teaching activities more difficult**, and 43% were not convinced that cultural diversity among students was an important teaching resource.



In four areas among the above, teachers' responses varied significantly depending on the type of school in which they worked. The following differences are statistically significant:

- **Cultural differences among students increase students' empathy:** Teachers in technical schools were the most sceptical, with 35% giving negative responses, while teachers in vocational schools were the most positive, with 74% positive responses, compared to 69% across the sample ($p < 0.05$) [Chart 7a].
- **Cultural differences among students increase students' civic awareness:** Fewer teachers in all types of secondary schools agreed with this statement and the differences were up to 4 percentage points: 80% of technical and vocational schoolteachers and 81% of general secondary school teachers, compared to 84% of primary school teachers ($p < 0.05$) [Chart 7b].

- **Cultural differences among students hinder creating a positive classroom atmosphere:** This issue was more frequently encountered by teachers in primary schools (a total of 29% affirmative statements) and general secondary schools (27%), compared to technical schools (22%) and vocational schools (16%) ($p < 0.001$) [Chart 7c].
- **Cultural differences among students make teaching activities more difficult:** This challenge was most clearly noted by teachers in primary schools (77%) and general secondary schools, with the latter showing the highest proportion of 'strongly agree' responses (23%) ($p < 0.001$) [Chart 7d].

Teachers with **less professional experience were more likely to point to the negative effects of cultural differences in the classroom:** such teachers most often reported that cultural differences negatively impacted creating a positive classroom atmosphere (34%) and did not enhance students' empathy (40% of the least experienced teachers and 33% of those with 10–20 years of experience) [Charts 8a and 8b]. Similarly, younger teachers were more likely to reject the positive impact of multiculturalism on students' civic awareness (21–23% giving negative responses) [Chart 8c] and to perceive difficulties discussing controversial topics (41%) [Chart 8d]. These correlations are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Teachers with 10 to 20 years of experience are the most likely to highlight the negative impact of cultural differences on conducting lessons (78% of responses confirm that teaching activities are more challenging ($p < 0,05$) [Chart 8e].

The intensity of a teacher's contact with foreign students significantly influences their assessment of the consequences of cultural differences. Teachers with less contact were more likely to see the positive aspects of cultural differences. Conversely, **teachers with extensive experience teaching foreign students were much more likely to point out**

negative consequences of multiculturalism in the classroom:

- *Cultural differences among students hinder creating a positive classroom atmosphere:* 76% among the most experienced teachers compared to 56% among those with minimal contact.
- *Cultural differences among students increase empathy:* 70% of teachers with minimal contact agreed, compared to only 48% of those with extensive experience.
- *Cultural differences among students increase civic awareness:* teachers with more experience teaching foreign students were more likely to either reject this opinion (25%) or strongly support it (10%);
- *Cultural differences among students hinder discussing controversial topics:* Teachers with minimal contact with foreign students were more likely to disagree with this statement.
- *Cultural differences among students make teaching activities more difficult:* Agreement rises with experience, with 86% of teachers working with over 50 foreign students agreeing, compared to 73% of those teaching up to 5 foreign students.

All of the above correlations are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) [Appendix 2, Charts 9a–9e].

A comparison of responses to this question in 2024 with the identical question posed in the ICCS study conducted in spring 2022 among eighth-grade teachers shows an increase in negative opinions among teachers regarding the impact of cultural differences on the teaching process and peer relationships.

Although the ICCS study was conducted exclusively among grade 8 teachers, it is worth noting that in this study, opinions about the negative effects of cultural diversity were much more frequent.

Cultural differences among students:	ICCS 2024 study	CEO 2024 study
	Sum of answers in favour of the proposition	
	Eighth-grade teachers	Teachers of different grades
<i>make teaching activities more difficult</i>	48%	74%
<i>hinder creating a positive classroom atmosphere</i>	14%	27%

At the same time, opinions about the positive impact of cultural diversity were rejected by a significantly larger percentage of teachers.

Cultural differences among students:	ICCS 2024 study	CEO 2024 study
	Sum of answers rejecting the proposition	
	Eighth-grade teachers	Teachers of different grades
<i>increase students' civic awareness</i>	6%	18%
<i>are an important teaching resource</i>	10%	43%
<i>increase students' empathy</i>	12%	32%

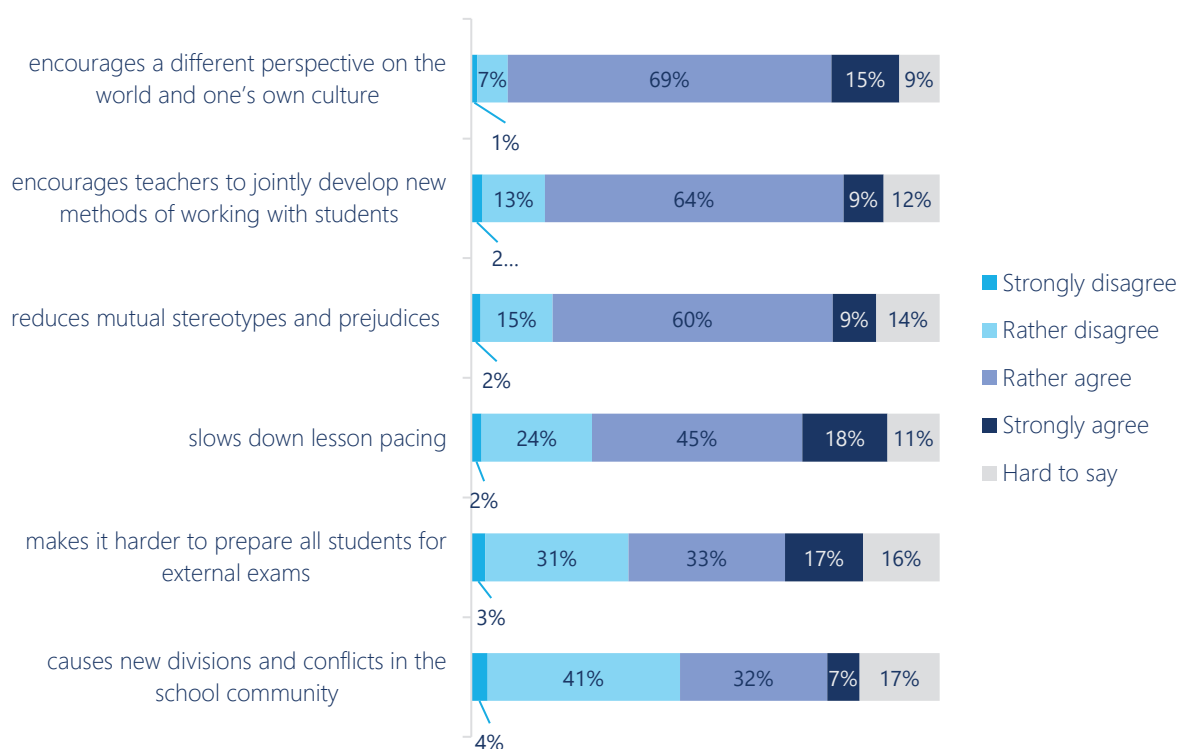
It is worth noting that in 2022, as the ICCS study showed, Polish teachers differed from teachers in other countries in their critical view of diversity.

What Are the Consequences of the Presence of Foreign Students in the Classroom?

The presence of foreign students was seen by most teachers as an opportunity. Over 80% believed it offered a chance to shift perspectives on the world and their own culture, 69% saw it as a way to reduce stereotypes and prejudices, and 72% considered it an encouragement for greater collaboration among teachers.

The presence of students from other countries in the classroom and school:

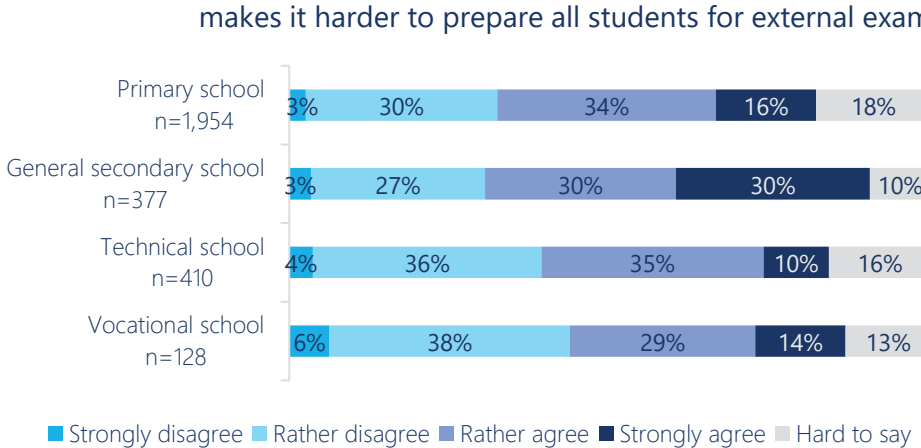
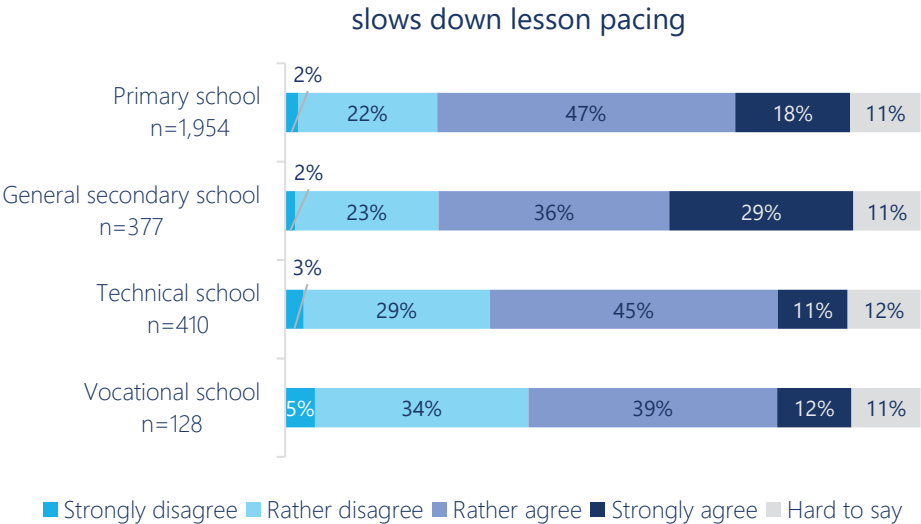
n=2,869



At the same time, the impact of foreign students on the teaching process was assessed rather negatively: nearly two-thirds of teachers (63%) thought their presence slowed down the pace of lessons, and 60% believed it made it harder to prepare all students for exams. Teachers were divided on whether foreign students intensified conflicts and divisions within the school community: 45% did not see this negative impact, while 39% believed there was such a correlation.

Teachers' views on the presence of foreign students vary depending on the type of school in which they work. **In vocational secondary education (technical and vocational schools), teachers were less likely to see the presence of foreign students as negatively affecting lesson pacing or exam preparation,** compared to their peers in primary schools and general secondary schools. For instance, 32% and 39% of teachers in technical and vocational schools, respectively, disagreed that foreign students slowed down lesson pacing and 40–44% – that they hindered exam preparation [Appendix 3, Chart 10a-b]. In primary and general secondary schools, these figures amounted to 24–25% and 30–33%, respectively. Teachers in general secondary schools were the most outspoken, with nearly one-third expressing strongly negative views on the impact of foreign students on these two aspects of the teaching process. These differences between teachers from different school types are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

The presence of students from other countries in the classroom and school:



When evaluating the impact of foreign students on classroom atmosphere and peer relationships, teachers in primary schools reported the highest percentage of negative responses, with 41% stating that the presence of foreign students led to new divisions and conflicts [Appendix 3, Chart 10]. At the same time, primary school teachers were the most likely to be undecided on this issue. This correlation is also statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). This may be due to the overlap of two factors: the higher number of foreign students in primary schools and the age group they work with, among whom disruptive behaviours are more common. Consequently, primary school teachers are more experienced with conflict situations than teachers in all types of secondary schools.

Teachers with the shortest experience (less than 10 years or between 10 and 20 years) were the most likely to disagree with statements about the positive impacts of the presence of foreign students in the school. These groups also included the highest percentage of teachers pointing to negative aspects of their presence. This applied to both the teaching process and peer relationships. [Appendix 3, Charts 11a–e]. Such differences in teachers' attitudes based on their years of teaching experience follow trends observed in previous questions and are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$ for all types of consequences).

As in the previous questions, an inverse correlation exists between teachers' perceptions of the consequences of foreign students' presence and their experience teaching them. The more experience teachers had with foreign students, the stronger their support for negative opinions and the greater their rejection of views that highlighted the positive consequences of foreign students' presence in Polish schools. All these correlations (apart from the statement that the presence of foreign students encouraged a different

perspective on the world) are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$, and for the claim about reducing stereotypes, $p < 0.05$) [Appendix 3, Charts 12a–e].

Challenges in Teaching in a Multicultural Classroom

According to teachers, the most significant challenge in teaching in a multicultural classroom was the language barrier, cited by 74% of respondents. As for other issues identified, just under half of surveyed teachers pointed to challenges related to assessing and grading foreign students, and less than 40% mentioned adapting teaching methods to meet the needs of new students, addressing their psycho-emotional needs, or managing low attendance and high turnover rates among students of different nationalities.

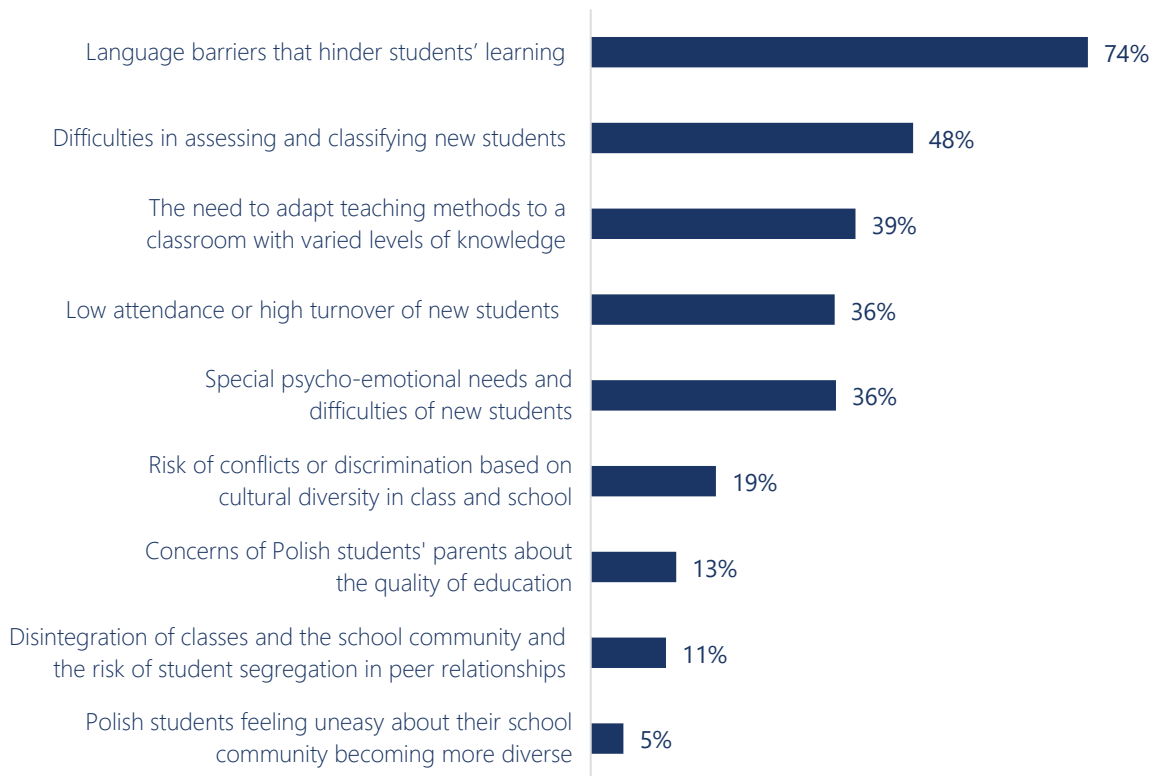
It is noteworthy that a relatively small percentage of teachers identified challenges related to peer relationships or conflicts (11–19%). However, some qualitative studies indicate that this is a critical area, which becomes more difficult to manage in schools⁹.

When it comes to the specific challenges faced by different types of schools, the language barrier was the most frequently cited issue across all school types, ranking among the top three challenges in each case. This is a statistically significant correlation ($p < 0.001$). Teachers in vocational schools most often identified this difficulty (81%), while general secondary school teachers reported it the least frequently (58%). In primary schools and technical schools, teachers perceived this challenge with similar frequency (76%). Differences were also observed in the area of assessment and classification. Teachers in vocational and technical schools were less likely than those in primary and general secondary schools to view this as a significant challenge (37% and 38% compared to 49% and 57%, respectively; $p > 0.05$).

⁹ CEO & UNICEF quality research report - Magdalena Tędziągolska, prof Bartłomiej Walczak, dr Kamil M. Wielecki [Students from Ukraine in Polish schools – 2023/2024 school year](#)

Challenges related to working in a classroom with students of different nationalities

n=2,869



Interestingly, general secondary school teachers were the least likely to point to the area of psycho-emotional needs as a major issue (28% compared to 37–39% in other schools, $p > 0.05$). However, they were also more likely than others to highlight issues related to relationships between refugees and the host community. They noted that concerns from Polish students and parents about diversity posed a challenge for them as educators, with 11% and 17%, respectively, identifying this as a significant issue ($p < 0.05$) [Appendix 3, Table 5].

Across all groups of teachers categorized by years of professional experience, the three most cited challenges were similar: language (correlation: $p < 0.05$); assessing and classifying students, as well as adapting teaching methods (correlation: $p > 0.05$). More experienced teachers also more often noted challenges related to the psycho-emotional needs of students (10–12%, compared to 5–8% in groups with lower seniority levels). This correlation is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) [Table 6].

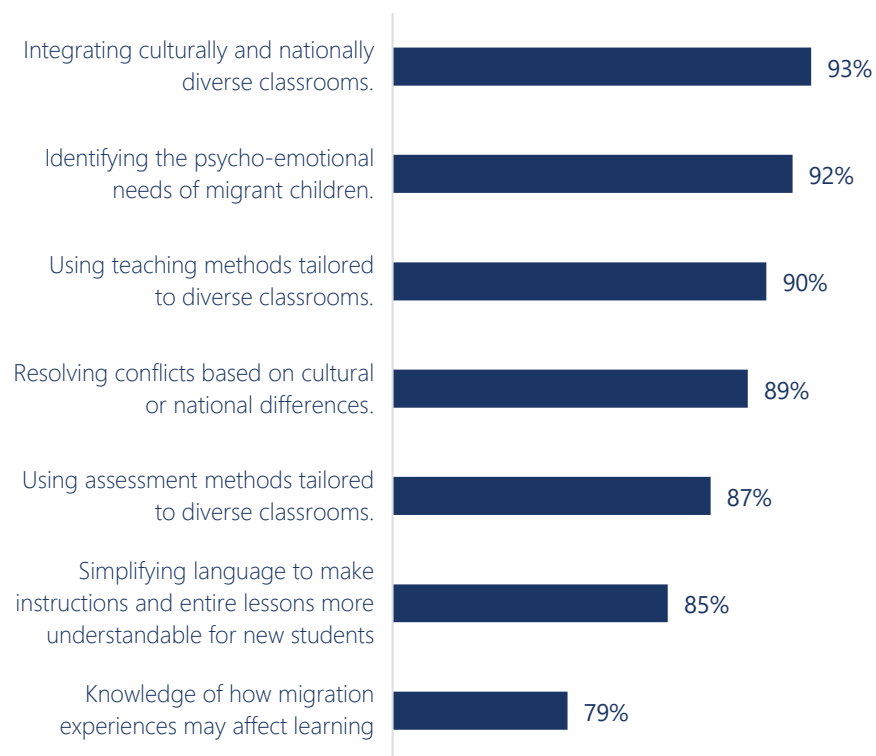
With respect to the five challenges, there is a statistically significant relationship between the challenges teachers identify in multicultural classrooms and the intensity of their experience teaching foreign students. Less experienced teachers found assessing and classifying students more challenging, but they were less likely than their more experienced colleagues to cite challenges in areas such as attendance, peer conflicts, and class integration. Language barriers were most frequently identified (76%) by teachers with moderate experience (teaching 11–20 foreign students) [Appendix 3, Table 7].

5. Teachers' Competencies in Teaching in a Multicultural Classroom

The second set of survey questions focused on the range of competencies necessary for teaching in multicultural classrooms. The respondents reported which competencies they considered important and how they assessed their own preparedness to work in multicultural schools.

Integrating students and identifying the psycho-emotional needs of students with migration experience were the competencies most often identified by teachers as important or very important for achieving teaching and educational goals in multicultural classrooms (92–93% of teachers). The third most frequently mentioned competency was the ability to adapt teaching methods (90%). Aspects such as simplifying the language of instruction or knowledge about how migration experiences affected the learning process ranked slightly lower, but they were still acknowledged by the majority of respondents (85%

How important are the following aspects of knowledge and skills to effectively achieve teaching and educational goals in a class with students of different nationalities? n=2,869



and 79% of respondents, respectively, viewed them as 'rather important' or 'important').

Share of 'important' and 'rather important' responses to the question: *In your opinion, how important are the following aspects of knowledge and skills to effectively achieve teaching and educational goals in a class with students of different nationalities?* [For full chart see: Appendix 2, Chart 14]

This indicates that while teachers deemed many competencies as important for teaching foreign students, they primarily emphasized the importance of those related to students' well-being rather than teaching methods.

When examining the competencies essential for achieving teaching and educational goals in multicultural classrooms across different types of schools, significant differences were observed in five of the seven competencies included in the study ($p < 0.001$) [Chart 14a-e]:

- knowledge about the impact of migration on learning,
- adapting teaching methods,
- classroom integration,
- resolving conflicts related to nationality or culture,
- identifying students' psycho-emotional needs.

In most cases, **primary school teachers were the most likely to identify a particular competency as important or rather important** [Appendix 3, Charts 14a-e]. For resolving conflicts and identifying students' psycho-emotional needs, the difference between primary school teachers and vocational schoolteachers – who ranked lowest on this scale – was 5 and 7 percentage points, respectively. Primary school teachers most often recognized the need to integrate multicultural classrooms, with 94% identifying it as an important or rather important competency.

Only knowledge about the impact of migration on learning was more frequently mentioned by teachers from general secondary schools, with a 2-percentage point difference compared to primary schools. There was also a noticeable gap between the responses of general secondary school teachers and those working in vocational secondary education: in technical and vocational schools, the percentage of responses was 6–7 percentage points lower than in general

secondary schools. On the other hand, general secondary school teachers were less likely than their counterparts in other school types to highlight the importance of adapting teaching methods (3 percentage points lower than in primary schools).

It is worth emphasizing that the majority of teachers, regardless of their workplace, recognize the importance of the competencies discussed above for effective teaching and education. Teachers in primary schools generally recognized these competencies more, which may stem from their more frequent experience working with foreign students. Conversely, the lower (although still relatively high) percentage of responses in vocational schools indicates potential areas for further professional development.

Teaching Experience

The perception of the importance of the competencies – has a significant correlation with teachers' seniority ($p < 0.05$) [Appendix 3, Table 8]. Following types of patterns can be observed:

- teachers with the least experience were most frequently unable to determine the importance of a given competency. The differences ranged from a few percentage points to nearly double the responses
- In three cases, the least and the most experienced teachers were the least likely to identify specific skills. These were: knowledge about the impact of migration on teaching, the ability to integrate a class, and the ability to identify students' psycho-emotional needs.
- Adapting teaching and assessment methods was least frequently indicated as important by the two groups with the shortest experience (86% for teachers with up to 10 years of experience, and 89% for those with 10–19.9 years).

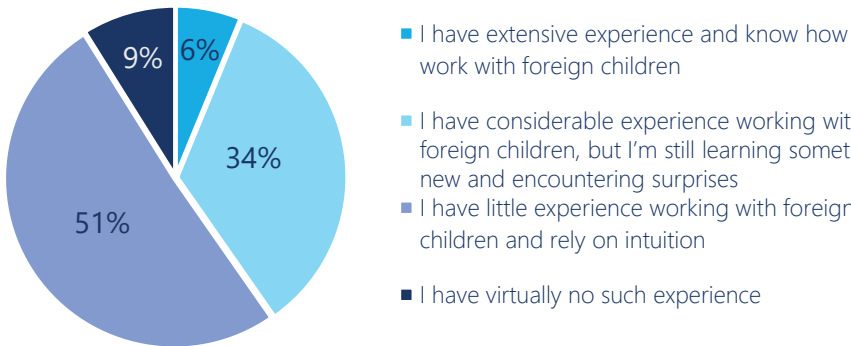
The fact that the groups at the two extremes of experience stand out here may reflect generational differences more than a simple correlation with experience. This stems from the dynamics of migration to Poland: teachers with 30–40 years of experience may not necessarily have more experience working with foreign students than their colleagues who have been in the profession for two or three decades less.

The perceived importance of the listed competencies was only slightly influenced by the intensity of teachers' contact with foreign students [Appendix 3, Table 9]. For only two competencies (related to teaching and assessment methods), this correlation is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Teachers working with more than 50 foreign students most frequently indicated the importance of these competencies, with 93% and 90% identifying them as important. This group also had virtually no teachers considering these competencies unimportant.

Teachers' Self-Assessment of Their Experience Working with Multicultural Classrooms

When asked to assess their own experience working in multicultural classrooms, teachers were relatively reserved. Even though a large proportion of the surveyed teachers worked with foreign students (86%), as many as 60% described this experience as minimal or almost non-existent. Only one in 17 teachers felt confident in knowing how to work with foreign students.

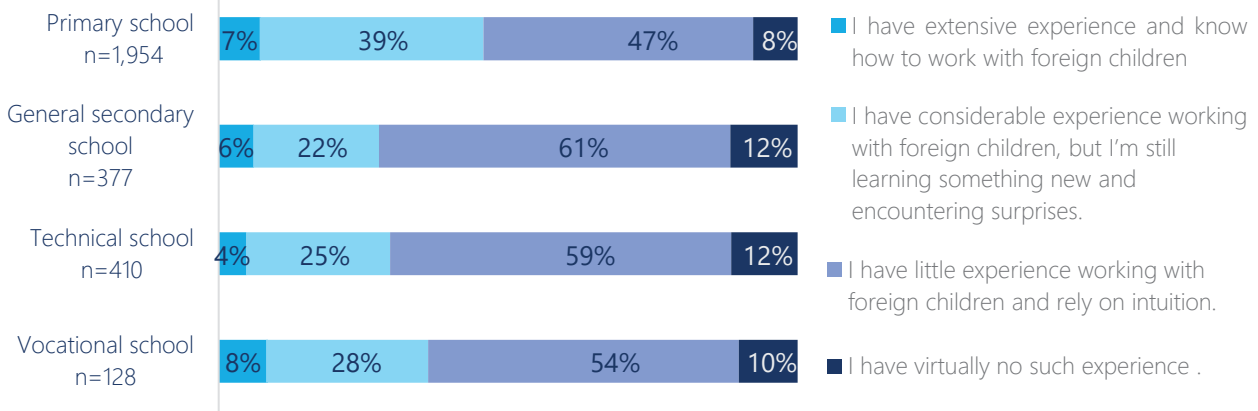
How would you assess your current experience working in a multicultural classroom/school?
n=2,869



Teachers' self-assessment of their experience is correlated ($p < 0.001$) with the type of school.

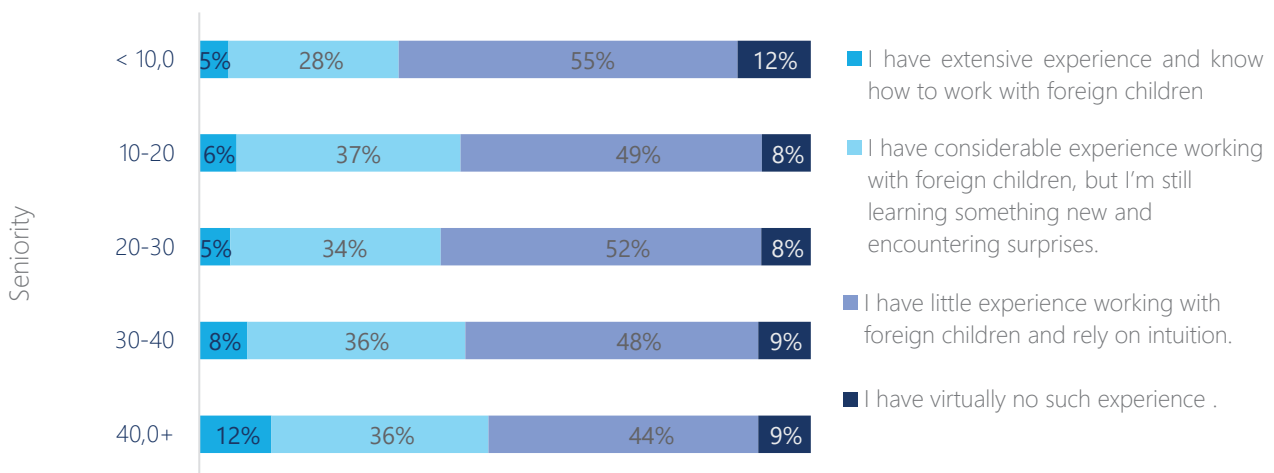
Primary school teachers were more likely than their colleagues in all types of secondary schools to positively assess their experience working in multicultural classrooms (46% in primary schools as opposed to 28–36% across all secondary schools). General secondary school and technical school teachers rated their experience the lowest. This discrepancy is likely due to the frequency of such experiences – there are more foreign students in primary schools, giving teachers more opportunities to gain experience. Another possible explanation involves the greater challenges associated with teaching and managing older students, which may make all secondary education teachers feel more helpless compared to primary school teachers working with younger students.

How would you assess your current experience working in a multicultural classroom/school?

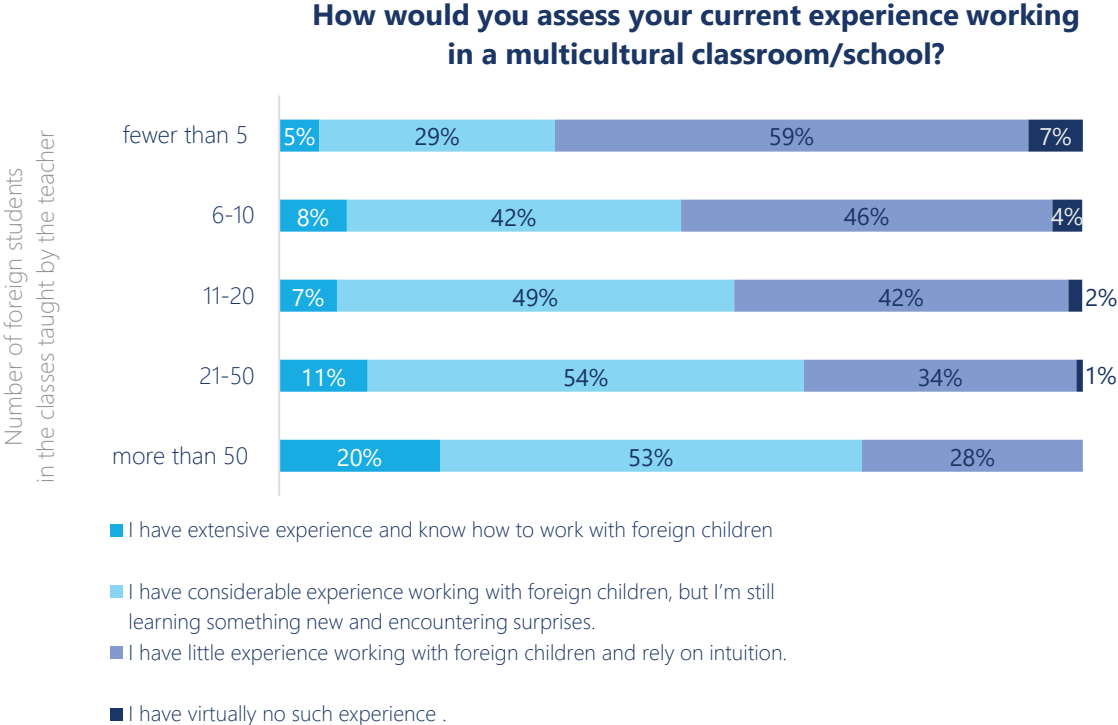


Teachers' **self-assessment of their multicultural experience also depended on their seniority** ($p < 0.05$). The shorter their teaching experience, the fewer teachers positively assessed their experience in working with multicultural classrooms. An exception to this trend is the group of teachers with 10–20 years of experience, who more frequently than their older colleagues described their experience as extensive or considerable (42%).

How would you assess your current experience working in a multicultural classroom/school?



The intensity of contact with foreign students naturally affected teachers' self-assessment of their experience ($p < 0.001$). The more students a teacher worked with, the more often they described their experience as considerable or extensive. However, it is worth noting that among teachers working with more than 50 foreign students, only 20% believed they knew how to teach foreign students.



Teachers' Self-Assessment of Their Preparedness to Work with Multicultural Classrooms

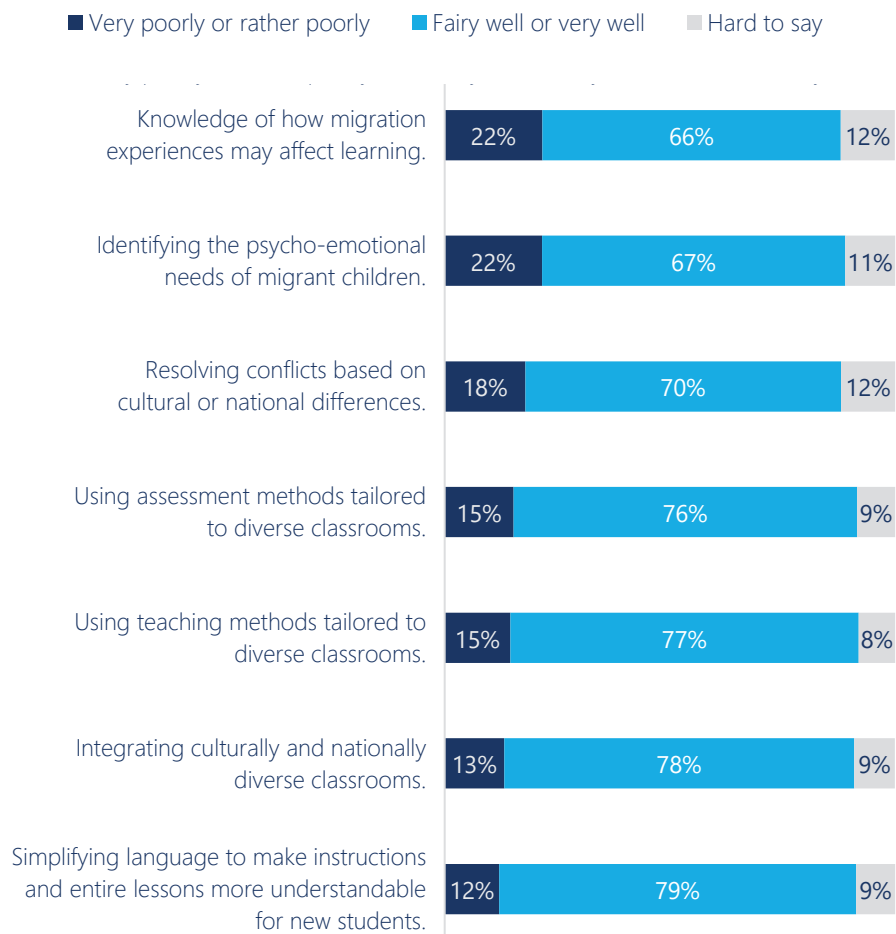
When asked to assess their preparedness in terms of the specific competencies they had previously identified as important for teaching and upbringing, the vast majority of teachers assessed their preparedness well (between 66% and 79% answered 'fairly well' or 'very well', depending on the competency). The integration of students in a class, which was most frequently identified as important, was a competency teachers felt relatively confident in – 78% stated they were well or very well prepared in this area.

The competency ranked lowest in importance – knowledge of how migration experiences can affect learning – was also the one teachers were least confident about. Two additional areas where teachers felt less confident were identifying the psycho-emotional needs of refugee students and resolving peer conflicts.

Interestingly, although the language barrier was identified as the main challenge in teaching foreign students, the largest proportion of surveyed teachers (79%) believed they had mastered the ability to adjust their language to the needs of foreign students.

How would you assess your preparedness – in the following areas – to work in a classroom with students of different nationalities?

n=2869



Teachers' self-assessment of specific competencies showed significant differences depending on the type of school in which they worked ($p < 0.05$) [Tabel 12]. Although the type of school did not greatly influence the hierarchy of competencies assessed as strongest or weakest, differences were evident in how teachers rated their skills based on their school setting. Primary school teachers were more likely than their colleagues in other schools to positively assess their preparedness across all competencies. Differences with general secondary school teachers, who rated their competencies the lowest, ranged from 11 to 14 percentage points in areas such as knowledge of migration, identifying needs, and adapting teaching methods.

General secondary school and technical schoolteachers were the most critical of their competencies.

General secondary school teachers rated their abilities the lowest in almost all areas except conflict resolution. Meanwhile, technical schoolteachers most frequently rated their competencies negatively in the following areas: the ability to identify psycho-emotional needs (29% for general secondary schools, 30% for technical schools) and knowledge of how migration affects learning (30% for general secondary schools, 29% for technical schools).

When considering **the influence of teaching experience on competency self-assessment**, statistical significance was observed in only two areas:

- **Class integration:** Teachers with the least experience rated their competencies the lowest, with 72% stating they were well or very well prepared compared to 80–81% in groups with over 20 or 30 years of experience.
- **Knowledge of how migration affects learning:** Teachers with medium experience (10–20 years) and the most experienced group rated their competencies the lowest in this area (63% and 64% of positive answers). The latter were also the group of teachers who most often negatively assess their competencies in that respect (26%, compared to 17% among teachers with over 30 years of experience).

The intensity of a **teacher's contact with foreign students influenced their self-assessment across all competency types**; this correlation is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.001$) [Appendix 3, Table 11]:

- **Knowledge about how migration affects the teaching process improved with more frequent contact.** Teachers working with many migrant students were significantly more likely to rate their competencies positively (90%) compared to those with sporadic contact (fewer than 5 students), where only 65% gave positive self-assessments.
- **Teachers with more experience working with foreign students generally rated their competencies in adapting teaching and assessment methods more highly.** However, one exception was the group teaching between 20 and 50 students, which rated their skills the lowest and was also more likely to remain undecided. On the other hand, teachers working with more than 50 students were the group that assessed their competencies the most positively.
- A clear pattern emerged in four key competency areas – simplifying language, class integration, conflict resolution, and identifying students' psycho-emotional needs. Teachers' self-assessment improved with experience working with foreign students, but a noticeable decline occurred when teaching more than 20 such students. Teachers in this group rated their skills at a level similar to those with sporadic contact with foreign students but lower than those teaching 11 to 20 students. The issue became more pronounced among teachers working with over 50 students, where the highest percentage of negative evaluations was observed, reaching 25% in the area of identifying students' psycho-emotional needs.

The self-assessment of most competencies was lowest among teachers reporting either the least or the greatest intensity of work with foreign students. This reflects two types of incompetence: conscious incompetence and unexperienced incompetence. For teachers with limited experience working with foreign students, the sense of lacking competence may stem from a lack of practice. In contrast, teachers working with a large number of foreign students, who face a greater diversity of challenges, may be more aware of their shortcomings in certain areas.

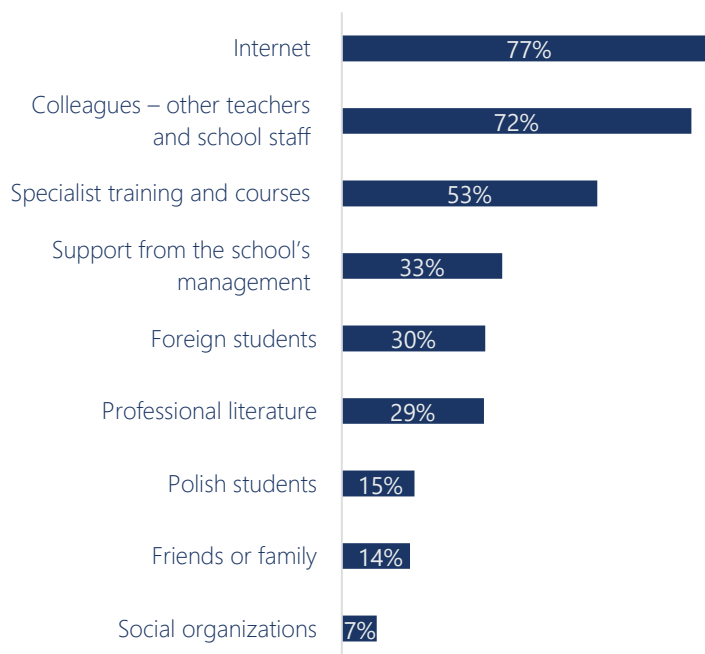
6. Professional Development for Teaching in a Multicultural Classroom

The fourth area of interest in this study was teachers' prior experience in developing their knowledge and competencies related to working in multicultural classrooms and integrating children of different nationalities. Teachers were asked about the extent to which they had access to various forms of in-service training, how they assessed these opportunities, and, most importantly, what kind of support they currently need.

When asked about their sources of knowledge in this area, teachers primarily pointed to **the Internet (77%)** and **peer support within the school (72%)**. Half of respondents declared to participate in training and courses, and one in three teachers mentioned support from their school's management. **Only one in fourteen teachers reported having received support from non-governmental organizations**. This is somewhat surprising, given that many social organizations (and, to a lesser extent, teacher training centres) organize specialized training sessions and courses and publish materials on this subject online. A possible explanation for this situation could be the limited reach of these organizations in promoting their offer to schools, as well as the possibility that teachers may not be aware of who authored the materials, online events, or training sessions they utilize.

What sources do you use to gain knowledge for working in classes with students of different nationalities?

n=2,869



The correlation between the use of different professional development sources and the type of school in which a teacher works is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) for four sources: the Internet, training, colleagues, and school management [Chart 15]. Primary school teachers were more likely than their counterparts in other types of schools to utilize these forms of support, while vocational schoolteachers were the least likely to do so [Appendix 3, Chart 15]:

- Internet: 68% of vocational schoolteachers reported using it, compared to 78% of primary and general secondary school teachers.
- Specialist training: 59% of primary school teachers reported using this resource, which significantly distinguished them from teachers in all types of secondary schools, where the figure ranged from 38% to 40%.
- Colleagues (other teachers and school staff): This source was also most commonly used by primary school teachers (75%) and least frequently by vocational schoolteachers (63%).
- Support from the school's management: This area showed the greatest variation among teachers' experiences. General secondary school teachers used this support the most (43%), followed by vocational schoolteachers (35%). In primary schools, the share of teachers relying on this form of support amounted to 32%.

In some cases, there is also a statistical correlation between the sources of knowledge used and teachers' seniority ($p < 0.05$) [Appendix 3, Table 12]:

- More experienced teachers were more likely to use professional literature, with the proportion increasing from 26% among the least experienced to 34% among the most experienced teachers.
- Younger teachers were more likely to rely on support from friends, family, and school

colleagues (16%) compared to the most experienced teachers, who used this resource the least (7%).

- At the same time, teachers with the longest experience were more likely than others to rely on help from Polish students (24%). This correlation is slightly above the assumed significance level ($p = 0.056$).
- Support from the school's management was used similarly by all groups of teachers (30–34%), although it was most common (37%) among those with 10 to 20 years of experience.

There is no correlation between the share of teachers reaching for specialist training and courses and the length of their teaching experience ($p > 0.05$).

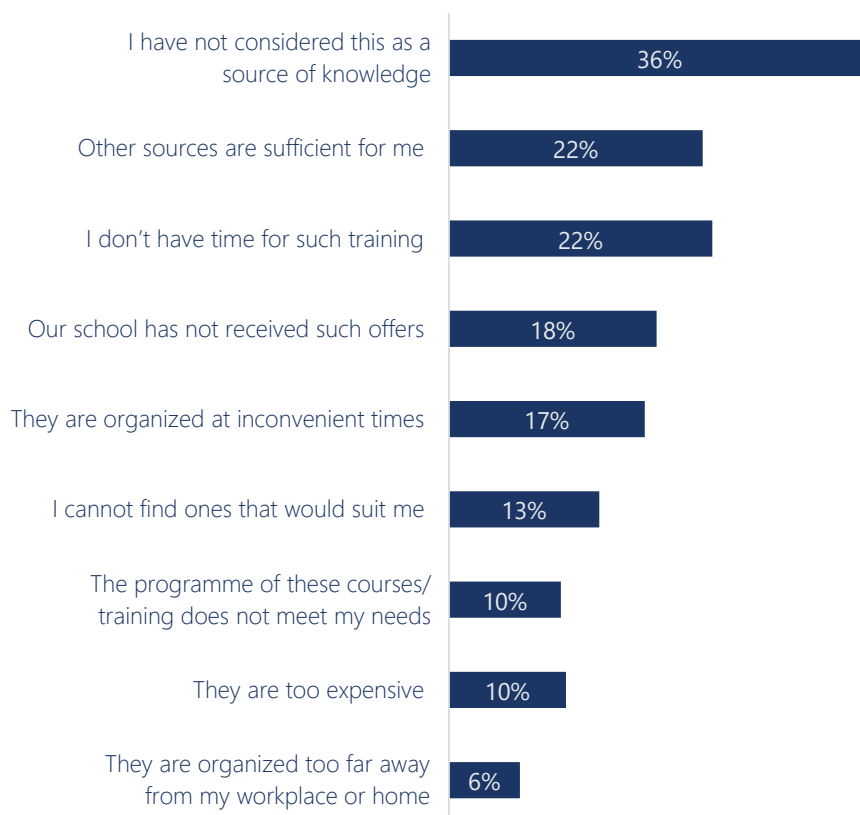
In the case of in-service training and using the Internet, the more intensive the contact with foreign students, the more likely teachers were to engage in training (70% of teachers working with over 50 students compared to 48% of those teaching up to five). This may indicate that teachers with more experience working with foreign students see a greater need and seek opportunities for such support. For Internet use, the relationship is reversed: the more personal experience teachers had, the less likely they were to rely on online resources [Table 13]. This could mean that online resources are helpful when teachers experience their first challenges and are not yet motivated to reach for specialist training.

Roughly half of all teachers do not seek specialist support through courses or training.

Over one-third (36%) admitted that they had not considered this form of development. A further 22% felt they did not need additional sources of knowledge or lacked the time for training. Notably, 18% of teachers declared that their school had not received offers for professional development in the area of cultural diversity, and 13% reported being unable to find such opportunities.

Why have you not attended specialist courses or training on student integration and cultural diversity?

n=1375



Declarations about schools not receiving training offers varied depending on the type of school where a teacher worked [Tabel 14]. The highest percentage of teachers citing this issue was found among those in technical and general secondary schools (22% and 23%, respectively), while primary school teachers referred to this problem significantly less often (15%).

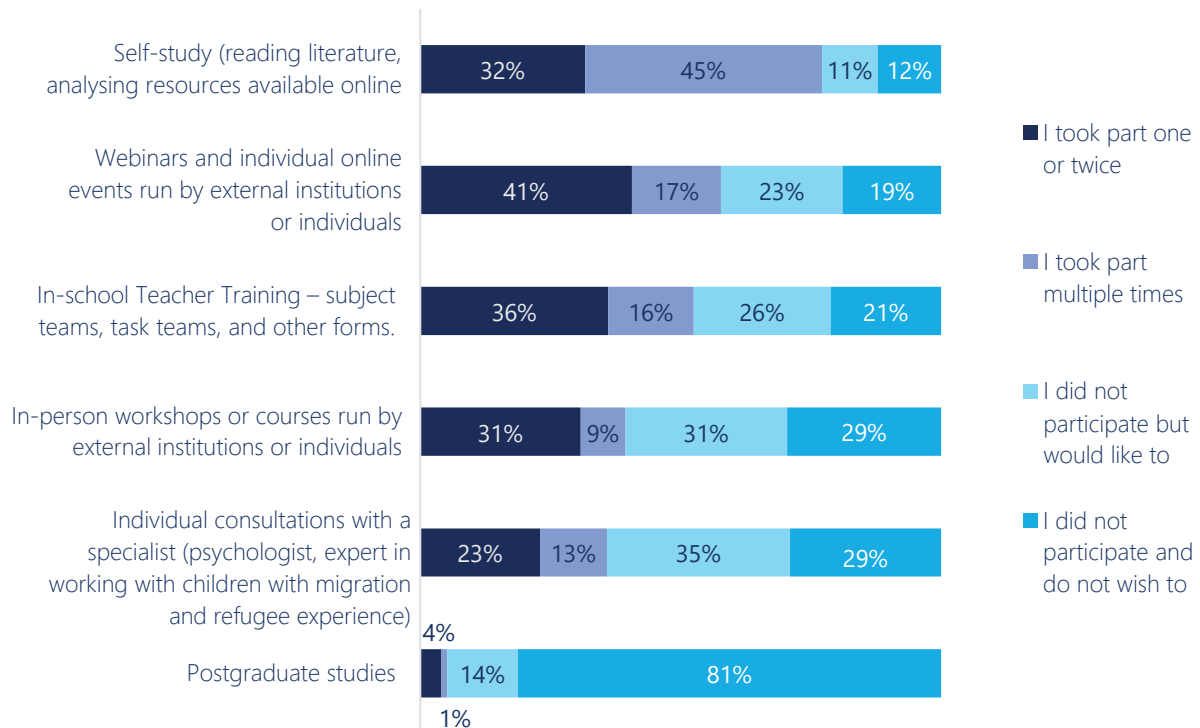
Forms of professional development

Teachers were also asked about their experiences with different forms of professional support

over the two years preceding the survey (2022-2024), corresponding to the period when a larger number of students from Ukraine joined Polish schools. The majority of teachers reported that they primarily relied on their own resources and effort for development (87% reported self-study), while between 40% and 58% participated in various training formats. It is notable that the surveyed teachers were unfamiliar with postgraduate studies on topics related to integration and cultural diversity, with a widespread reluctance to engage in this form of professional development (81%).

In what forms of professional development in the area of student integration and cultural diversity have you participated in the last 2 years?

n=2,869



The professional development experiences and readiness of teachers to engage in various forms of training depend on the type of school where they work ($p < 0.01$) [Appendix 3, Table 15]. One exception here is taking up postgraduate studies.

Teachers in primary schools most frequently engaged in various forms of professional development, followed by teachers in vocational schools. Generally, the frequency of using different types of support was similar among teachers in general secondary and technical schools, and it was lower than that of teachers in vocational and primary schools. Self-study and attending in-person workshops were the forms of development least utilized by technical schoolteachers.

A characteristic feature across all school types was the occasional nature of professional development experiences. The percentage of teachers who reported having used some form of professional development once or twice was significantly higher than those indicating repeated participation. For instance, in the case of training sessions and webinars, the differences between regular and one-off/two-time participation ranged from 27 to 15 percentage points:

In what forms of professional development related to student integration and cultural diversity have you participate in the past two years?

In-person workshops or courses run by external institutions or individuals				
	Primary school n=1,954	General second- ary school n=377	Technical school n=410	Vocational school n=128
Attended once or twice	35%	23%	21%	26%
Attended multiple times	10%	6%	6%	6%
Webinars and individual online events run by external institutions or individuals				
	Primary school n=1,954	General second- ary school n=377	Technical school n=410	Vocational school n=128
Attended once or twice	45%	31%	32%	37%
Attended multiple times	20%	10%	10%	10%

Self-study, webinars, and in-school teacher training were the most commonly practised forms of teacher development across all school types, both for occasional and repeated participation. However, when it comes to repeated participation, primary and general secondary school teachers favoured webinars alongside self-study (20% in primary schools, 10% in general secondary schools), whereas vocational and technical schoolteachers relied more heavily on in-school teacher training.

Among teachers who did not take part in specific forms of professional development but would like to participate in them in the future, the greatest share was among general secondary school teachers. One exception was in-person workshops, where the highest percentage of non-participants expressing interest was among vocational schoolteachers.

Consultations with specialists were the form of support that most teachers did not use but were open to this type of support – this claim was expressed by 34% of primary school teachers and 40% of vocational schoolteachers. The second most appealing form for non-participants was in-person training sessions and workshops, with interest declared by 29% of primary school teachers and 38% of vocational schoolteachers.

In terms of the length of teaching experience, statistical correlations are observed for four types of support: workshops, webinars, postgraduate studies, and in-school teacher training ($p < 0.05$), [Appendix 3, Table 16a-b]:

- The most experienced teachers (over 40 years of work) were the least likely to use one-off workshop support (22%). However, a relatively high percentage of this group expressed interest in pursuing postgraduate studies (25% compared to 9–13% among mid-career teachers).
- At the same time, experienced teachers (with over 30 years of work) were the most likely to participate in webinars (63% compared to 55–57% among less experienced teachers). A similar trend was observed for in-school teacher training (59% compared to 49–53% among younger teachers).
- The youngest teachers had the least experience of all teacher groups in using various forms of professional development related to student integration and cultural diversity, with participation rates

ranging from 36% to 64%. One exception was postgraduate studies – although relatively few teachers enrolled in them, a higher proportion of younger teachers took advantage of this option (7% of teachers with less than 20 years of experience compared to 3–4% in older groups).

There is a correlation between the intensity of contact with foreign students and participation in various forms of professional development ($p < 0.05$) [Appendix 3, Table 17]. **Teachers with more experience working with foreign students were more likely to participate in different forms of training.** For in-person workshops, the difference was 11 percentage points: 29% of teachers working with up to 5 foreign students reported occasional participation, compared to 40% in the most experienced group. This suggests that experience with foreign students motivated teachers to seek and use diverse forms of support.

Professional Development Topics

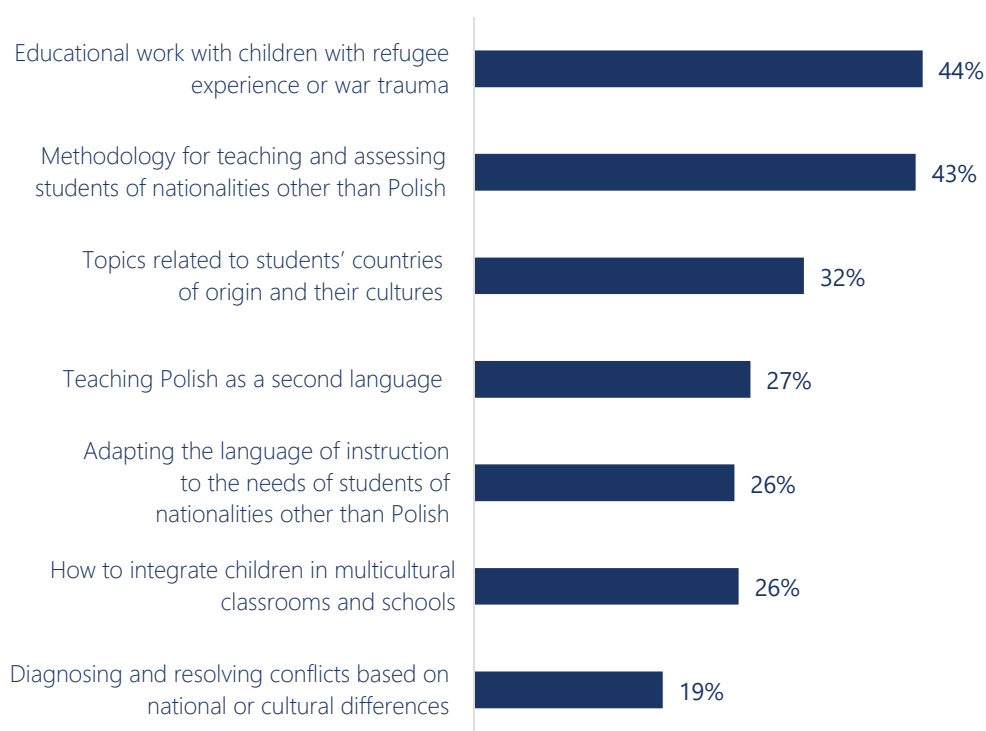
Professional development in the area of multiculturalism, as undertaken by teachers, most often focused on working with children with refugee backgrounds (44%) and teaching methodology (43%).

Interestingly, although class integration was previously identified as the most important skill for working in a multicultural classroom, it was a topic explored in professional development by only a quarter of teachers. A similar pattern was observed with adapting the language of instruction – despite the language barrier being highlighted as the main challenge in multicultural classrooms, only a quarter of teachers pursued training in this area. At the same time, when assessing their own competencies, teachers rated both of these skills highly.

On the other hand, conflict resolution, which teachers rated as the third weakest competency in their self-assessment, was the least frequently covered topic in professional development. Only 19% of teachers reported participating in training on this subject.

What was the topic of professional development activities in the area of student integration and cultural diversity that you participated in over the past two years?

n=2413



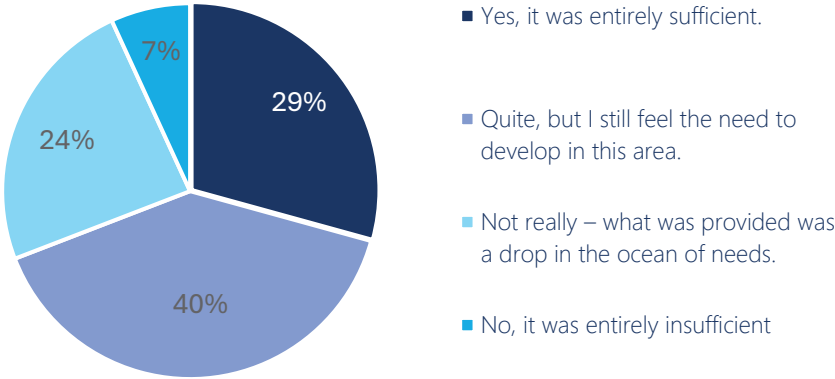
The topics of professional development varied depending on the type of school in which the teacher worked ($p < 0.05$), [Appendix 3 Table 18]. General secondary school teachers were the group most likely to indicate training in teaching methodology and assessment (50%), knowledge about the refugee students' countries of origin (38%), and diagnosing conflicts related to nationality (23%). On the other hand, primary school teachers most often pursued development in the area of educational care for children with refugee backgrounds (49%) as well as teaching and assessment methodology (44%).

There is a relationship between the intensity of teachers' contact with foreign students and the topics covered in their professional development, but only in the area of educational care for students with refugee or war trauma experiences. The larger the group of foreign students a teacher worked with, the more likely they were to seek support in this area – from 44% among teachers working with up to five students to 67% among those teaching over 50 students.

Support efficiency

Most teachers (69%) were satisfied with the support they received for professional development over the past two years in the areas of integration and working in multicultural classrooms. In this group, the majority were teachers who still wished to expand their knowledge (57% of those satisfied, 40% of the entire sample). Another 31% believed that the support they received was insufficient.

Was the professional development support you received over the last 2 years sufficient for you?
n=2413



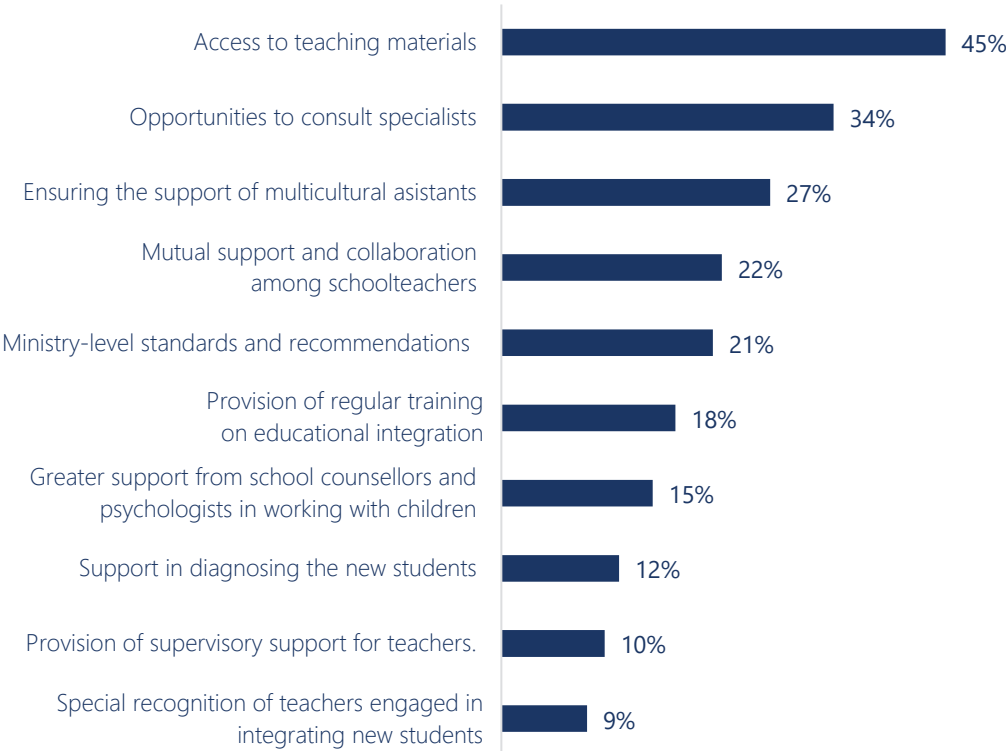
The assessment of professional support varied depending on the type of school in which the teacher worked ($p < 0.05$), [Appendix 3, Table 19]. **Primary school teachers tended to be more critical compared to respondents in other types of schools** – 27% of them deemed the support as adequate. The highest level of satisfaction with the support received (39%) was expressed by vocational schoolteachers. Among primary school teachers, there was also the highest proportion of respondents who believed that the available support was just 'a drop in the ocean' of what is needed (25%). At the same time, primary school teachers, followed by vocational schoolteachers, were more likely to indicate the need for further development in this area (41% and 39%, respectively) than their colleagues in technical schools (34%).

What Type of Support Do Teachers Need?

In terms of resources needed to support work in multicultural classrooms, teachers most frequently pointed to teaching materials, such as lesson plans, textbooks, and worksheets (45%). The second most commonly identified need was the support of a specialist in the education of students with migration and refugee backgrounds (34%), followed by the support of an intercultural assistant (27%). Slightly more than one in five teachers (22%) expressed a need for greater mutual support within the teaching staff – regular discussions and the sharing of good practices within staff meetings or subject and class teacher teams. A similar group (21%) indicated the need for support from the Ministry of National Education, specifically in terms of setting guidelines and standards for working with students with migration and refugee backgrounds, such as implementing the curriculum, assessing, and classifying students.

What would you need to strengthen the quality of your work with students with migration or refugee experience?

n=2735



In-service trainings and workshops ranked in the middle of the list of various forms of support – there were several other forms of assistance that teachers valued more highly. When it comes to training, it is important to consider teachers’ length of work, as there is a significant correlation ($p < 0.05$) between teaching experience and the demand for in-service training support. The older the teacher, the lower the percentage indicating this form of support as necessary (declining from 27% to 18%).

The type of school where teachers worked also influenced their expectations regarding different forms of support ($p < 0.05$) [Appendix 3, Table 20]:

- **The demand for in-service trainings and consultations with specialists was more frequently expressed by teachers in all types of secondary schools** than in primary schools (30% of vocational schoolteachers compared to 20% in primary schools).
- **The need for ministerial standards was most commonly highlighted by teachers in general secondary schools and technical schools** (33% and 26%, respectively).
- **Support from an assistant was most expected by primary school teachers** (35%) and least by vocational schoolteachers (14%). This may be linked to the greater presence of co-teachers and teacher aides in primary schools, leading to a familiarity with having an additional adult in the classroom.

The intensity of contact with foreign students differentiated teachers' expectations regarding four forms of support ($p < 0.05$) [Appendix 3, Table 21]:

- Access to teaching materials: Teachers working with 20 to 50 foreign students stood out here, having reported a lower need for teaching materials (38%) compared to the overall sample (45%).
- External support of an assistant: This was most sought after by teachers working with more than 50 foreign students (45% compared to 27% for the overall sample).
- Provision of in-school pedagogical/psychological support: This area showed the greatest variation among teachers. Those teaching over 50 foreign students expressed very little need for such support (8%), whereas 26% of teachers working with 20 to 50 non-Polish students indicated a clear need.
- Recognition of teachers' efforts: This was far more often supported by teachers working with over 50 students (20%) than by those with less experience (9% among the least experienced group).



Recommendations

1. **Educational authorities, including the Ministry of Education and regional boards of education, should actively communicate the critical importance of welcoming and integrating foreign students into Polish schools.** This should be accompanied by clear explanations of the long-term educational, social, and cultural benefits such integration offers, not only to the students themselves but also to the broader school community. This approach fulfils the Polish state's obligations to all children residing in Poland, while also fostering social cohesion and enriching the educational experience for all students
2. **Educational authorities, including the Ministry of Education and regional boards of education) should continuously encourage teachers to actively participate in professional development initiatives** with a specific focus on equipping them to work in culturally diverse classrooms. This should be integrated as a key priority in national educational policy for the 2025/2026 school year.
3. **Teachers must receive tailored, flexible support to build their competencies in culturally diverse classrooms, addressing their unique needs and openness.** This support should include blended approaches, including practical resources, online sessions, expert consultations, and continuous, process-driven school support.
4. **Teachers should be provided with integrated support to improve their competencies in working with culturally diverse classrooms, combined with general methodological guidance.** For example, support could focus on assessing all students with diverse knowledge and skills, rather than focusing only on those with migration backgrounds. This broader approach would likely boost teachers' interest and engagement in the support offered which would ultimately benefitting the entire school community.
5. **Teachers in secondary schools, particularly those preparing students for the school leaving exam** (so-called 'matura exam'), must receive targeted methodological support. As fewer foreign students attend up to this level of education, integration becomes more challenging in secondary schools, as training opportunities have largely focused on primary school teachers.
6. **Support for teachers working in culturally diverse classrooms should encompass not only training but also clear guidelines, recommendations, interpretations of regulations** (e.g., on assessment), ready-to-use materials for working with students, and examples of best practices.
7. **Teachers should receive special focus on language instruction as part of their training for working in culturally diverse classrooms.** Teachers need to be made aware of the role all educators play in teaching the language of education and simplifying instructions and develop their skills in this area.

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