

## KEY CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

More than 200,000 children and adolescents from Ukraine are learning in Polish schools - over 152 thousand are boys and girls fleeing the war in Ukraine, and 51,000 are migrants who arrived in Poland before February 2022.

Since the introduction of compulsory education for school-age children in September 2024<sup>1</sup>, there have been an increase in the number of pupils in the Polish education system by more than 18 thousand. This is a much smaller increase than forecast by the Ministry of Education and organizations and institutions supporting the inclusion of refugees from Ukraine into the Polish Education system.

The increase in the number of students is distributed unevenly. In primary schools, it is an increase of only 6.8 thousand, which is about 6% more than the previous school year (a total of 112.5 thousand students). In secondary schools, on the other hand, it is an increase of 11.2 thousand, or as much as 40% over the previous school year (a total of 39.8 thousand).

In primary schools, the largest increases in the number of students are observed in grades V through VIII, while in secondary schools in grades II and III. With high probability, it can be assumed that these are students who previously studied online in the Ukrainian system or have remained out of school.

About 22,4 thousand (about 15%) of the refugee students from Ukraine who are currently studying in Polish schools are newly enrolled students (not studying at the end of the previous school year in any institution of the Polish education system). It can be concluded that majority of them entered the education system because they no longer had the possibility to continue compulsory schooling in the Ukrainian online system.

A comparison of SIO and Social Security data (ZUS), although with limitations as data collection methods of both institutions differ, shows that the number of students on whom the 800+ benefit is collected is almost equal to the number of children in the education system. Therefore, assumptions can be made and say that children from Ukrainian families who receive 800+ are actually studying in a Polish school.

The increase in the number of 800+ benefits paid out (compared to March 2024) is observed mainly among adolescents - over 15 years of age. The largest number of new PESEL numbers are also issued in this group. It is likely that this increase can be partly attributed to teenage boys who are trying to avoid having to stay in Ukraine due to the ban on men aged 18-60 from leaving the country.



<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that, according to the new law, students in the final grade of the Ukrainian online education system are exempt from compulsory education in the Polish educational system.

The presence of pupils from Ukraine in the Polish education system is widespread - they learn in 58% of Polish schools (almost 12,5 thousand). In the current school year, students from Ukraine have appeared in an additional 335 schools, where they have not been present in the last school year.

About 70 percent of refugee students enrolled in secondary schools are studying in technical or vocational schools. This is about 15 percentage points higher than for Polish students. This could be the result of the students' own decisions to get a profession and enter the labour market faster. It could also be linked to the consequences of the selection process following the eighth-grade exam, for which the adjustments for Ukrainian students in the previous school year remained limited.

Only 2.4 percent of refugee students from Ukraine study in preparatory classes, with no such classes functioning in four voivodeships. Meanwhile, preparatory classes are an important part of preparing the Polish education system for the possibility of another arrival of new refugees to Poland, resulting from further escalation of the war in Ukraine or conflicts in other countries.

Despite changes in the education law reducing the number of hours of Polish as a second language taught per week from 6 to 4 (meant to encourage participation) - the number of refugee students taking advantage of this form of support has again dropped. Only slightly more than 42% of Ukrainian refugee students are learning Polish as a foreign language (down from almost 60%). This change is alarming as the knowledge of Polish is a prerequisite for educational success in the Polish system and the success of integration. Instead of a gradual increase in interest in these lessons, we observe fluctuations between school semesters in the number of students attending. It is important to find the key factors impacting this situation and take measures to ensure high accessibility, quality, and uptake of these classes.