

# CULTURALLY DIVERSE SCHOOL

## Challenges and needs stemming from the arrival of Ukrainian students

Qualitative research report commissioned  
by The Center for Citizenship Education

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August 2022



This report is based on **over 100 interviews** conducted in **six schools** – elementary and above-elementary, hosting refugee students from Ukraine. The interviews' participants included Ukrainian and Polish students, their parents, school principals, pedagogues and psychologists, intercultural assistants, technical staff, representatives of the school's close environment. Fieldwork was conducted in May and June 2022.

The breakout of the war and the varied support provided to refugees was an opportunity for school communities to come together. Most of the actions were based on the spontaneous involvement of the employees, students and their parents; such grassroots initiatives were the driving factor behind the support given to refugee students also during the fieldwork.

**The factors that help acclimatisation** of Ukrainian students in the first period were the school's prior experience in working with foreigner students, having Ukrainian or Russian speakers on staff, and the presence of Ukrainian students from the pre-war migration. In the case of schools with no such prior experience, the process of taking on new students was spontaneous and largely depended on the competencies and motivations of individual teachers.

On the other hand, **one example of a negative influence** across many levels was the refugees' high mobility, resulting in their continued migration or return to Ukraine.

**There were many different strategies tied to accepting students to the schools and classes** – some included systemic diagnoses and support, keeping consistent proportions between Polish and foreign students in classes, or simply automatically placing students in the least crowded classes. Large schools, with a larger (proportionally) number of refugees, applied more thought-through strategies. The students themselves talk about a sense of alienation, stress and the language barrier when entering a new environment. At the same time, their Polish peers experienced difficult emotions tied to the breakout of the war and sudden changes in their school.

**What definitely makes it difficult to connect** with Polish students is the tendency for creating relatively enclosed, Ukrainian groups, whenever there is a larger group of refugee students in a given class. In this sense, the strategy for placing a larger group of Ukrainians in one class (because, i.e. that class has a teacher who speaks the language or is experienced in working with foreign students) is unhelpful.

Even in the schools that tried to support teachers by finding and photocopying materials, developing lesson scripts, offering training sessions at the school or providing teacher self-help activities, **there was a serious issue with access to coursebooks, exercise books and worksheets for some subjects**, in particular sciences, or materials for learning Polish as a second language. Most of the materials used required extensive effort and time from the teachers.

Principals and teachers declare they **would like to learn more about the Ukrainian education system**, especially focusing on differences in the curriculum.

Instances of **conflicts between Polish and Ukrainian students** described by teachers and students, were only incidental. They were perceived as part of the “normal” processes taking place among young people, not rooted in the context of nationality. Nevertheless, some tensions are visible in the statements of Polish students and their parents, moreover, the teachers seem to lack competence when it comes to solving conflicts that may be on grounds of nationality or ethnicity.

**The lack of psychological-pedagogical support** for Ukrainian students is one of the most serious issues we have observed. The reason is the shortage of specialists who speak Ukrainian or Russian, as well as the cultural barriers. School staff are aware of the potential trauma of the refugees, but at the same time they lack tools for diagnosis and therapy. The most commonly adapted solution is to try and create a sense of “normalcy”. Teachers declare they need to raise their competencies in such areas as diagnosing and reacting to difficult emotions and to recognise situations that threaten the emotional safety of students or situations that would warrant specialised interventions.

One solution that helps overcome the challenge of providing a sense of emotional security (to students and teachers), to cope with cultural differences, and to support educational processes and to streamline school–parent interactions, is the **institution of the intercultural assistant/ assistant to the foreign child**. The issue, however, is the lack of systemic solutions (in the schools participating in this study, the assistants were hired only thanks to NGOs), long-term planning or contracting the work of the assistants and extremely low pay.

Teachers and principals understand very well that effective integration into the educational system requires **cultural and social integration**. They rarely seem to focus on avoiding assimilation and preserving the cultural identity of the newly arrived students.

**The predominant mindset is that the Polish and Ukrainian cultures are very much alike. Such a presupposition can result in the failure to notice the significant cultural differences.** At the same time, Ukrainian students stress the numerous differences as far as school culture is concerned. Attempts at cross-cultural education are sporadic, limited only to facade aspects (Ukrainian cuisine day), or incidentally focused on a single aspect on geography or nature classes. Moreover, teachers assume that Ukrainian students would be highly involved, without prior identification of their needs or even without providing them with a sense of security. This also works the other way – besides integrated teaching, Ukrainians have few opportunities to learn more about Polish culture at school.



**What helps Polish and Ukrainian students connect and bond in the classroom** is using group tasks with mixed-background participants, creating opportunities for spending time outside the classroom (outings, field trips, out-of-school classes – especially sports or art).

**What makes integration harder:** having too many refugee students in one class, preferential treatment (grading) of newly arrived students, teachers and form tutors failing to facilitate such connections, lack of competencies in the area of conflict-solving and countering discrimination.

**When looking at the activities organised by the whole school or the local communities,** we see a limited (or non-existent) offer of free time activities for Ukrainian students. After-school interactions are largely limited to one's national group; the fact that Ukrainian students are also burdened by simultaneous online classes in Ukraine does not help motivate them to participate in such after-school activities.

**The Ukrainian students' experience of the Polish school is as diverse as the group itself.** Personal characteristics, such as motivation, the amount of material they learned in Ukraine, character traits, learning styles all of these aspects determined their deeper or more superficial integration in the area of education. On the other hand, we see two repeating and potentially unhelpful elements in the attitudes of Polish teachers. First of all, the model of the "quiet, polite, ambitious" student, and secondly, the lack of understanding for students not committed to learning. The primary barrier, however, is language – not just on a level that enables communication but which would make it possible to participate in the educational processes fully.

**Based on our observations, the student's gender does not impact the course of integration.** The differences came down to seeking relations within one gender group, especially among younger students, and the specific nature of interests rooted in broader gender scripts. **On the other hand, age was a significant differentiating factor** – integration was much easier for the youngest students.

**Preparatory classes** turned out to be a solution ensuring a sense of emotional security; it was also helpful for learning Polish, catching up with any curriculum differences and introducing the student to the Polish educational culture. On many levels, the preparatory classes also made work easier for the teachers. At the same time, they reduced the opportunities for connecting with Polish students, whereas the age differences lead to tensions and conflicts. Some students reported problems adapting to mixed classes. From the teachers' perspective, the challenges included varied ages of the students and the resultant necessity to work with several curricula at the same time, the extra workload and the lack of clear guidelines on how to run preparatory classes in the next school year.

**In mixed classes** (with numerous exceptions), the process that we have observed does not take into consideration the needs of the Ukrainian student. The issues caused by the language barrier were particularly bothersome in this case. As a result, Ukrainian students were given tasks that were unsuited to their level of knowledge and capabilities. This was further worsened by the controversies tied to using Russian, spoken by many teachers, and the concerns tied to using English.

What helped mitigate these problems was providing students with an intense Polish language course, teachers being open to communicating in various languages (including English), the help of assistants and volunteers who speak Ukrainian, simplifying instructions and using verbal and written communication at the same time, diagnosing educational needs, using group work, goals and success criteria of lessons, referring to the students' experiences and using inclusive educational elements, as well as using formative assessments.

According to the widely held opinion of the teachers, Polish students and their parents, **the inflow of migrants to their classrooms hasn't had a negative impact on education quality.** However, numerous concerns are raised about the future, especially in the final grades, among parents of children with diagnosed learning difficulties or disabilities, and in classes that large groups of Ukrainian students were placed into.

**Principals and teachers have high expectations of the Ministry of Education with regards to guidelines for schoolwork in the next school year and the support offering for schools.** Teachers frequently state they expect the Ministry to specify the grading rules further and to provide more information on how to work with foreign students. It is worth adding that the preferential grading of Ukrainian students, used commonly by many teachers, lead to tensions in their relations with Polish students.

Ukrainian students **very commonly participate in online classes at their Ukrainian schools.** This is due to the need for uninterrupted education in the Ukrainian system and to stay in touch with their local community. As a result, the students are dealing with an increased workload, and their attendance in Polish schools suffers.

Principals and teachers mostly **believe that Ukrainian students are not prepared for taking external exams** (the end of the elementary school exam and the Matura – the end of the secondary school exam). The basic obstacle is the lack of a proper command of Polish and having spent relatively little time in Polish schools.

**Cooperation with Ukrainian parents is based on school employees that know Ukrainian or Russian.** In actuality, there are few places for interaction; participation in parent-teacher meetings is limited due to the language barrier. For many Ukrainian parents, it was challenging to use the standard school communication tools, such as the electronic grade book or e-mail. This is further worsened by the limited availability of the parents due to their jobs or the need to care for other family members. Cooperation with the parents was much closer in schools that have preparatory classes.

The study presented in this report constitutes the first stage of a project supporting schools that accept students from Ukraine, carried out by the Center for Citizenship Education (Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej).

The study's goals were as follows:

- Exploring the needs and tensions in school communities hosting refugee students from Ukraine.
- Providing data needed for planning long-term support of students from Ukraine, including an offering for principals, teachers, and comprehensive support for schools in the coming school year and to develop a “Model for educational integration of migrants into the school community”.

This report constitutes an attempt at describing the needs and solutions used in the situation of a rapid inflow of foreign students to schools. The study was conducted in May and June 2022. It was a unique moment – the ending of a vast, societal surge of activity caused by the Russian aggression on Ukraine. Many of the solutions that we have seen, were spontaneous and ad-hoc. It seems that longer-lasting mechanisms are forming at present. As we are closing the data analysis stage right before the start of the new school year, we are sure that it will differ significantly from the end of the previous one. Still, the data acquired may provide a basis for rationalising actions and can contribute to improving the situation of Ukrainian students, their Polish peers, and the faculties.



The study was carried out by a Polish-Ukrainian team comprised of: Magdalena Tędziągolska, dr hab. Bartłomiej Walczak, Anna Żelazowska-Kosiorek and Anna Biernat, Małanka Junko, dr Kamil Wielecki, dr Oksana Tashkinova

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We offer our heartfelt thanks to the PLAN International team for working together on the conceptualisation of this project and to the schools that expressed their willingness to participate.

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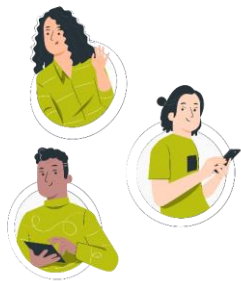
6 CASE  
STUDIES

OVER:  
100  
INTERVIEWS

150  
RESPONDENTS

14 DAYS SPENT  
AT SCHOOLS

### WITHIN EACH CASE STUDY



#### 1. ETHNOGRAPHY

Observation  
Observation study  
Informal conversations



#### 2. INTERVIEWS

School principal, teachers,  
pedagogue/ psychologist, PL and  
UKR students, PL and UKR parents,  
non-pedagogical staff, school  
environment: NGO, JST, etc.



#### 3. PHOTO-STORIES and DIARIES

Teachers and students

We conducted the study in the final days of May and June 2022, in six schools, located in various parts of Poland, including:

- 3 elementary schools, 3 secondary schools
- 3 schools had preparatory classes
- 4 schools located in cities with over 100 K residents, two – in towns of under 50 K residents

**AREAS OF INTEGRATION**

The **educational** area pertains to participation in educational processes.

The **cultural** area refers to the awareness of norms and culture specifics, including language.

The **social** area refers to relations with other social actors. Therefore, it extends to the area of emotional security.

The **political** area relates to agency in shaping one's school environment.

**PRE-WAR AND POST-WAR MIGRATION**

The report differentiates between processes described in reference to migration before and after February 24th, 2022. Due to the lack of information about the respondents' status, the term "migrant" and "refugee" are used interchangeably.

**PREPARATORY AND MIXED CLASSES**

In the report, we refer to two models – separative and integrative (see Todorovska-Sokolovska 2009, Iglicka, Gmaj, Walczak, 2013). As much as the concept of a "preparatory" (or transitional) class should be clear, calling a class where foreign students work together with their peers from the host country "integrative" could make reading the report more difficult. Firstly, due to the fact the report frequently refers to the concept of integration, secondly, due to the specific functioning of the concept "integrative classroom" in the Polish educational system. This is why we have opted for the label "mixed class".

**INTERCULTURAL ASSISTANTS**

To make the terminology more uniform, we have decided to label persons from Ukraine hired to support refugee students "assistants"/ "intercultural assistants". However, it is essential to note that specialised literature (and the schools themselves) also refers to such a role as "refugee child/ student assistant" or even "Ukrainian student assistant".

**VERBATIM LABELS**

Quotes are labelled with three-part codes. The first part refers to the school (i.e. CS), the second one – the method (i.e. IDI), whereas the third – the category of respondents (i.e. Ukr teacher – Teacher from Ukraine).

To eliminate the risk of identifying respondents or their institutions, codes of schools or individual respondents were removed from the labels.

**GRAPHICS AND PHOTO SOURCES**

Title page photo: pexels.com

Pictures in the report: materials from the research

Graphics: storyset.com

**NAVIGATION**

Press **B** any time you need to go to the table of contents.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

In the process of developing the recommendations, we have divided integration policies into four areas:

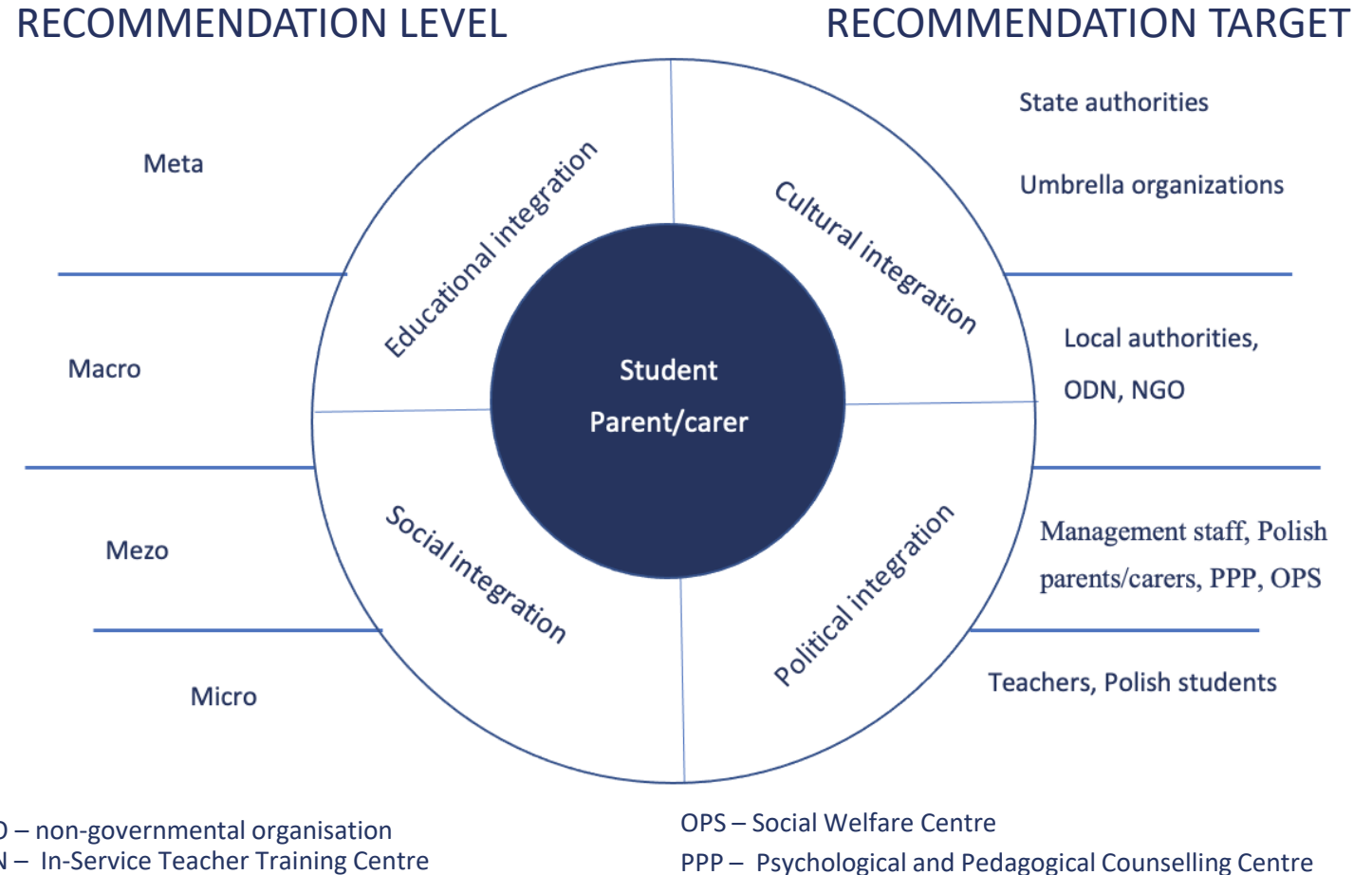
- **Educational** that concerns the process of learning
- **Social**, tied to social relations and emotional security
- **Cultural**, connected to the use of language and internalisation of patterns that govern school functioning
- **Political**, related to having an impact on the functioning of the school community.

These areas overlap and create a hierarchy. According to the data acquired in the course of the study, effective integration into the educational area requires prior action in the fields of social and cultural integration. On the other hand, what helps integration in the political area, is the amount of time spent in the host country and having overcome barriers in other areas.

Based on the scope of impact, we have differentiated the following levels for the implementation of integration policies:

- **Micro** – classroom level
- **Mezo** – school community/ small local community level
- **Macro** – local government-level, exceeding beyond direct interactions
- **Meta** –central and European level

## AREAS AND SUBJECT OF RECOMMENDATIONS



## MICRO LEVEL

Classroom, teacher, students

- Raising the teachers' qualifications in the area of multicultural education, working with foreign students and trauma diagnosis
- Providing form tutors with lesson scripts and materials in both languages
- Preparing students to receive the refugees and to say goodbye to them
- Introducing peer "buddies" for newly accepted students. Preparing the students for this role and supervision
- Creating a space for international contacts during the lessons (working in mixed groups, projects together)

## MEZO LEVEL

School, school community, psychological and pedagogical counselling centres, social welfare centres

- Raising awareness regarding current legislative solutions among the principals
- School introducing anti-discrimination education (every teacher and school employee and parents targeted by activities aimed at rising competencies in the field of preventing discrimination).
- Developing and implementing school-wide procedures for admitting foreign students to the class
- Enabling principals and teachers to network and share information on practical solutions.
- Including Ukrainian students into extracurriculum activities, including the organisation of Polish-Ukrainian art and sport classes
- Conducting an initial diagnosis and sharing results with the form tutors
- Polish-Ukrainian parent pairs: the Polish parent is responsible for supporting the Ukrainian parent in the area of functioning at the school, contacts with the school, or a Polish parent – animator – choosing one person responsible for contacts with parents from Ukraine
- Including Ukrainian teachers into the faculty: starting cooperating with other teachers, sharing experiences
- Planning a friendly space at school for Ukrainian students, i.e. text in Ukrainian, information on the culture and history of Ukraine
- "By the way" integration, not a "forced" kind – including/ inviting Ukrainian students to partake in different school activities (volunteering, student council, school festivals)
- Including parents into the class community by making it a standard that they are invited to meetings and adding them to class groups on IM applications
- Offering parents support with respect to organising life in Poland (language courses, job offers, qualification courses)
- Implementing a school policy of transparent communication with Polish and Ukrainian parents in order to address their concerns tied to their children's education whenever they arise



<p><b>MACRO LEVEL</b></p> <p>Local authorities, In-service teacher training centers, NGO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Streamlining psychological-pedagogical aid – hiring translators or specialists that speak Ukrainian and developing tools for diagnosing foreign students</li> <li>• Developing effective methods for communicating the psychological-pedagogical offering for Ukrainian families and teachers (language of benefits)</li> <li>• Introducing assistants as a standard solution in a multicultural school</li> <li>• Offering training seminars for intercultural assistants and teachers from Ukraine</li> <li>• NGO and In-service teacher training centers offering for schools in such areas as multicultural education, working with foreign students and anti-discrimination education promoted with a language of benefits</li> </ul>
<p><b>META LEVEL</b></p> <p>State authorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of systemic solutions in the area of psychological-pedagogical and assistant support</li> <li>• Shorter response time of state-level authorities to challenges as they emerge</li> <li>• Developing standardised tools for an initial diagnosis, together with a manual</li> <li>• Social campaigns directed at people from Ukraine to promote the use of psychological support</li> </ul>

## MICRO LEVEL

Classroom, teacher, students

- Preparing teachers to work with a class that is varied on such competencies as language and grasp of the material, but also of mixed ages: increasing competencies in this field, delivering tools
- Work organisation of the lessons for faster Polish learning, i.e. working in groups in mixed classes, learning Polish as a second language in smaller groups
- Learning Polish as a foreign language - including both the language of communication and education (subject vocabulary, instruction) in the curriculum.
- Applying formative assessment strategies and techniques – working with lesson goals, feedback, in groups, feedback from colleagues, etc.

## MEZO LEVEL

School, school community, psychological and pedagogical counselling centres, social welfare centres

- Developing a system for acquiring information from parents about the plans of Ukrainian families and taking these into consideration when planning teaching (i.e. dividing into language groups depending on needs: intensive Polish course vs basic Polish just for day-to-day needs)
- Developing (as part of the school grading system) and/ or communicating a system for grading Ukraine students, informing stakeholders about changing rules for crediting students from Ukraine
- In the preparatory classes: developing an effective system for students to leave preparatory classes and join mixed classes (communication and cooperation between teachers)
- Matching the Polish language classes given to the actual needs of the students, more types of classes dedicated to Ukrainian students
- Consultations for students and parents regarding their educational path options
- Informing Polish students and parents about the course of the education, actions intended to ensure teaching the full program, and “timely” preparation for exams
- Enabling Ukrainian students to pursue their interests as part of out-of-school classes

<p><b>MACRO LEVEL</b></p> <p>Local authorities, In-service teacher training centres, NGO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher Training Center and NGOs with an offering for teachers on how to work with a class that is varied on such competencies as language and grasp of the material, but also varied on age</li> <li>• In-service training offer for teachers from Ukraine</li> <li>• An offer for schools to apply formative assessment in a multicultural school</li> </ul>
<p><b>META LEVEL</b></p> <p>State authorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guidelines from the Ministry of Education and Science on such matters as grading criteria, passing criteria for Ukrainian students, minimum material requirements</li> <li>• A clear comparison of the priorities of the Polish and Ukrainian education systems, together with the differences in the respective curricula</li> <li>• Coursebooks and other didactic materials on a level that is well-suited to the students (including materials for teaching Polish as a foreign language), which consider work in mixed-age groups and learning of the language of "everyday communication" as well as "the language of education"(subject terminology, instructions)</li> <li>• More Polish classes for all students from Ukraine, including pre-war migrants</li> <li>• Putting together and disseminating good practices, experiences of schools on such aspects as standards in running preparatory classes and legal solutions (a "handbook" for principals)</li> <li>• Flexibility as a principle of support for students – the scope of the support needs to follow from a diagnosis of needs (i.e. choosing between additional Polish and additional math classes)</li> <li>• Supporting students make up on any differences in the curricula (i.e. extra classes for consultations, activities)</li> </ul>

<p>MICRO LEVEL</p> <p>Classroom, teacher, students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving students space for expressing their cultural values (i.e. on such classes as geography, history, art or form period)</li> <li>• Carrying out youth initiatives tied to raising awareness on Polish and Ukrainian cultures so that the content and form consider the preferences of a young target; enabling them to learn more about youth culture</li> <li>• Helping improve command of Polish by organising two or three-month-long preparatory classes</li> <li>• Raising the Polish students' and teachers' awareness regarding multicultural education, staying mindful of the problem of Polonization</li> </ul>
<p>MEZO LEVEL</p> <p>School, school community, psychological and pedagogical counselling centres, social welfare centres</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School event calendar should consider events significant for Ukrainian culture, including religious holidays</li> <li>• Introducing activities (lessons or extracurricular) for preserving Ukrainian identity</li> <li>• Teaching students and teachers basic Ukrainian phrases (i.e. "dictionaries" in the school or given to students, basics courses)</li> <li>• School's cooperation with the local environment – seeking and developing an offer for students and their families (i.e. career advice, classes for pursuing interests, temporary jobs, etc.)</li> </ul>
<p>MACRO LEVEL</p> <p>Local authorities, In-service teacher training centres, NGO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointing a commune/ city-level coordinator in charge of temporarily relocated students</li> <li>• Supporting Ukrainian organisations and giving them easier access to schools</li> </ul>
<p>META LEVEL</p> <p>State authorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a base of expert-reviewed scripts and materials regarding multicultural education</li> <li>• Spreading information on the possibility to organise Ukrainian language classes</li> </ul>

<p>MICRO LEVEL</p> <p>Classroom, teacher, students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raising awareness among Ukrainian students that they can become more involved in student body council activity</li> <li>• Inviting Ukrainian students to participate in student body council initiatives, volunteer clubs (changing their position from recipient of aid to donor, more empowerment)</li> </ul>
<p>MEZO LEVEL</p> <p>School, school community, psychological and pedagogical counselling centres, social welfare centres</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informing parents about parent associations, inviting them to meetings with the parental council or school council</li> <li>• Looking for other forms of contact than electronic (phone, messengers, traditional notes given by students)</li> </ul>
<p>MACRO LEVEL</p> <p>Local authorities, In-service teacher training centres, NGO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating a council of parents of temporarily relocated students with direct access to the local educational authorities</li> </ul>
<p>META LEVEL</p> <p>State authorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparing an info-pack about the Polish educational system for Ukrainian parents in their language</li> </ul>



# The school in the face of the refugee crisis

*Sekretariat*

*Dyrektor*  
mgr [redacted]



The breakout of war in Ukraine was accompanied by an outpouring of compassion and desire to help, together with concerns and some degree of paternalism.

Schools began organising aid events to raise various kinds of resources (money, items).

Support for Ukrainian students was provided based on the following:

- own resources of the school and its community
- resources available in an – often informal – network of contacts
- support of local government units, NGOs, business

These actions were (and in many cases still are) spontaneous.



The aid and solidarity events, besides supporting the refugees themselves, became **an opportunity for rallying** the community of the school or even the local community at large.

”

*This situation unleashed **all the goodness** dwelling in the students, parents and teachers. (CS IDI princ)*

In certain locations, the help was also organised together with local government institutions, NGOs, businesses, as well as “ordinary” citizens. Regardless of the actions aimed at the outside (i.e. for relocation centres), **communities everywhere would undertake actions for the newly-received students and their families**, providing them with clothes, coursebooks, school accessories, PE clothes or meals in school cafeterias. In one of the schools, this was financed by the teachers, whereas in another – by local businessmen. Parents and students would widely join the initiatives (as organisers and donors).

”

*The faculty and the youths were moved to the core. Shocked that this happened in the 21st situation [...] Literally the same day [the war broke out], the students wanted to show unity with Ukraine. We saw Ukrainian national colours, ribbons attached to tops. The student body council started raising food; they started asking for so many things [...] Hard to count what they asked for. [...] And then the Ukrainian kids started coming over to our town. **These children were received so warmly, kindly, beautifully.** (CS IDI teach)*

In the first days and weeks of the war, the inflow of refugees was accompanied by **concerns, less about material support and teaching but more about providing psychological aid** to people traumatised by war.

”

*At first, we thought that it’s not an issue to organise help and to teach Ukrainian kids, we thought that counselling could be an issue [...] **These kids are traumatised, will we be able to handle that?** (CS IDI princ)*

Empathy levels were so high **that it would manifest itself in the language of a kind of paternalism**, perfectly encapsulated in the following quote.

”

*They [Polish students] couldn’t wait! **Everyone wanted to have their own Ukrainian.** They actually fought over it! There was so much empathy in them. (CS IDI PSYCH)*

It is worth taking note, that such narratives among the students were seen by the adults as an **expression of care** and were not viewed as an opportunity to talk about the agency of people fleeing war.



### PRIOR EXPERIENCES AND PREPARATION OF THE TEACHERS

The school's prior experience as an organisation in working with a foreign student is a significant factor. This experience could follow from working with migrant children, as well as Polish students with a lower command of Polish, returning from a stay abroad. We've noticed that such experience had a positive impact, in schools that ran preparatory classes, as well as schools placing students in mixed classes.

"Positive" in this case refers first and foremost to better preparation (and more peace of mind) of the faculty and having procedures in place for working with new arrivals, minimising their stress and facilitating acclimatisation (examples presented on following pages).

It needs to be stressed that prior experience did not always turn out to be relevant or sufficient in contrast with reality. However, such experience surely gave the principals and teachers a sense of security and a good starting point for managing the crisis.

An additional factor that made it easier to go through the initial period, was having teachers that speak Ukrainian or Russian in the faculty.

### ROLE OF PRE-WAR MIGRATION STUDENTS

Ukrainian children from the pre-war migration are a special case. They play a significant role, helping in contacts with the new arrivals. First of all, it is thanks to them that the school (administrators, teachers, staff) had had the experience of working with foreign students. Secondly, the pre-war migrant children helped as translators and intercultural assistants for the war refugees.

”

*At this school, we've already had all kinds of challenging situations with Chechen teenagers, their mentality, the language; there was much of that already. So... We had the stuff to draw upon. (CS IDI psych)*

*You start with helplessness. That's because nobody had any ideas; I mean people don't have any, there are no tips. In my case, it's always been my intuition. I just had to intuitively come up with some rules [on how to work with Ukrainian students in the classroom]. (CS IDI teach)*

### SCHOOLS WITHOUT EXPERIENCE

Schools that had never had foreign children before, and which were about to receive students from Ukraine, found themselves in a new and surprising situation that they had to deal with as it unravelled. The administration, as well as teachers and staff were therefore not prepared to take on these students and did not have their own, developed mechanisms. The process of including children from Ukraine into the activities of the school went spontaneously and in practice depended on specific people

*Our situation is quite comfortable in the sense that we had a Ukrainian girl coming over from another class – she's been with our school for long, and she was acting as the translator.*

*We have another Ukrainian girl here who mostly translates for us, whatever she [new girl from Ukraine] is trying to tell us. (CS FGI Students)*



Returning to Ukraine or continued migration is a process visible in all of the schools tested.

In one of the schools, one-sixth of about 70 refugee students left.

From the school management perspective, staying informed about the students' plans seems very important. On the one hand, this impacts how you work with students, on the other hand – it determines the school's ability to make them feel safe.

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*When we were taking on these kids, I remember asking if they were going to return or stay. Some knew. And I think we could develop a different educational offer for kids that will stay than for the kids that will return. (CS IDI princ)*

*I was saddened to learn that my friend was going to a different city in Poland. (CS student diary Ukr)*

**Directors and teachers** seem to view this mobility as something inevitable and seem helpless towards it. They don't have access to information about the family's plans. It often happens that the families make decisions overnight without informing the school. None of the schools has a system in place for managing information about students relocating.

Because of this temporariness, **teachers** – more or less consciously – are less involved in the teaching and integration of students from Ukraine, especially in mixed classes. They are also tired of constantly seeing new faces and that their work as educators seems like a never-ending chore.



Polish **students** are usually not very emotional about their Ukrainian peers leaving. Perhaps it is due to their relatively short time spent together.

Still, we have observed some examples of a sense of loss. They were particularly visible whenever a student would leave who had high social skills and found integration easy. Their absence was felt by the Polish and Ukrainian students and the teachers. The latter emphasised the important role that such students played in the integration of other Ukrainians.

Whenever their peers would return to their home country, any Ukrainian students from mixed classes that stayed behind found it especially difficult to cope.

#### A STORY FROM ONE OF THE SCHOOLS

In one of the elementary schools, five people from Ukraine were already coming, and only one stayed. Of these five, one person stayed: a boy that “doesn't connect”. Students tried to encourage him to join them after school, but all to no effect. The students would speak English with the previous Ukrainian refugees, friendships were made. According to the student telling the story, there were massive emotional costs tied to accepting new students, investing oneself in relationships with them, then losing them. This could negatively impact their willingness to open up to new people who may join the class in the future.



The solutions applied in the schools participating in the study range from the lack of any systemic approach to conducting an initial diagnosis and planning out the whole process.

It is not the case that only the schools with more experience working with foreign students have systemic solutions.

However, strategy development is not a priority in schools with few Ukrainian students joining.

Interestingly, schools that don't introduce systemic solutions treat this as a conscious strategy – explaining that they want to ensure that students join the school as “naturally” as possible, without any particular “set-up” that would create a distance and be disturbing.

### NO SYSTEMIC SOLUTIONS

- Based on the assumption that the situation is temporary, wanting to wait things out.
- No special procedures and no deeper reflection upon the strategy for integrating and education persons from Ukraine.
- Criteria for placing students in classrooms: minimum interruptions in the functioning of the school

#### Risk/ Challenges

- No student diagnosis
- Individual teachers are overburdened (i.e. teachers appointed by the principal to handle the matter), diluted responsibility.
- Students are placed in classes “at random” without considering their needs.

**Observed in:** schools with few students from Ukraine, mixed classes



### SELECTIVE

- Developing solutions only for chosen stages (ex. finding coursebooks, but no diagnosis “procedure”)
- Criteria for placing students in classrooms: minimum interruptions in the functioning of the school + needs of the students

#### Risk/ Challenges:

- Tasks unevenly distributed among teachers
- Students not always placed in the class that best suits their profile

**Observed in:** schools with various numbers of Ukraine students, mixed classes

### STRUCTURED, MULTI-STAGE PROCESS

- Emotional, social and educational needs of students as the key criterion – starting point
- Thought-through, multi-prong process with specific tools
- The process is worked on by a team (task team, not just individual teachers)
- Preparatory classes have well-established procedures for admitting children to school and for education

#### Risk/ Challenges:

- In preparatory classes: developing an effective system in which students can be placed to mixed classes

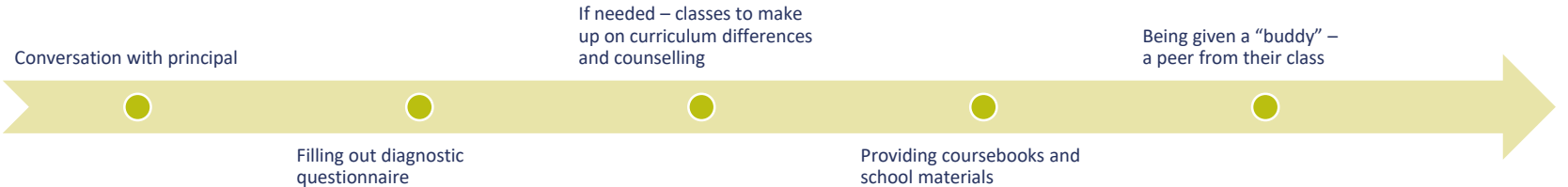
**Observed in:** large schools, with many students from Ukraine, preparatory and mixed classes





### A school with extensive experience working with foreign students and many Ukrainian students

- Established process plan and tool
- Tasks are distributed among teachers, teacher team instead of individual teachers responsible for the task



The process started with a meeting of the parents and the student with the school's principal. During or after that meeting, a diagnostic sheet was filled out (prepared by specialists from the school). This tool provided insight into the needs and competencies of the student, including their competence in using Polish. Results of the diagnosis were given to the form tutor of the class that the new student would be placed in. An initial diagnosis was also the basis for possible material catch-up classes or counselling.

At the same time, actions were underway to secure the student from the material side: thanks to the funds raised by the school, the student was given a set of materials (backpack, accessories and PE clothes) and coursebooks. These tasks were divided among the teachers to avoid excessively burdening one person. In the class, the new student was under the care of a volunteer-peer, a "buddy", who was there to help the student's acclimatisation in the first period.

The form tutor was required to inform the class and other teachers about a new student joining. And he/she was also required to inform the parents using the electronic grade registry.

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*The principal speaks to every single student or parent first... Just to show that every student matters. After that, there's the phone call from the office informing that there's a new student coming and that day we arrive early to greet the student... It was like this whole chain of people involved, from the principal, all the way to the cleaners. (FGI teach)*

*We informed the school library that we need a full set of coursebooks. Then it was the form tutor's decision how to introduce the new student to the class. It is important though that the child knows 1-2 people beforehand, remembers their names and that the student can ask them anything if needed. (IDI psych)*

Let us examine one of the elements of the admission strategy of Ukrainian students into Polish schools: placing students into classrooms. Schools that did not use preparatory classes had varied criteria for placing students in the classes:

- student's age
- how many students are in the class
- whether the form tutor knows Russian
- presence of pre-war migration Ukrainian children (as support)

Surprisingly, age was not always the first criterion. As a result, there were sometimes classes where 14-year-olds and 17-year-olds studied together.

### FINAL YEAR OF SCHOOL

The last grades (8th grade of elementary school and 4th grade of secondary school) are a special case. We have observed cases where schools avoided placing students in these classes. The reason given was the desire to protect refugees from exam anxiety. Arriving two and a half months before the end-of-school exams, usually with no command of Polish, they had no chance of mastering the exam material.

The problem of the impact that accepting such a student and allowing them to take the exam would have had on the school's place in the Poland-wide school ranking was never mentioned – although it could be an implicit criterion.



*The only thing the principal avoided was placing anyone in the 8th grade, as they have the exams. (CS IDI office)*

### DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS WITH PARENTS

It was sometimes challenging to convince Ukrainian parents to agree to send their child to a lower grade than the child should attend according to their Ukrainian education system. Teachers stressed it would be helpful to have a simple tool – a comparison of the Polish and Ukrainian education system, that would enable simply explaining the proposition to the parents.



*They are in 6th grade, but they should be in 5th. On a mental level, it is an issue to go down one level. We've had many of these unhappy people when we took a child to a lower grade. Once or twice we decided to give in to what the parents were saying, and in both cases this was a mistake. But sometimes, we just lack arguments. (CS IDI teach)*

### OPTIMAL SYSTEM

Principals and teachers also tried to find optimal proportions between Polish and foreign students in the classroom, for better integration. They did that based on information they'd heard from their sources. However, they didn't always know how to act in specific cases, or they lacked organisational capacity.



*I remember this webinar where they mentioned worrying research results. Based on that, if you want successful integration, you can't have too many of the children. (...) The lady said openly that you can't effectively integrate anyone if you have enclaves. And I do see that! In classes with many Ukrainian children, they all stick together. (CS IDI princ)*



### EXAMPLE 1

One of the high schools decided to place Ukrainian students to the smaller classes, so that their presence and learning process don't negatively impact other students.

One drawback of this decision is that students of different ages are in the same class (17-year-olds from Ukraine with 14-15-year-olds from 1st grade secondary school) and that the curriculum does not fit the Ukrainian school's profile (i.e. students from a Ukrainian automotive-profile technical secondary school or math-oriented class were placed into a humanities'-centred first class). This, in turn, negatively impacted their motivation for studying.



*Our rule was that we're going to just add students to wherever we have free spots. The goal was to avoid worsening everyone else's working or studying conditions. This means that they were placed in two humanities'-centred classes, just so that it's not as packed. Because there were 25 people there, so we could increase the number to reach that 30. (IDI princ)*

The solution was chosen because the school governing body did not agree (and would not provide funding) for a preparatory class, despite having reached the legally required number of over 15 students from Ukraine in the commune's secondary schools.



### EXAMPLE 2

The school was well-known in the area for having preparatory classes that had been operating for several years now, and because of that, physical queues to the school formed during the first "wave" of Ukrainian refugees.

Children were placed in these preparatory classes first. When there were no free spots anymore, the principal decided to place the children in mixed classes. When these were full, the school had to deny some students.

Teachers responsible for placing children to the mixed classes try to use different quality criteria (i.e. they take the student's personality into consideration) when making the decision.



*Ukrainian children are placed wherever there is a free spot. I write down what would be best for a given child... i.e. that the child won't start speaking Polish if they already have someone Ukrainian in the class, and so on. (IDI teacher)*



*I keep explaining to everyone, convincing people – don't keep these kids in younger classes. You're just hurting them again! None of us at 14 would like to be put with the 12-year-olds. Never in a lifetime. They need to have friends who are their peers. (CS, IDI teach)*

*We gave them the best care we could. I don't view the placement of Ukrainian children in certain classes as my priority, because I have [number] of them, so it's just a handful. (CS IDI princ)*

*I'm completely alone with this problem [organisation of the admission of children from Ukraine]. It is so difficult for me. There's no link between our cultures. There's just me and them. At first other teachers were helping me, but then they lost interest. (IDI teach)*

**MEETINGS WITH PARENTS**

Inaugural meeting for Ukrainian parents and teachers before starting education (connecting, getting to know the school and the rules), then a follow-up meeting several weeks later (feedback, satisfaction evaluation, relevance to needs)

**“BUDDY” PROGRAM**

1:1 support of Ukrainian students by their Polish peers, exchanging information on the cultural similarities and differences. There were schools in which the idea didn’t work out – the concept needs improvements – better preparation of youths and regular supervision.

**GREETING**

After being admitted to the school, the student and parents had a meet-and-greet with the principal, then they were greeted by the form tutor, who would take the student to the class and introduce them to the new classmates.

**MEETING WITH CONSULTANT**

Consultations for parents and students with regards to the educational journey of the students at the stage of the recruitment, conducted by a teacher from Ukraine that knows the needs and concerns of Ukrainian parents and students.

**POLISH-UKRAINIAN CONVERSATIONS**

Every Polish and Ukrainian student would receive a teacher-developed set of basic phrases in Polish and Ukrainian.

**ADULT HELPER**

A dedicated Ukrainian-speaking person as contact and for support at school (accessible, involved in various issues). A more accessible formula for traditional psychological-pedagogical support. The student receives clear information on how to contact the person, their availability.

**MINI-COURSE OF UKRAINIAN**

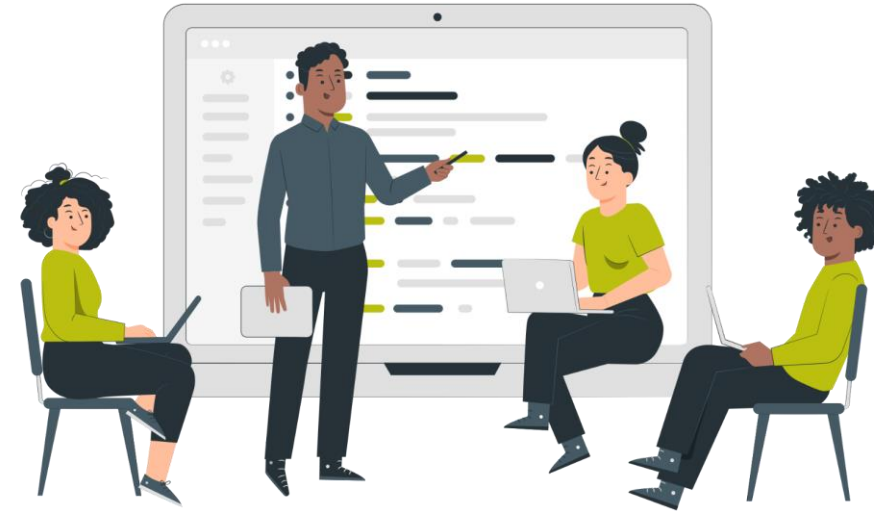
The whole faculty took part in a webinar – mini online course of Ukrainian.



There were significant differences visible as far as schools' support of teachers is concerned. The support ranged from ad-hoc actions to more systemic, coordinated activities.

The schools' support for the teachers who were supposed to accept Ukrainian students into the classes mostly came down to:

- Conducting workshops (internal) on how to communicate with foreign students
- School faculty preparing lesson scripts and materials (i.e. a dictionary of Ukrainian words for teachers and students)
- Self-help actions, sharing good practices on faculty meetings and/ or subject teams or class teams
- Sharing didactic materials in the school, photocopying materials
- Participating in external webinars and trainings on how to talk to students about war and teaching Ukrainian



*We have this custom in our school... Whenever we face a new school situation, I organise a training workshop for the teachers. I give them time so they can become used to the situation and have some lead to turn to. When we first had the Chechens, we didn't know how to make them feel comfortable in our school. So, we invited this wife of a Chechen; she's been married for 20 years. And she listed everything, told us what to expect, what not to require. We created a handbook together! She taught us a lot. (CS IDI princ)*

*We developed a short script on how to talk to students that just came from Ukraine. Most important points. (CS IDI psych)*

*Scripts were prepared for the form tutors, they were to be practised in all the classes. So that the whole school is ready! (CS IDI psych)*

Sources for the materials were varied – ranging from specialised organisations to social media groups.

In some schools, the process was organised: specialists (principal, pedagogue, psychologist or subject teachers) looked for or developed materials that were then printed/ photocopied and given to the other teachers. Whereas in other schools, finding the materials depended on the inventiveness of specific teachers.

It is worth noting that the materials used were only partially reviewed by professionals.

### CHALLENGES

Teachers agree that as time goes by, there are more and more available materials for teaching students from Ukraine (mostly thanks to the NGOs and students), but reaching these materials is not easy. **The lack of a “starter pack” in the form of ready-to-use didactic materials is one of the key challenges, very commonly mentioned during the study.**

- Lack of coursebooks and materials for specific subjects (the situation is best with languages: Polish and English and worst with sciences and history), for working in preparatory and mixed classes (bilingual coursebooks)
- Not enough coursebooks at school to give them freely to the students
- No exercise books and worksheets for specific subjects
- No class plans that take into consideration varied age levels, needs of students from Ukraine, the nature of working with a linguistically/ culturally diverse classroom.
- No materials for teaching Polish as a foreign language that would be relevant to the students' age/ level.

**Didactic materials are scattered and finding them requires effort. The “average” subject teacher needs a quick and simple pathway to reach the materials they need. Otherwise, they will just give up, especially if educating children from Ukraine is their additional task (mixed classes).**

### WHAT MATERIALS AND FROM WHERE?\*

- Polish coursebooks (i.e. “Hurra”, “Krok po kroku”, “Raz, dwa, trzy i po polsku mówisz Ty!”, coursebooks of the Wspólnota Polska Association)
- Other materials (lesson scripts, worksheets, dictionaries, games) developed individually by teachers (or already part of their resources) and shared on social media groups or other forums for teachers or provided by publishing houses, NGOs, universities.
- YouTube, paid VOD platforms (HBO, Netflix, i.e. during the lessons showing Polish videos with Ukrainian subtitles)



\* Information on the material used by teachers coming up during the study.

Teachers had to manage on their own – **there was no systemic support**. If the teacher knew how to look, they were able to survive. (CS IDI princ)

They gave us one package of coursebooks for the whole school, called : “Raz, dwa, trzy”. Wonderful. **I wanted to have a whole set for every child (...)** so that we don’t have to work with photocopies. I can’t just say “Please buy a coursebook” ok? **Students respect books more**, because a photocopied page is just something they can throw out. (CS IDI teacher in pc)

**The barrier is always the same – how much time the teacher has and if these materials are accessible.** I can see how much time I’m wasting not preparing scripts, but photocopying stuff, or coming up with extra materials. If we had these annexes to coursebooks with simpler tasks (...), that in itself would be helpful. (CS IDI teacher in pc)

There is a number of different Polish teaching coursebooks in the market. **But not the exercise books! That’s always what I am short on.** Exercises, work sheets, as simple as possible, so that you can print out or so that you can have a big collection of these exercises in your binder. (CS IDI Polish teacher in pc)



Right now if you go to FB groups, you can see that Polish as a second language or Polish for teachers is really popular, **you have tons of webinars with teachers from Lviv**, they explain grammar and any difficult things. They can show you excellent methods on how to overcome difficulties. (CS IDI teach)

I go to YouTube, to find videos about Polish legends or history. And often these are **videos for kids, animations, similar to what you probably show in pre-school** – this is the crest, this is the flag. Only they should make something for older students, so that it’s... You know, it’s fine that they use simple language, but it should look more sophisticated. And so that it doesn’t sound like talking to toddlers. (CS IDI Polish teacher in pc)

**We watch videos**, i.e. in April we watched HBO, five episodes with every class and the kids liked it. (CS IDI Polish teacher from Ukraine in pc)

I would like to have materials in Ukrainian, that would mirror the requirements we have of our Polish students. You know, to have consistency: **like a Polish coursebook but in Ukrainian.** (CS IDI teach)

I once found this website. I think the principal sent it to me, that it has materials. **But there was nothing interesting there.** Like two tasks, country names in Polish, Ukrainian or Russian. Then some continents and that was it. I just gave up and never used that. (CS IDI geog teacher).

Schools received a **varied** level of external support.

A significant factor, in this case, was the **social capital of the schools** – their network of contacts with representatives of various institutions – public or private, which enabled i.e. smooth recognition of a disability certification by the Psychological and Pedagogical Counselling centre or providing the student with ballet lessons in a private dancing school.

Many of the tasks, especially securing the refugees' material needs, were **undertaken by the schools on their own**, relying on donations from faculty and parents. Still, with respect to **expert knowledge** (the *know-how*, providing didactic materials and coursebooks), **third-sector organisations** were necessary. Respondents did not mention any activity of state institutions in this field. Still, close cooperation between an NGO and the local government allowed for i.e. broad introduction of assistants of Ukrainian children in the scale of the whole city (see description on the right).

One clear gap schools cannot fill by themselves is providing **psychological-pedagogical support** in a language accessible to the students and their parents. The report focuses more on that later on.

### EXTERNAL MATERIAL SUPPORT

- Companies funding meals and didactic materials
- Local social services
- Donations from private individuals and institutions



### EXTERNAL SUPPORT FROM EXPERTS

- NGO: CEO, Ukrainian organisations, NGOs involved in multi-cultural education → providing knowledge and materials (including coursebooks), trainings and integration workshops

### STORIES FROM SCHOOLS

#### Effective practice implemented in cooperation with NGO

Assistants of Ukrainian children – help financed by American foundation via Polish NGO. The assistants (although they are only women) are hired in schools all across the city and managed by the city's education department.

#### Donations for the preparatory department

Thanks to the presence in the media (social media and traditional) and networking, the school was able to acquire funds to pay for the functioning of a preparatory department.

### Varying levels of involvement of the school authorities

Help given to schools by the local government depends on two aspects: general relations between the school (principal) and governing authority and the scale of inflow of migrants to the town.

The involvement of the local government expressed itself across several levels. On the one hand, it came down to finding and giving a specific sum from the local government's resources. On the other hand, it was about coordinating the aid on the level of the town (for example – the system of Ukrainian student assistants). From the principal's perspective, flexibility was an essential element, as it can give more (or fewer) options under the current law.

Teacher wellbeing comes up as a significant need. It is presented as a way to cope with the challenges tied to the inflow of refugee students.

Interestingly, this first of all came up in schools that never undertook attempts at supporting teachers with expert information and which didn't turn out to be effective in the integration of refugee students. It seems therefore that the actions were too general.

On the other hand, in the schools that focused from the start on growing teacher's competencies in the area of foreign children, wellbeing was described as the goal of the next support stage – a way to reduce the workload and improve work.

In a school focused on teacher wellbeing, the principal mentions the following elements that are key for preparing the team for the challenges tied to the crisis:

- ensuring proper management of the school,
- treating the children as an important actor, focusing on their wellbeing
- good work atmosphere in the faculty.

According to the principal, teachers have the competencies required to work with students from Ukraine, among others thanks to the Inclusive Education Program that the principal is a coach of and that the school participated in. However, based on the observations and interviews, teachers don't know how to include Ukrainian students neither in the dimension of education nor socialisation/ connecting.

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*It all starts with the atmosphere at the school. After all these years, nobody can convince me that even the best training can change a teacher. If the teacher is barely alive, as they need to make money on their other job, lest they can't support their family, then you can't expect good quality. You can't expect projects that will provide any support, because you first need to take care of your wellbeing [...] **If you don't take care of your wellbeing, then you won't have time for compassion and you can't give yourself to others properly.** This is why I think you should start with wellbeing. It's the atmosphere of a given place that makes people want to grow and do anything. (IDI princ)*

*I don't want to complain here, but these extra hours, they are a burden, a difficulty... Because it's not like I have fewer standard responsibilities. This is just another thing. Of course, I chose this thing myself, absolutely aware of everything. But it's still something that I need to consider when looking at my worktime (IDI, teacher of Polish in pc)*



Principals and teachers have only **very superficial** knowledge of the Ukrainian education system, based on snippets of conversation with refugees or comments found online.

**They express a strong desire to learn more** about the Ukrainian system and to know more about the education pathways of the children that later go to Polish schools.

They need easily available, transparent and concrete materials:

- that compare the key assumptions of both systems (Ukrainian and Polish)
- that show differences in the curricula in specific subjects.

The problem when looking for information is that it is not accessible (i.e. requires going through many documents or knowing a foreign language), but this aspect is not seen as a priority due to there being many other important things (it is a “nice to have”, not a “must have” – principals and teachers can function without that knowledge).

Knowing the Ukrainian education system is essential for the schools so that they can:

- Effectively plan educational and adaptation processes on the school level (i.e. placing students in classes, diagnostic tools, explaining students the differences in the grading system, help in planning future education)
- Explain to the parents and students their decisions regarding class placements
- Better diagnose the student’s knowledge (knowing the curriculum = knowing what material the student should have learned)
- Planning work with the students (i.e. scope of material they have to catch up on)

**Principals also stress that besides information on the Ukrainian education system, they would like to have clear guidelines concerning the rules for placing students into specific classes.**



*We were missing some way of comparing the programs. But it shouldn’t be complicated, **as nobody had time to analyse the details. We also lacked this reassurance that placing a given child in a year-lower grade is a good solution.** It probably is, because this is mostly about social development in the classes and it doesn’t make sense to throw hurdles at the kids and give them new subjects, especially in older grades and forcing them to learn... Better to go back, give them time to learn Polish. (CS IDI princ]*

*I’d like to know their core curriculum, **what they should know and what I could take further with them.** Knowledge on the language, nouns, adjectives, etc., and what I can expect. (CS FGI teach)*

*We should **take into consideration what they learn on the history lessons,** how they interpret different events and characters, to learn what we can hear from them. So that they aren’t upset but understand. (CS IDI Polish teacher pc)*



In summary, the factors that impact attitudes and actions of the teachers in the event of a sudden inflow of foreign children:

- The subject they are teaching (some content can be harder/easier to share with foreign students)
- Awareness of the basics of Ukrainian/ Russian and communication skills
- Having had prior experiences with working with foreign students or Polish return migrant students
- Personal traits, such as: coping in crisis situations, flexibility, openness

The two teachers described on the right work in the same school, teaching in mixed and preparatory classes.



Zofia\*, math teacher. Speaks Russian, often diagnoses the students' level of knowledge, willing to look for materials by herself.

She decided to approach the new task methodically by planning her work rules.

*I treat all of the students the same. The preparatory class has students from 4th to 6th grade, meaning that it's a huge difference. I thought that we should start with the basics. Same as our 4th grade, doesn't matter if you're in the 6th; I just go ahead like I would in 4th grade. And if someone wants more, I work with them one-on-one. (IDI teach)*

It helps her a great deal that she knows Ukrainian and Russian:

*Whenever we have a foreigner, I know how hard it is for them at first. That's why **I approach and I translate as much as I can**. In that preparatory class, I introduce Polish terms without knowing the Ukrainian equivalents, so... I ask them to tell me the Ukrainian term, but they don't always know either (laughs). Sum is a simple one. But deduction is [incomprehensible], but then they start remembering: "Oh yes, this is that in Ukrainian and that in Russian". (IDI teach)*



Marcin, history teacher. Doesn't speak Russian, has a problem finding didactic materials online, quickly discouraged.

Sometimes feel helpless. Doesn't know how he's supposed to work with a mixed class. Tried to rely on materials found online. As a result, the children received tasks either blow their skills, or tasks they could not complete as they didn't know the language – i.e. copying notes.

During the lessons, he also asks children that arrived earlier from Ukraine for help – they are sitting in benches with students from the wartime migration, to help them whenever needed.

***To be honest, I had no idea what to do with them.** I did a regular history course with the class... But how do I teach Ukrainians our history? It was a huge issue making them included in the lessons. **So hard as they didn't speak a word of Polish. I was left alone** with history and it's tough to do it today. Because I have lessons and then I need to prepare additional materials for the three students, so that they do something, instead of just sitting idly. (IDI teach)*

Discrimination or conflict on groups of nationality is not seen as an issue in any of the schools. The cases described on the right are explained as related to age, puberty, “normal stuff among kids”, not anything related to nationality.

Teachers do see some nationality-related conflicts, but they are exclusively verbal and incidental (according to declarations).

Minimising contact areas is one of the strategies for limiting possible conflicts. This is visible in the case of a school that decided not to send newly arrived students to a class in which there are “nationalistic parents”. This is a short-term solution however, that can increase social distance.

Certain examples of conflicts on the grounds of nationality show that the time of selfless help is passed, and that some issues and tensions are starting to arise. This also applies to local communities. Many teachers lack competencies for intervening in the event of conflicts due to nationality, and sometimes they can’t even correctly identify the problem, boiling the situation down to previously mentioned “misunderstandings among peers”.

It is worth stressing that conflicts are also visible among Ukrainian students that come from Russian and Ukrainian-speaking regions.

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*We have this one class, and there are several nationalistic parents there. Obviously, when such views are shared at home, then kids also start to speak in a certain way. And they really told Ukrainian kids such as: that’s for Volhynia, go back to where you’re from. That was quickly resolved in the class. But it took place in Fall. I was so scared that the class would start acting up from February, but no, they are quiet. And we did not send any refugees to that class – it was intentional. (CS IDI princ)*



*Their situation is very hard, although some receive too much help. That’s my impression, that we’re neglecting our own citizens and students, and they are getting so much more, even when they don’t need it. Obviously, you have to help, support and be compassionate, but there’s always a line. Doesn’t mean that they are entitled to everything. (CS FGI PL student]*

*Some isolated opinions started coming up about the history of Poland... Like Polish kids would sometimes say: “my grandmother suffered at the hands of the Ukrainians”. (CS FGI teach)*

*No, you just see the regular situations like you would between kids. They were playing football and one Ukrainian kids got angry and hit a Polish kid and that Polish one yelled „You Ukrainian!”, If someone called me “You Pole” I would not take offense. We talked with them and they made up. (CS IDI teach)*

*We recently had this squabble between some Ukrainian boys. They got into an argument and the boy told the girl to go back to Russia if she speaks Russian. (CS IDI psych)*

The schools are **not reporting any particular psychological problems among Ukrainian students**. This could be due to the problems with diagnosis (language!), but it could be due to cultural differences. As we show in the rest of the report, parents treat counselling as a potential stigma for the child.

What appears as a major issue is the **low availability of psychological-pedagogical help** for Ukrainian students and of revalidation materials in Ukrainian.

**The form tutor**, not the assistants, is more often required to seek professional help. On the one hand, this is quite logical – as in the end the form tutors have the most contacts with the child. On the other hand though, this implies that form tutors and assistants have sufficient competencies to diagnose the child as one that needs more help.

[SEE ALSO → EMOTIONAL SECURITY](#)

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*We do have some kids from that first wave... Perhaps they never witnessed combat or violence. [...] But then there were these kids who drew flags on their own, crossed out Putin. (...) All in all, nobody reported any needs for counselling kids about their war trauma. (CS IDI psych)*

*Several kids were directed for a more in-depth diagnosis. In one clinic, there were some Ukrainians in the faculty. But all in all, it's hard finding specialists who speak Russian or Ukrainian. (CS IDI teacher pc)*

*Ukrainian parents hide it whenever their kids are having issues, and it takes teachers several weeks before they can have some suspicions. There are so many undiagnosed Ukrainian kids. Ukrainian parents are fighting how they can against getting counselling. They think it means there's something wrong with their child. We convince them that a pedagogue means the child can be given more classes in a given subject. (CS IDI teach pc)*

*In our country [Ukraine], people often think that a counsellor and psychiatrist are the same thing. So, if you're getting counselling, it means there's something wrong with you. You're crazy. That's why kids are afraid of psychologists. (CS UKR form tutor pc)*



In one of the locations, the Psychological and Pedagogical Counselling Centre offers on its website the help of a psychologist who speaks Ukrainian, but in reality there is only one specialist (considering the scale of the large city) and he is working for a different office.

*[Psychological and pedagogical] help is not available... You need to try and find it yourself, privately. (CS IDI parents PL)*

**RECOGNISING THE NEED FOR SUPPORT IS A CHALLENGE**

In most schools, the trauma potentially experienced by the students is a subject that is both obvious and absent.

Teachers, pedagogues and principals stressed many times that they are aware of the potential traumas of the children and they are willing to provide support. At the same time, they stressed that “our school doesn’t have students with severe problems”. Teachers cannot be expected to know how to diagnose trauma, but it appears there is a problem of “overlooking” students who may need psychological help.

**“WE’RE HERE IF YOU NEED US”**

We have not seen any systemic actions or the strategies used by schools to give Polish or Ukrainian children support in coping with the situation are intended as “inobtrusive” or “by the way”. One exception is meetings of form tutors or school pedagogues with Polish students right after the breakout of the war when the situation was being discussed. These meetings took place in many schools and took on the form of planned “talks” or (less often) workshop meetings.

The faculty most often respond to anything reported by the children, but they don’t initialise anything on their own. The main responsibility rests on the form tutors, who are supposed to watch and “steer” processes among the kids in the class. Pedagogues and psychologists work individually, and they take action if they receive such a signal from the form tutor or the child him/herself. At that point, they meet and chat, listen, support the children in finding solutions. However, stories of such work appeared surprisingly rarely.

**LANGUAGE BARRIERS**

The biggest obstacle is not knowing the language, and language is vital for connecting with the student, for the child to accurately describe feelings and emotions.

After some time, the teachers start to “come to an understanding”, but they feel that the communication is very imperfect.

In the case of any diagnosis, they try to direct the child to a clinic, which has people speaking Ukrainian, but the waiting time is long. School pedagogues, psychologists and form tutors directly spoke about the major issue, which is the lack of a psychologist and pedagogue that speaks Ukrainian (at the school or in the close environment).

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*R2: That’s what I also thought: maybe they aren’t that open, because of what they experienced. They were just living peacefully and then bang!*

*R1: based on my observations, it’s not like they are displaying any trauma. They don’t talk about that at all.*

*R2: War as a conversation topic? Never comes up. (CS DI Polish teacher and speech therapist)*

*R2: Later on, that second [student] came and he’s been very closed off since, he doesn’t connect with anyone really. Sometimes the Ukrainians.*

*R3: Yes, whenever we tried reaching out, he just brushes us off.*

*R1: Right, we didn’t know why that was. Maybe it’s the trauma, or a problem he has with himself, or maybe he can’t accept the fact that he should have learned that language and that he’d prefer us to communicate with him in his language. (CS FGI students PL)*



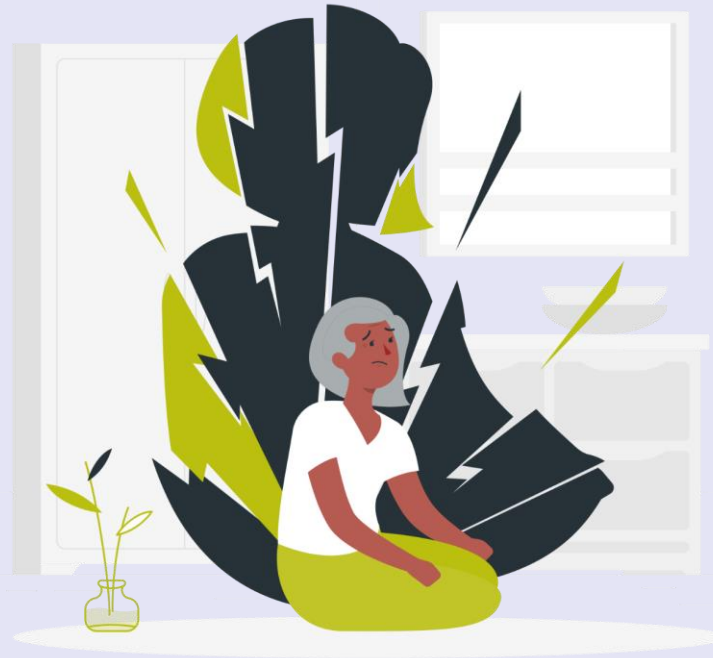
**WHY THE “INOBTRUSIVE” TAKE?**

One example is a school with extensive experience working with refugee children that runs preparatory classes. After the first, very emotional response, the faculty decided that it will be best for the school to return to its normal functioning (regular lessons, without large-scale donation campaigns), so that Polish and Ukrainian children alike can start functioning rather normally:

”

*The teachers decided that normalcy creates a sense of security. We’re back to business as usual, because doing these extra things breeds anxiety. These donation events are visible and they can really be upsetting down the road. It was necessary at first, we all were touched to the core and had to take action, and it was important for the kids to see. But afterwards, the lesson itself is the lesson – predictability equals security. We avoid doing things for show – all kinds of grand undertakings. (CS DI psych and pedagogue)*

**It is likely that the needs of many Ukrainian students have not been addressed, due to the faculty’s lack of competence in recognizing trauma, the language barrier and the cultural barrier tied to receiving psychological assistance.**

**TRAUMA OF THE ADULTS**

Some have also mentioned the difficult mental state of the teachers and staff members from Ukraine. Therefore, the list of potential people in need of support goes beyond just the students.

Teachers and other school staff from Ukraine – as they know the language and because of the cultural “proximity”, they are often the first and most trustworthy people that the students and their families come into contact with. Therefore, they become the “confidants”, hearing out problems and difficult emotions.

**None of the schools mentioned offering any kind of support for this group. At the same time, it would be a challenge in itself to encourage them to use help: these people don’t feel they need to use the help of a specialist.**

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*Nobody [at the school] ever told me anything about where I could get any help. But I don’t need that help anyway. I’m coping well on my own. (CS IDI teacher from UKR)*

## AREAS OF INTEGRATION

Respondents identify three areas of integration, usually starting with **social** (connecting, sense of security) and **cultural** (knowing the language and the local customs). **Educational** integration (full participation in educational processes) is also mentioned, but afterwards. It is worth noting that this is not a hierarchy of importance, but perception is simply seen as a multiprong, complex process.



*It's no wonder that they don't want to participate in everything. They've been thrown to the deep end, a school they don't know, surrounded by strangers, detached from their friends and families. They left everything behind. First, they focus on Polish, on communicating with us. After that, I think they should pursue their passions in the after-school activities, like maybe they could take part in drama or movie classes. (CS IDI Polish teacher)*

*Successful integration means that people connect in the classroom, that the student eagerly participates in classroom activities, wants to share their experiences; you can tell by the smile on their face. (CS IDI German teacher)*

## POLITICAL INTEGRATION

Interestingly, no mentions of **political** integration were made – which would entail migrants having influence in the new environment. Respondents would explain that it's because of the sudden inflow of migrants. At the same time, the predominant discourse of “helping”, “caring for people who are worse off” that schools (and most Polish people) had used, is conducive to paternalism. Looking at the high level of political integration of earlier Ukraine migrants (i.e. involvement in student body councils), one can conclude that this may change as the refugees stay in Poland longer.



*At first, it was all so hectic that it didn't occur to me to ask them to join the student body council. It was just one child joining after another and they didn't really seem to want the extra activities. And it's also right after the pandemic, it's not like the school is doing much. (CS IDI teach)*

## INTEGRATION AND ASSIMILATION

Respondents clearly differentiate between integration and assimilation. They expressed a care for preserving the cultural identity of the refugee students. Whenever possible they attempted to create a space for cultural expression, i.e. during geography, history or art classes.



*[Integration is...] It means that the child joins the Polish process of education, can function in a Polish school, among Polish kids, speaks Polish, but is also accepted by other kids, is not bullied and can show his/ her culture, can speak their language, but he/ she also knows Polish. (CS IDI princ)*

[→ SEE CULTURAL INTEGRATION](#)





## PRINCIPALS

- Learning more about the current state of the law with respect to the realisation of the core curriculum, the school's and teacher's responsibilities, possible individual adjustments in these areas
- Easy access to information about the Ukrainian education system, together with an analysis of the curriculum differences for specific subjects/ classes.
- Practical tips on how to manage a multicultural school, inspirations for usable solutions.
- Administrative support tied to the additional number and high fluctuation of students
- Transparent and attractive solutions (that guarantee stable employment and attractive pay) for hiring teachers from Ukraine
- Materials regarding possible strategies about testing the knowledge and grading students from Ukraine

# Cultural integration



### DIFFERENT SCHOOL CULTURES

Cultural differences were visible in how school culture (and the educational system in general) was perceived by students from Ukraine and their parents.

Ukrainian students see the Polish school as less demanding and more casual concerning student-teacher interactions. The Polish school and teachers give more freedom and allow for more independent thinking and self-expression. Some of these impressions could be due to the unusual status of the refugees in Polish schools and the resultant treatment they receive from teachers.

Students state there are fewer subjects and daily lessons but that general education lasts longer (and that the school year is longer). The Polish school's curriculum is perceived as more practical, and the material more "useful in life", relative to the amount of material Ukrainian students need to learn.

There is also a culturally-specific attitude to psychological-pedagogical support that has been revealed. Ukrainian students and their parents see such support as stigmatising.

**The predominant belief in the schools participating in the study is that the Ukrainian and Polish cultures are very much alike. This can lead to the overlooking of differences that are relevant to the integration process (including planning effective action).**



How are Polish students perceived by their Ukrainian peers? They feel that the Polish schools lack discipline and that the students are immature, not independent and don't respect the teachers. They drew attention to the extremely different way that Polish students talk to the teachers and how they behave during lessons or tests.

The teachers often talk about how disciplined Ukrainian students are, and that they are very respectful of teachers, more so than the Polish students. This could be due to the cultural differences (i.e. Ukrainian schools being more disciplined), or the low level of acclimatisation in Polish schools. Elementary school teachers notice that the Ukrainian students are more advanced in the sciences.

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*You need to learn longer in Poland, but it's easier. (CS FGI student Ukr)*

*Teachers and principals all say that the Ukrainian kids are like us 10 years ago: respectful of their elders, obedient, have a sense of hierarchy... (CS IDI environment)*

*[One of the Ukrainian students says that] you can't do anything on the lessons there, you need to just sit politely. But we here have more freedom, you can express yourself more freely, more individually, say what you think about something. (CS IDI teach)*

Assistants (of the Ukrainian child, foreigner child, intercultural assistants) are a solution successfully used in Polish schools that have been hosting foreigners for many years. This solution was also rated very highly during this study.

At the same time, it is worth stressing that the tasks of these people differ from school to school. They play a key role in the mixed classrooms. The support they provided to Polish teachers and students was valuable especially at the first stages of the functioning of preparatory classes.



### TASKS OF ASSISTANTS IN THE SCHOOLS PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY

- Being there during the lessons **in mixed classes**, accompanying students from Ukraine (help in explaining instructions of Polish teachers, to communicate with the teacher)
- Presence on the lessons in **preparatory classes**: helping students in their contacts with Polish teachers, explaining instructions, but also taking care of organisational aspects (i.e. resource raising events).
- **Holding lessons in preparatory classes** (in specific subjects, but also additional classes in Polish, team-building games)
- **Working with parents**: translating during conversations with Polish form tutors and teachers, help in using Librus, consultations regarding the choice of the child's educational path (in and out of the school).

### BENEFITS OF THEIR PRESENCE IN THE SCHOOLS:

- Provide children with a **sense of emotional security** by knowing their language, being aware of their needs.
- **Support** students from Ukraine in the educational process. This is particularly important in the mixed classrooms, where lessons are prepared and ran from the perspective of the Polish students' needs.
- Provide a **sense of security** to Polish teachers, help connect with Ukrainian students
- **Make easier** (or even possible) the communication between the teacher and parent

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We don't have an assistant in our high school. They would **definitely reduce the workload on a teacher that works with mixed classes of thirty-four people**. The assistant would be the person that would give the [student] a bit more time, who would explain the instructions, or who'd break things down to make it easier. Definitely a **basic need** for us. (CS IDI teach)

So the two teachers that were hired as teacher's assistant, and informally as language and cultural assistants, it turned out that these **two ladies are simply the most important people for creating these classes, contacting parents, students, organizing their life, and hugely for the organization of the whole social sphere**. (CS IDI princ)

It would be neat if every mixed class had an assistant. **Some children understand nothing and maybe feel too shy and don't say when they can't understand something. The assistant could approach them and help, give hints**. Maybe if there were more assistants, so they can **later individually work with the children** on whatever they don't understand or need help in. (CS IDI assistant)

It was difficult for the parents to figure out the electronic grade record... So I'd call them, or when they offered extra Polish classes here in school, **I also called the parents at that point and I told them when these lessons are taking place, so that the parents know**. (CS IDI assistant)

Then we also have teachers from Ukraine who came here and are doing an amazing job, **they are translators and can be so helpful in moments that are challenging from a psychological perspective**. (CS FGI teach)

[In Ukraine] you graduate from school, go to University and go to work. If you don't have University education, you get nothing. That's why if a child goes to vocational or technical high school in Ukraine, it's like your child died (...) Parents come here with the children and would normally be in the last grade of secondary school in Ukraine. So they say: "We want a general-education secondary school, so the child can go to University later". **I talk to the child (...) and that way I can understand their language ability, or if they know some math or not and what their general perspectives may be. Sometimes the child doesn't need that University. And I talk to the parents**. (CS IDI form tutor in pc)

I explained things on Polish, like that we have an "o" with the line above it, and that it's actually a "u". **I explain to them how I understand it, and they responded with: "Wow, great, I get it", because if you can explain something through Ukrainian, there's a chance that they will get it faster**. (CS form tutor pc)



The presence of assistants in the schools brings undeniable benefits, but it is also tied to a range of challenges that impact their working comfort, and the outcome of the Ukrainian students' integration in the schools.



- There is a lack of systemic solutions (the solutions in the tested schools were mostly third-sector)
- There is no long-term planning with respect to the role and tasks of these people in the schools
- In the preparatory classes, the people working as assistants/ teacher's aid in actuality work as subject teachers – they do not enjoy the rights the teachers have, meaning that they are paid worse for the same job
- Assistants have a lower status in the faculty than the teachers, they are not always viewed as proper partners for cooperations by Polish teachers, they are not integrated with the teacher team
- They do not have psychological support, nor any training in working with children who suffered trauma, despite being intended as the first contact in difficult situations. Moreover, assistants themselves (people from Ukraine) are not aware of the need for such support.

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*The assistants? We don't call them that, they are supposed to be teacher assistants, three women from Ukraine – they are really supporting us. They are not assigned to just one class, they wander from one class to another, whenever needed. (CS IDI teach pc)*

*When a student asks me about war, I respond, but I don't want to start such a conversation myself, as it's just hard. I also had to leave my job and home behind. [asked about psychological support:] No, it's fine. It's just like that, I don't like talking about it, remembering it all (...) These bombs dropped on the road next to my car... (CS IDI teach from Ukr pc)*

*They are hired as teacher's aid, for meagre pay, it's more like a hobby-job. They should be given a higher pay or more hours. (CS IDI teach)*

*She handles the kids very well, but it's hardest for her. Being trained in conflict-resolution would be definitely helpful for her, as that's important, I think. (CS teach pc)*





Irina\* is an art teacher from Eastern Ukraine. She came to Poland with her child right after the war broke out. She joined her husband, who had already been working in Poland earlier.

She didn't know Polish at first, but she took part in an intensive, everyday course. As she speaks, she is careful to use the proper grammar forms and uses Ukrainian words.

Irina's work means she is always in contact with Ukrainian children. She is with them during the lessons, and on the breaks, she is close to the office, solving problems, helping students find classrooms, etc. Teachers turn to her for help in contacts with Ukrainian parents.

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*Just like the principal was telling the parents of Ukrainian kids, I am their [Ukrainian students'] mother... The children turn to me if they have problems, questions, whenever they can't find the classroom. One time a girl from Ukraine had high blood pressure, she came and talked, her pressure dropped, you know, the emotional stress of these children is just... I go with the students to lessons, I help, translate... I went on field trips with them twice, because there are so many Ukrainian children in that class... And on the breaks, there were these tiny children, it was harder for them, I would call them on the breaks, asking if they are ok, if anyone isn't calling them names etc.” (IDI assistant)*

Even though all of our interlocutors spoke very highly of Irina's work, her status at the school is vague. **She is not seen as equal to the teachers, rather placed closer to the technical staff.** She does not use the teacher's lounge.

Irina is not formally an employee of the school, but the NGO. According to the principal, this formula provides much flexibility and helps avoid the red tape. At first the principal had doubts about how to manage the assistant's work, but she quickly noticed the numerous benefits, above all securing the emotional needs of Ukrainian students and supporting educational processes.

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*At first I thought this would be an issue [management and team integration]. But then it turned out that Irina is so driven – she learned the language with the kids. She doesn't cost us anything and perhaps I specified the frameworks well, there's no red tape now, she doesn't write reports but she only watches over the kids like a substitute mum. (IDI princ)*

**The issue is for the support to continue** – the Foundation will finance Irina's stay at the school only to the end of the school year..

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*If the governing body found money to keep that teacher's assistant, I'd be more at ease. (IDI princ)*

It would also put Irina's mind at ease, as she needs to plan her future.

Based on the interview with a person working for the local government coordinating assistants, we know that there are several dozen intercultural assistants from Ukraine working in the city. They will be involved in the Summer in the city programs, they will be able to offer their own activities under these programs. There are plans – not yet clear ones – to extend their employment for another school year.

Practically all of the schools attempted to bring Ukrainian culture closer to Polish students (and the broader school community).

This is important, as such actions can help break stereotypes and de-exoticize the people coming.

However, these attempts often center on an image of the culture boiled down to the facade aspects, detached from daily life.

Schools and teachers fall into the trap of stereotypical forms (“Ukraine evening”, presentation of the history, a national dish market, etc) and content of such activities (history, cuisine, crafts).

One of the consequences could be the low appeal of such activities for their intended target audience: children and youths, who need content and means of expression relevant to their needs, related to the reality of daily life.

Most common forms of cultural education:

- Specially organized events (i.e. “Ukraine day”) – popular especially when Ukrainian students first appeared in Polish schools.
- Materials about Ukraine present in the school space (posters on corridors)
- Presentations presented by Ukrainian students and showed on lessons (form period, history, geography, Polish, foreign language)

Most of these forms assume a high level of involvement of people from Ukraine as the creators of the content and the presenters. Teachers sometimes directly appoint the authors without considering their needs or concerns. They were not always able to properly consider their comfort, i.e. sitting the foreign student in front of the whole class and asking him questions does not provide even a minimum sense of security.

### STORIES FROM SCHOOLS

#### TALKING ABOUT DAILY LIFE

The art teacher encouraged children from Ukraine to make presentations about themselves. When one student said she comes from a town that has a power plant, that sparked the interest of Polish children and started a discussion about daily life in Ukraine.

#### UKRAINIAN CELEBRITIES IN THE SCHOOL CORRIDOR

The school corridor has posters with information on Ukraine, presented in a form that is simple, without too much information, focusing on facts from history, as well as i.e. contemporary people celebrities. There is also a board with a dictionary of basic Ukrainian-Polish phrases.

#### CHALLENGE: ALLOWING POLISH STUDENTS TO UNDERSTAND

Ukrainian youths were performing songs in their own language at the school talent show. Several people came wearing traditional shirts on “Vyshyvanka Day”, but Polish youths didn’t know why. No space was created to discuss the cultural specificity.

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*I asked my student to tell us something about Ukrainian culture, music, actors. To show that the country is actually no different than Poland. That the people living there have their dreams, passions, plans for life. And she spoke so beautifully about Ukrainian customs and beliefs. Incredible, an amazing lesson. (CS IDI Polish teacher)*

*Sometimes on form period, I ask: how do you celebrate holidays in Ukraine? And that person talks about it and then students ask questions: but how come? Why? (CS FGI teach)*

*In our class, we had whole two lessons about it. And we had this music/ poetry evening in March. We were telling Polish, Ukrainian and Belarussian poems, music and singing. There were four languages there, it was somehow translated. Parents were sitting there having coffee, tea, many people took part, met and saw each other. (CS IDI teach)*

*Nobody ever prepared us on how to behave towards them. (CS FGI stu PL)*

We haven't seen many activities aimed at bringing Polish culture closer to Ukrainian students. It usually only came up as something additional – to a specific subject discussed on a lesson, or a field trip.

One exception to this takes place on elementary early education (grades 1-3) classes, where subjects such as the basis for cultural and societal functioning are touched on. Even if these classes are not intended to help integrate foreign students, they indeed fulfill that purpose.

The reason for low level of activity in this area could be the belief that Polish and Ukrainian cultures are similar, and the fact that lesson goals and other educational activities are defined with the Polish majority in mind.

Most common forms of cultural education:

- Early elementary education, history and Polish language lessons (by the way of specific subjects)
- Visiting administration offices and other public utility buildings
- School trips: visiting the city and the surroundings
- Materials about Poland present in the school space (boards on corridors) – created for other purposes
- Informal situations of going out with Polish youths

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*You can't really say that there's lots planned out connecting opportunities in high school. But they went to camp, (...) and you had one Polish and one Ukrainian person playing all of these games, singing together, dancing. That was great for bonding. But you can't really have that at school, it's just a 10 minute break, so how can they connect? (CS form tutor from pc)*



### A SPACE FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL LEARNING

The solution mentioned by most respondents is using out-of-school learning: in the form of field trips or Summer camps (or day camp). This helps understand the town/ city, its specific character, history, landscape, as well as learning more about how to function in the hosting country. Obviously, it is also a pastime and an opportunity to connect with Polish peers.

### EXAMPLE FROM SCHOOL

#### WORLD OF YOUTHS

A Polish student prepared a meeting for the preparatory class students – an activity about youth culture in Poland. What Polish youths listen to what, how they talk, where they go.

### TEACHERS AND STAFF HAVE EXPERIENCE WORKING IN A CULTURALLY DIVERSED SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT



*I think we're just accustomed to the situation of being a Polish-Ukrainian school. We have Ukrainian children in all of the classes. First it was 10%, now 20% are foreigners. It used to be that they were from Chechnya, Yemen, Kurdistan, but they were individual, isolated persons. Now, it's become normal. It's like what you see in the West: a multicultural blend, which is why we teach about such a world. (CS DI psych and pedagogue)*

Schools experienced in managing multiculturalism display a **process-based approach**. Respondents point out that the school community is always learning multiculturalism and is also struggling (and will continue to struggle) with difficulties.



*We're learning to do multiculturalism. That was a positive impulse in the sense that it does not arouse any negative emotions, negative intentions towards the children that came here. But I don't know how it'll be going forward. The Polish are not used to multiculturalism, we're really enclosed. (CS DI psych and pedagogue)*

On a more **detailed level**, experiences of multiculturalism translate into:

- An attitude of openness and acceptance among the faculty. Teachers can count on one another for help.
- Pedagogues and psychologists consciously act as mediators and provide support for the teachers.
- Consistency between the faculty and administrative staff.
- Students learning more about the situation of children from Ukraine.

### KNOWLEDGE OF THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES



*I don't know their national identity, no idea what's important for them. When planning work, I could refer to certain values, such as honor or valor. Because I'm just going with my gut feeling most of the time, I never know if I'll get things right. Maybe their values are the opposite? Modesty and humility?*

*There's this sudden clash of two worlds and there's a lot between the lines. We're kind of in the same place, looking at the same tree, but we view it totally differently. And it's important for me, to try and see things through their eyes. (CS IDI psych)*

In some schools (most often schools without experience working with foreign students), the teachers and principals assume that their general preparation in so-called soft-skills and empathy are sufficient for working with any student, including students from different cultures. They don't feel any need for trainings on intercultural aspects.

However, interviews with students and parents show that **integrating students from Ukraine on the educational, cultural and social levels is a challenge for the teachers**. To support these students, teachers give them special status in the class and downplay the progress of Polish students, trying that way to appreciate the Ukrainian children. Polish students express their dislike for that practice, and it creates unnecessary divisions.

One challenge when offering intercultural education could be the **teacher's resistance** to trainings that they consider unnecessary, together with the narrative about the never-ending need to participate in trainings (as the teachers are always seen as imperfect), and the idea that the Ukrainian students' presence is only temporary. It seems that in the area of intercultural education, some of the teachers are in the phase of unconscious incompetence.

Is it possible for the Polish schools to introduce the multicultural model, that enables preserving the identity of the country of origin instead of assimilation? As one of the principals puts it, it is theoretically possible.

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*We have legal solutions in place, parents may ask for lessons in Ukrainian, geography, and the culture of the country. Before the war, there was just one school in [city] with such a course (CS IDI princ)*

The challenges include financing, recognition of the qualifications of Ukrainian teachers. In practice, apart from the actions of individual teachers that created the space for this on i.e. nature or geography lessons, we have not seen any attempts at creating a multicultural model.



Is the preservation of the Ukrainian identity endangered? Principals and teachers seem to be aware of the risk of refugee polonization. At the same time, the Ukrainian diaspora is clearly talking about the need for preserving their identity and the subject came up strongly during a conversation with one of the cultural assistants.

No wonder – Ukrainians are at war with a state that is denying them that identity. As the previously mentioned assistant stated, Ukrainians in Poland are not being repressed and forced to abandon their culture. On the contrary, they are a numerous minority and have many tools to foster their language and culture. The Orthodox Church is another integrating center besides the social institutions.

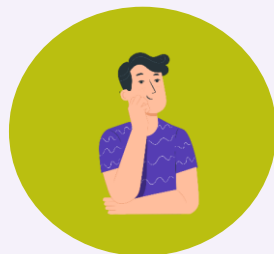
Nevertheless, it is worth stressing that **nearly all of the actions intended to sustain the culture of the country of origin are taking place out of school. The Polish educational system, like many others in the world, is assimilative in its character, despite the existence of solutions for preserving the identity of the migrant's country of origin.**





### UKRAINIAN STUDENTS

- Understanding the Polish cultural and educational context
- Desire to share own culture and preserve one's cultural identity
- Learning about cultural differences, especially those that hinder access to integration and use of available forms of support
- Support from people with competencies in the area of integration, multi-cultural education (i.e. assistants)



### POLISH STUDENTS

- Preparing for contact and for sharing an educational space with Ukrainian students, in particular the capturing and understanding of cultural differences
- Possibility to resolve any misunderstandings or differences as they arise



### TEACHERS

- Learning the basics from the field of intercultural education, especially non-stigmatizing presentation of cultural differences to Polish students
- Noticing the need for and the benefits of intercultural and anti-discriminatory education
- The ability to manage a culturally-diverse class
- Undertaking anti-discriminatory actions, ability to respond to cases of discrimination



# Social integration



Ukrainian students talk about a sense of **alienation, stress and a language barrier** that come with entering a new environment and a new schooling system. On the other hand, many students experienced **difficult emotions tied to the state of war and a sense of confusion** about the changes to their daily life (new people, new rules, vague future).

Taking care of the emotional needs of the students, providing them with a sense of comfort and safety (physical and mental), was definitely a priority in all of the schools participating in the study.

Principals and teachers undertook many activities to pursue that goal and conversations with the parents and students indicate that they succeeded in many cases.

Ukrainian students and their families felt taken care of thanks to material and informative help. What was important for the students, was not just the verbal communication about solidarity and the willingness to help, but also the presence of Ukrainian elements in the school space (mitigating a sense of anxiety and alienation). Contact with adults and peers who know Ukrainian and Russian also increased their sense of security, guaranteed potential support in difficult situations.

Some of the schools introduced the idea of peer support – Ukrainian students were paired with “buddies”, who were supposed to act as guides and provide help. This solution did not always work out well and needs improvement in future.

It was very uncommon for students (Ukrainian or Polish) to talk one-on-one with a school pedagogue or psychologist about the war in Ukraine.

[→ MORE HERE](#)

## HOW DO SCHOOLS LOOK AFTER THE STUDENTS' EMOTIONAL SECURITY? |

MORE COMMON

**Bringing the student to the class and facilitating their integration**

**Material support of students and their families** → donations, buying school equipment, etc.

**Friendly physical space, where students feel comfortable and safe** → i.e. posters with slogans expressing support for Ukraine, flags in the corridors, bilingual signs for places in the school; classes held in well-lit, spacious classrooms, a place to sit during the breaks

**Possibility to talk with adults who know Ukrainian or Russian** (including with intercultural assistants)

**Talking about emotions regarding the war in the classroom**

**New students getting a tour of the school, meeting the people and seeing new places.** Help of Staff/faculty to navigate the school and solve other problems.

LESS COMMON

**Role of the “buddy”** – a peer whose role is supporting the Ukrainian student in solving problems, figuring out the school reality.

**One-on-one conversations with pedagogue and/ or psychologist**

### TALKING ABOUT THE WAR

In the first period right after the start of the war, Polish students had a chance to talk about the conflict (with school pedagogues, psychologists, form tutors). It is worth stressing that **support given to Polish students** on how to manage difficult emotions **was sometimes provided “intuitively”**.

There were also doubts if such actions were needed (“not everyone may express a need for such a conversation”).

Because the war is taking longer, schools discontinued some of these activities feeling that the subject has become more familiar, whereas children still need that support.

*„I also provide career consulting in 8th grade and we talked about passions and interest on one of the classes. This one, really nice boy from the war migration wave said he doesn't want to talk to me about that. But he will gladly share his plan on how to punish the person that contributed to the breakout of war in Ukraine. They don't want to learn what they can achieve here or talk about their future, they just want to punish, “beat someone up”. That's what focuses their attention ” CS IDI pedagogue*

### NO PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

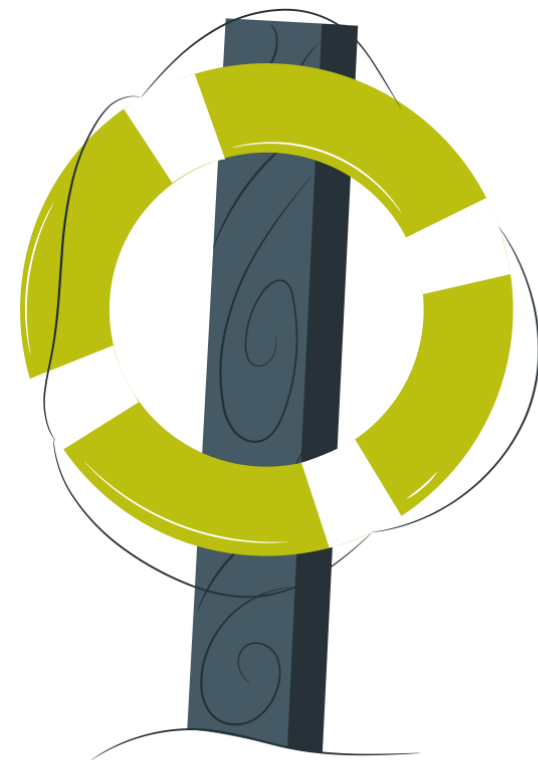
We would like to once again emphasize how immensely challenging it is to diagnose students (especially from Ukraine) that need specialized psychological or therapeutical support and the limited availability of professional help → [MORE](#)

### SUPPORT NEEDED FOR THE TEACHERS

The challenge is to **support teachers and assistants working with students from Ukraine and Poland**.

They implement various solutions, although – as they often stress – **they lack professional preparation**, especially with respect to people fleeing a war zone.

They need to increase their competencies in the area of diagnosing and responding to difficult emotions of the children, and their ability to recognize situations that are potentially endangering the emotional safety of students (i.e. avoiding exercises that could make children feel threatened or actions that may create a conflict in the classroom).



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*It's just completely unexpected. You went to your school so many years, with your people, and suddenly you find yourself here. **It's stressful.** (CS FGI student UKR)*

*I would prefer it if they explained more things to us at first [about the school, education, etc.]. I remember when they were admitting me, my new classmates came to the principal's office, **took me to their classroom, just sat there in the front with everyone staring at me** [...] It would have been so much easier if they explained to us first how the lesson plan works. We had a paper lesson log in Ukraine, there's an electronic one here. At first it was hard for us to access the electronic lessons log, and we could not understand what was written there. I didn't know when things were changing, i.e. I took the wrong books, or I would come to a lesson that was cancelled and I just sat there. That's what happened at first. Now, my classmates upload the lessons' plan to our Messenger group and there's no issues there (CS FGI student UKR)*

*At present, we can see many happy faces. Hopefully these children are really happy, not that they are bottling something up. **And I hope they are not only happy at school, but at home as well.** (CS IDI teacher assistant)*

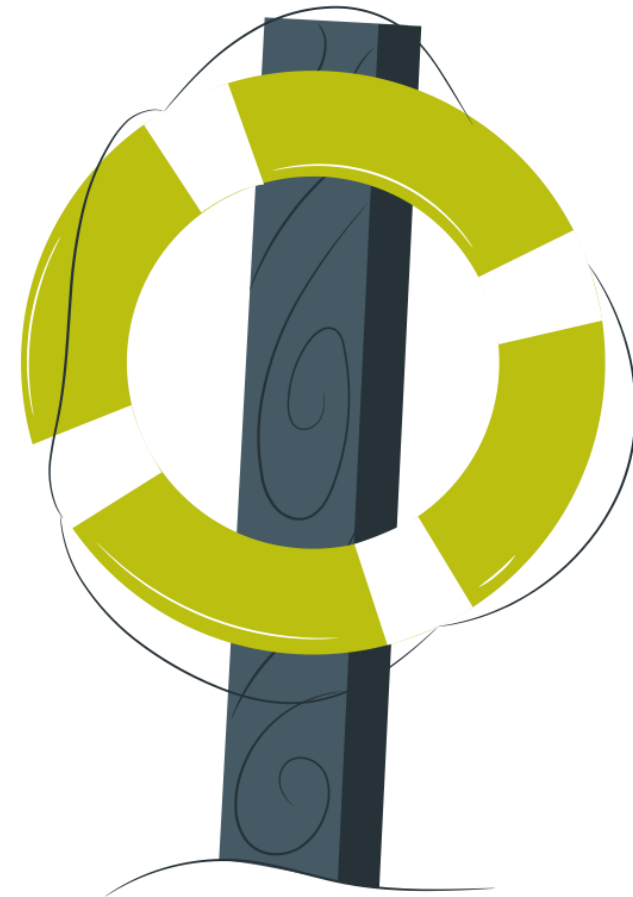
*We talk so much on our form periods. This means that whenever anyone has any doubts, **they can express their feelings. Like if someone is anxious, they can approach us during the break.** (CS IDI teach)*

*In our older child's class, the teacher **wrote Putin is a pr..ck on the whiteboard** (CS FGI parents, UKR)*

*Maybe we need workshops **on how to manage these children, so that you can improve yourself, and so that you know how to respond in every situation**, to know how to behave around these kids... You have different kids every year (CS IDI teach assistant).*

*I thought that this subject [war] has been talked about in every possible way and that it's burning out slightly. Last week, they were drawing something called "my stress" and they drew the war. That means the subject hasn't really died out. **It still lives in them.** (CS IDI psych)*

***I feel really well here.** There are lockers with codes, many friendly people and teachers, the teachers are teaching so great here, I really understand Polish well. And no homework! And they give stuff out. (CS FGI student Ukr)*





Social integration of refugee students is a complex and very individual process, making generalisations difficult. There were several cases that we saw: from building strong relations with Polish peers, to the alienation of small groups or individual students. Without a doubt, some of the teachers tried to facilitate the process more or less intuitively, whereas some assumed it would take place “naturally”.

Two processes taking place in parallel were observed. The first process relied on the students gradually becoming more comfortable in the classes, as seen in their ability to express their own needs. The second process is fractionalism: as the number of refugees per class increases, a tendency arises to function in relatively closed, Ukrainian groups, which obviously limited integration and language learning.

The ability to express needs is connected to their command of Polish and personality traits – it is easier to connect for students that have high interpersonal competencies, extroverts, people open to making new friends (not just in the class) and of course people who are comfortable using Polish in daily communication.

Based on the opinions and observations, one can also suspect that younger students connect with their peers more easily. Especially in the early elementary education, children were very comfortable joining new environments.

From the perspective of the Polish students, it is important for the connecting with Ukrainian students not to be forced – instead that it follows their actual needs to create relations with others and to constitute their autonomous decision.



”

*The larger their group became, the more distant they would grow. Back when it was just one person, she was pretty sociable and talked to us. But later on, with every next person joining, they started feeling more separated from us. And they don't have that language barrier with their mates. (CS FGI PL students)*

*This five-person group suddenly became a huge part of a class, that previously had only 18 people. The conflict was that it was a shock for Polish kids, that someone suddenly speaks a foreign language, doesn't socialize with them, and for the Ukrainian students it was obvious that they will stick together, as they speak one language. They created a kind of clique. That was in 7th grade, which is pretty tough age-wise. A negotiator entered the classroom, we had team-building workshops, went out together. The situation has gotten normal, but it's not like they are all particularly friendly. [CS IDI teach [pl]*

*You can't force anything. At least that's what I think. It should all happen on its own, not forced. Because right now, if we did more and more socializing and connecting events, it would seem forced. Like making people become fake friends. Friendship is born out of coincidence, not because someone forces us to be with someone else. CS, FGI, Students PL*

## What helps connect in the class?

- The Polish with their enormous dedication, openness and helpfulness on day-one. Teachers, Polish students and their parents very actively joined any efforts at supporting Ukraine and helping the newly arriving students.
- Working in mixed groups on the lesson.
- Students going out together after the classes (to the movies, a walk around the area).
- Several-day trips – spending time together, planned socialisation events (i.e. workshops)
- Participating in extracurricular activities, especially sport and art
- Ukrainian students joining activities that had long been part of the school traditions (i.e. participating in the annual talent show, helping out in pet shelters)
- Any meetings/ initiatives that are organized spontaneously
- A generational cut-off from the historical differences and conflicts between Poland and the Ukraine. These are all completely irrelevant for the youths at the moment.
- Experience of the pandemic – schools appreciated the value of relationships, activities that bring the class together are less often seen as a “waste of time”
- Living with Polish families and interactions with them

## What makes it harder? What are the barriers?

- Language barrier (not just insufficient command of Polish, but also English on both sides)
- Placing a larger number of students from Ukraine to one class (danger of fractions)
- As described earlier, using different criteria for treating Ukrainian and Polish students (even if it’s all “in good faith”)
- Teachers’ believing that social integration takes place by itself, seeing it as something that does not require any special involvement or modelling, as it takes place by itself
- Insufficient competencies of teachers as far as working with the group is concerned (conflict resolution, being mindful of anti-discrimination behaviors, etc.)
- Students not being prepared to interact, not knowing how to talk about any difficulties that come up
- Sense of everything being temporary – reluctance to “investing oneself” in a relationship that may be interrupted at any moment
- Adaptation challenges of Ukrainian students due to the experience of migration (reduced mood, withdrawal, isolation, low motivation)
- Polish students feeling jealous of the special treatment of Ukrainian students by the teachers, or new Ukrainian students create close relations with the pre-war migrants.
- Polish students taking over from their parents nationalistic, bigoted narratives towards Ukrainians
- Students feeling forced – they would rather choose who to become friends with, instead of being told to



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Sometimes you notice that they are also **favoring them**. For example, when you look at the tests – they can use the Internet, we can't. And then they tell us that they wrote the test so well, whereas we didn't. They don't need to learn Polish history, but we need to learn the history of the Kiev Ruthenia (CS FGI student PL)

I was able to meet [girl from UKR] through shared interests. Thanks to our Polish teacher... We both draw and she showed me her sketchbook. (CS FGI student Ukr)

The physics' teacher was really funny, he's so cool, jokes around, but then he knows how to explain the lesson. Then I introduced a Polish girl to Nazar [student from UKR] and they really hit it off. (CS diary student Ukr)

R6: We talked about things that divide the Poles and the Ukrainians, like the Volhynia Massacre. And we tried to explain it. **We weren't really alive at that time, so maybe that's why we're not that emotional about it.** (CS FGI student PL)

The children felt that there was this kind of separation into “us and the Ukrainians”. Kids like to socialize but they felt like 2nd class citizens – **you need to adapt, you need to serve... But don't forget that not every Polish student is in a comfortable situation.** Also, the teaching program wasn't taught properly and there were also comments from teachers such as: “See, the Ukrainian got it, and what about you?” (CS IDI parent pl)

There was this one situation when we were going to the movies, and we all chipped in for the movie tickets, so they don't have to pay. Ultimately, they came to the movie theater and left! During the commercial break before the movie, they decided they don't want to be there and left. That means that our money **was wasted.** (CS FGI student PL)

We had this one story in our class. We had the old migrants there that were good friends with our Polish group. When the new migrants came, the old migrants focused on the new people, because they were the natural connectors... And our girls **were suddenly jealous that they were ditched.** (CS IDI princ)

I keep explaining [teacher talking to PL students] “She just arrived, I want to appreciate her amount of effort, not exactly her skills”, but the 4-6 graders, these students don't understand, **to them it's just an injustice.** (CS FGI teach)

Right now I'm spending more time with the Poles than Ukrainians. **We met and I really feel great around them.** (CS FGI student Ukr).

Yesterday we went for this walk with our classmates. It was nice. (CS diary of student UKR)

They are so awesome. When I first came here, I looked at the girls and I thought I'd never be friends with them. But I know half the school now! It's because I'm so outgoing, and my Polish language is just flowing like water. (CS FGI student Ukr)

School-level social integration activities are rare. They usually constitute formal celebrations or symbolic events (Ukraine Day, plays, etc.) – they are important, but happen rarely. Moreover, their frequency has been dropping since the start of the war.

Ukrainian students – with the exception of some cases, don't participate in after-school activities. Moreover, there is a lack of an offering of extra-school activities for them.

Their experience of the change extends beyond just the school. Teenagers from a huge city, see it as a downgrade when they arrive at a medium-sized country town in Poland.



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*R2: I don't really go anywhere besides the extra Polish classes.*

*R3: the city is beautiful and pleasant, but boring.*

*R4: The only entertainment you can get is going to Biedronka. They have no football fields or outdoor gyms. Even in the tiny village that I went to in Summer, they had these. This is just a small city. (CS FGI student Ukr).*

*B: Do you play football or basketball after school?*

*O3: There's nobody to play with... And I don't have a ball*

*O2: I did sport at home [Ukraine], not here. [CS\_FGI\_studentsU].*

*I think better socialisation is possible when they play something together, or go out. They should get together all of the second grades, give them a couple of hours free from school: we're learning Ukrainian, they are learning Polish (CS, IDI student body council)*

*It just came out spontaneously and naturally that [Ukrainian students] participate in everything that the Polish students are doing. One of them is going to be the pink panther at the end of the school year, the other one will be drawing. (CS IDI psych)*

## “NATURALNESS/ AUTHENTICITY” MATTERS FOR THE STUDENTS

Events such as formal school assemblies were seen as artificial. In this sense, school events that are on the calendar and are well-known to Polish students worked better as far as social integration goes.

Talent shows, festivals, book organizing campaign in the library – all of these events created much room for “unforced” socialisation.

What was helpful to social integration across many levels was the organisation of excursions and field trips, especially with a planned integration element.

### SOLUTIONS USED

#### PE TOGETHER

Students from the preparatory class have PE classes and art classes together with children from the Polish classes.

#### BOXING TRAINING

Inviting students from Ukraine to practice in the at-school club together with Polish students. The students had a chance to connect and are exercising together.

#### CHESS IN THE LIBRARY

The library team invited the preparatory class to help in transliteration and to add Ukrainian books to the library collection. This way, students familiarized themselves better with the library and now frequently use it, together with Polish youths, playing chess and other games in their free time.

## EXTRACURRICULAR CLASSES

Another important area. On one hand, they enable connecting with others, including people not from the class, and on the other they constitute an important part of the students’ free time. None of the schools participating in the study had an offer of after-school classes for Ukrainian students (or were they making any more extensive attempts at asking them to join). Respondents explained this by talking about the chaos of the new situation, the deficit of time and language barriers.

Sport and art classes had a positive impact. They enabled socializing with the peers without the need for excellent language skills.

#### VOLUNTEERING AND SOCIAL PROJECTS

*„I had kids in my class from Ukraine, Chechnya and Georgia. I think they adapt so well and I think they are better not studying on lessons, but in social project. They are so creative and helpful. They never refused anything when I ask them for something” CS IDI pedagogue*

## OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL

Out-of-school interactions mostly play out in the Ukrainian community, with few exceptions (especially if a family of Polish students was hosting refugees from Ukraine). One factor that did not help socialize after school was that Ukrainian students had little time, as they were studying in parallel in Ukrainian schools, or they were uncomfortable thinking about visiting their classmates at home (shyness, distance).

It is much harder for high school students to have out of school interactions – Ukrainian students create their groups, which also happens more frequently due to how preparatory classes operate.

After-school contacts were definitely more frequent with proper interpersonal skills and the school’s location – in smaller towns, it was much easier for students to meet after classes.

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*My mates **invited me to their home, but I said no.** That would just be... Embarrassing. (CS FGI student Ukr)*

***We meet with the other kids after school. We go on bicycles, we visit each other at our homes, they invite me for sleepovers. (CS FGI student ukr)***



### UKRAINIAN STUDENTS

- Physical and emotional safety
- Support in managing trauma, emotional problems
- Need to function comfortably in a multicultural environment
- Having someone I trust
- Belonging to a group
- Need for self-esteem (in a new/ unknown environment)
- Need for spaces / opportunities to make new connections (at school and out of school), for everyday contacts
- Need to take action, to give back (not just being the recipient)



### POLISH STUDENTS

- Physical and emotional safety
- Support in managing trauma, emotional problems
- Need to function comfortably in a multicultural environment
- Having someone I trust
- Need for self-esteem (in a new/ unknown environment)
- Need for equal/ fair treatment in a multicultural group
- Wanting to feel comfortable when connecting with new people (choosing who I want to be friends with)



### TEACHERS

- Raising their qualifications in conflict-resolution, anti-discriminatory actions, diagnosing students' emotional states
- Raising competencies in Ukrainian or being assigned an interpreter



# Educational integration



**DIVERSE GROUP = DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

Students from Ukraine are not the same. Instead, they constitute a diverse group with respect to such aspects as:

- **Motivation** for learning

This is usually tied to their goal: higher motivation among people who see themselves staying in Poland (for longer or forever).

- **How much they know** from specific subjects

The challenge for the teachers in this case is diagnosis.

- **Character**, manner of behavior.

Outgoing, extroverted people not only find it easier to fit into the school and class community, but they also find it easier to study in a Polish school.

- **Learning styles and preferences** regarding the subjects

Awareness of this variety and its impact on how students learn is important for effective teaching.

**STEREOTYPES AND EXPECTATIONS**

What is also significant for the educational integration of students from Ukraine are two phenomena that had been diagnosed during the study:

**Many teachers have in their minds the desired profile of a student from Ukraine.** It is a “polite, well-mannered, quiet girl” and an ambitious, active boy that speaks Polish fluently.

Children that comply with this perception are seen as “deserving of help”, there is a bigger chance that teachers will include them into educational processes in the class and the school.

The second issue is **lack of understanding of students not involved in their classes, not interested in the school, or openly challenging it.**

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*One can be very withdrawn. And then another could be almost like a Ukrainian nationalist. A bit negative. Don't know why, after all, we all received them well here? He joined the group latest. (CS IDI teach)*

*My daughter was surprised to see that the kids aren't terrified or traumatized. But in my daughter's class there's this girl – a quiet, calm, really great one. That's the kind you need to help. (CS IDI parent)*



*These kids are like ours, in the sense that they're all just as different. (CS IDI princ)*



Having a good command of Polish is essential for the teaching and learning of Ukrainian students in Polish schools.

In the younger elementary school grades, kids learn Polish naturally through their interactions with peers. According to our respondents, there is a smaller need for additional classes.

There is also a belief that kids from the preparatory classes; who have 6 hours of Polish in a week, or the ones that had been exposed to Polish in the past, can learn the language in three months well enough to start functioning among Polish kids, in the mixed classes.

Teachers mention the issue of effective teaching of Polish **in the large classes**. Not all schools give the chance to learn in smaller groups.

Introducing more Polish hours for children from Ukraine, during the school year, brought **logistical challenges** (finding a teacher, organizing the lesson plan).

In one of the school, they did not use the extra hours at all, “postponing” that for next year, justifying that decision as being “for the good of the students”.

Some also mentioned the **need for flexibility – to adequately adapt the scope of the offering**, for better consideration of the varied competencies and educational needs of the students.

### SOLUTIONS USED

#### TEACHERS COOPERATING IN TEACHING POLISH

Polish and Ukrainian teachers – who teach Polish in the preparatory class – establish together what they are going to teach.

*I spoke with the other Polish teachers, because we had this meeting on who is going to be teaching what. I would rather teach grammar, because I speak Ukrainian and can explain it better. And then they talk to the other teacher for speaking skills. So that’s how we divide the work. (CS IDI Polish teacher in op with ukr)*

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*I would like to have a group of 5 or 10 people. **Because 15 is a crowd! And here we have 25 people**, everyone on a different level (CS Polish teacher pc)*

*Introducing 6 hours of Polish weekly at the end of the year, when there are no teachers, when the lesson plans are all figured out... That really upset things. I decided to go for an intermediary solution: hired an extra teacher **and for 2 days we take the kids from their classes**, and then they have nothing but Polish for 2 days. Because if you have kids from 7th grade, they have like 6-7 lessons daily, if you add 2 more Polish lessons to their plan.. I mean that would overwhelm adults, let alone kids (CS IDI princ)*

***I don’t see any need for Sasza to take extra Polish lessons**, he knows Polish. What is important for me is that Sasza takes robotics classes, as he’s great in that. I want him to develop his potential. (CS IDI psych)*

*It’s difficult for my son, because if you want to learn the subject, you need to know how to read and write. **How is he going to solve math problems if he doesn’t understand the instructions?** Takes half a year before he writes that instruction into the translator. (IDI parent ukr)*

*I think that these kids rather need something like a safe haven. Because with all that baggage that they came here with... **Whether you give them 10 hours of Polish or 2 hours, their brain won’t take it all in**, as they are so stressed. (CS IDI psych)*

## A PANACEUM

Schools with little experiences with foreign students and few Ukrainians see the organisation of preparatory classes as the perfect solution, to the “language barrier” that comes up in all the narratives and to generally improve the school’s functioning

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*First thing you need is a preparatory class. **That would really make work easier for all.** I know that it means extra spending. And you need to run classes according to other laws. (CS IDI princ)*



## FEAR OF GHETTOIZATION

On the other hand, schools experienced in working with foreign students and with many Ukrainian students all (with single exceptions) stated that mixed classes are the desired solution. However, they do mention a need for an offering that would prepare the child to join nationally diverse classes.

”

*Top of my mind I want to say they should join the general classes, as that prepares them to function in the Polish society. Creating a preparatory class is a kind of ghetto. These classes are artificial, just temporary. [...] They [UKR students] are not all the same. (CS IDI princ)*

*You can't separate the kids, or else they will feel different or that there is something wrong with them. (CS IDI intercultural assistant)*

## ADVANTAGES OF PREPARATORY CLASSES

One can say that preparatory classes have many “tasks”: from providing a sense of emotional safety to students from Ukraine, through education, all the way to making it easier to manage the process of accepting Ukrainian students to the school.



*My role is not just to teach them and help, but also to take care of their wellbeing. If they have something to eat, clothes to wear, if they feel well. This relaxes as time goes by, as they feel more and more confident. But at first, I was thus guardian. Not someone who grades, but rather gives support. (CS IDI teach pc)*

### BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS

- Providing Ukrainian students with a sense of emotional safety, making them feel cared for.
- Possibility to quickly learn Polish as a second language and to learn the language of instructions and terminology for various subjects.
- Catching up with the differences in the learning program faster (students don't have to fill time drawing in “coloring books”) - important especially in the case of students from older grades.
- In the case of younger children, it is not a problem to socialize with Polish students outside the classes (sports' field, playground).

### BENEFITS FOR SCHOOL/ TEACHERS

- Ease of coordinating support/ work with students, providing students with comprehensive support



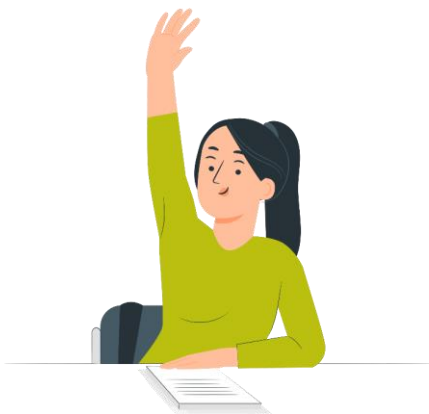
*I can't imagine they just coming here and just joining the class like that. It would be impossible, stressful for them and the teacher (CS IDI teacher in pc)*

*The advantage of these preparation classes over the mixed classes is that you can level all these differences and teach subjects. (CS IDI teach pc)*

*These months [in the preparatory class] brought her so many benefits. If she just joined a Polish class, it would be hard for her. She would not compete with others, even though she's been educated well in a Ukrainian school. (CS IDI parent UKR)*

## FOR STUDENTS

- The huge age differences cause tensions and conflicts (i.e. secondary school classes often have students that are at an age typical for Polish elementary schools)
- Danger of ghettoization – very limited opportunities for socializing with Polish children
- Learning language/ languages is ineffective in relatively large groups. Limited possibilities to quickly learn to speak Polish smoothly, spontaneously.
- Older students have difficulty adapting in mixed classes after they complete the preparatory classes. Whereas many teachers believe the problem will “solve itself”.



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*Kids aged 13-17 have different levels in English and Ukrainian... It's difficult because they also have different ages, and I'm here alone **and I can't come up with exercises that would be suitable for everyone.** (CS IDI eng teacher)*

*Children from Ukraine are able to communicate after a month. But you know, there are so many lessons, **that there's just no room to create a board game club.** And there's no time for that anyway after school. Nobody has a place to do it, or the time. (CS IDI teach pc)*

*Because it's not like I have fewer standard responsibilities. This is just another thing. Of course, I chose this thing myself, absolutely aware of everything. But it's still something that I need to consider when looking at my worktime . (CS IDI Polish teacher pc)*

## FOR SCHOOL/ TEACHERS

- No clear guidelines regarding how to run preparatory classes (now and for the next school year)
- Teachers are burdened time-wise and emotionally – extra work hours, working in conditions that are harder than “standard” – negative impact on wellbeing
- Students at different ages, different levels of knowledge, motivation, different plans for staying in Poland.
- The teacher needs to try and teach several programs (levels) at the same time.
- Also doing administrative matters – another burden for the non-pedagogical staff
- Limited availability of Polish teachers who know Ukrainian or Russian – hard to put together faculty
- The challenge is to plan and manage the process of students leaving preparatory classes and joining the mixed ones. Better communication between form tutors (i.e. one of the schools, the teacher of a mixed class was surprised to see a new student from the preparatory class on her lesson, nobody had told her in advance).

The data acquired enabled identification of factors important for organizing preparatory classes.

### WHAT IS IMPORTANT?

- **Hiring teachers from Ukraine** (form tutors, organizers, teachers of key subjects). This ensures familiarity with the Ukrainian education system, the school’s work culture, direct communication with students and parents in Ukrainian, the trust of the students and parents “for their own people”.
- Assumption that the preparatory class is a **transitional stage for students**.
- Thinking about the preparatory class as a **group of students with different needs** and taking into consideration that variety when planning educational processes (i.e. creating subgroups in the class, according to age, interests).
- Ongoing, good **cooperation with the local government** allows for smooth decision-making and implementations (first taking action, taking care of formalities later, flexibility in the approach to procedures).
- Providing an **extensive offering for students** – in the school and out of it (cooperating with the close environment), to allow students “accommodate themselves” in Poland, to learn about the Polish realities, their interests, or to plan their continued educational-professional journey
- Caring for the **touchpoints with the local community** (“guest student” on lessons in mixed classes; extracurricular activities, including sports, trips, etc.)
- **Spatial organisation** that provides students with a sense of comfort and safety



### DIFFERENT FUNCTIONS OF THE PREPARATORY CLASS

- The preparatory stage before entering a mixed class
- Intensive preparations for living in Poland (also together with learning remotely in Ukraine)

When planning the goals for the functioning of preparatory classes in future, it is important to consider different needs of students regarding their educational path going forward. Students from older grades may use preparatory classes for post-secondary education in Poland (whilst also graduating from a Ukrainian school in the meantime and writing their Ukrainian end of high school exam). It is also important to determine which institution should organize such an education of Polish (school, , center for lifelong learning, local cultural institutions, etc.).



*They (students) tell us: we don’t want to be studying here in high school for 4 years. We’re going to have the Matura exam next year and it’s more convenient to go back, graduate, take the exam, learn Polish or English and then go to University in Poland or Slovakia, wherever they want us. (CS IDI teacher pc)*

**SAFE SPACE OF THE LIBRARY**

A decision was made in the school, to change the initial plan to have the preparatory classes in the basement, and to move them to the library.

*We had the classes in the library, which is such a nice place there's no whiteboard, only a carpet. They didn't feel like at school at first. We were just sitting at a table together. (CS IDI teach)*

**DONATIONS**

One school created a special bank subaccount and the school would raise funds in the form of donations. Thanks to an effective information campaign among parents, social media and traditional media, the school was able to create the classes and help students.

**LANGUAGE GROUPS**

In one of the schools, the children from one class were divided into smaller groups depending on how well they knew Polish.

**"GUEST" STUDENTS**

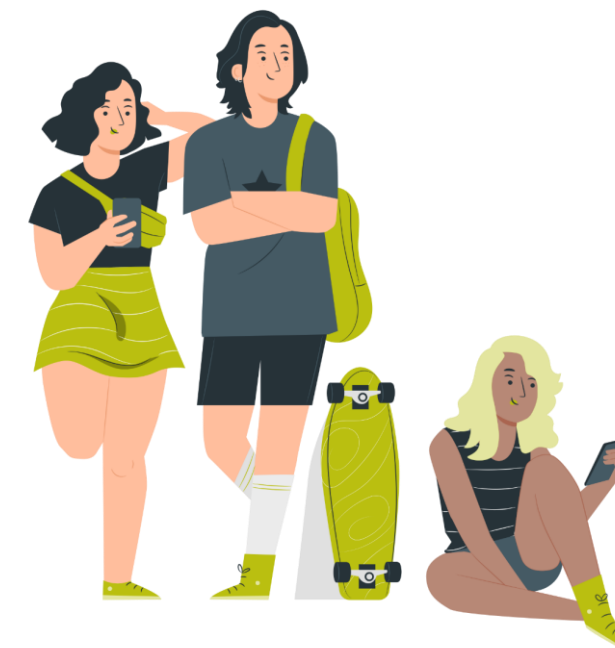
Students in a high school preparatory class who mastered Polish in a level allowing them to participate in classes in that language, were able to participate in mixed classroom lessons as "guest" students.

**FLEXIBILITY**

*You can't write these things in the official documents, or else the pedagogical supervisors would eat me alive.... But all of these permissions for creating classes, hiring people, these formalities... They were all agreed upon over the phone, and we decided to take care of the paperwork two-three weeks later. (CS IDI princ)*

**EDUCATIONAL TRIPS**

Children from the preparatory classes in high school regularly went on trips: they visited public administration offices, participated in meetings organized by NGOs, on which they learned more about the offer for foreigners.

**PURSuing INTERESTS OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL**

In some of the schools, the faculty would look for different ways in which Ukrainian students could grow develop their interests and talents, continuing the activities they did in Ukraine. For example, one of the students was given the option to participate in horse riding classes, another one did figure skating and ballet.



In the mixed classes, lessons were planned and conducted **with the Polish student in mind**.

The lack of clear guidelines/ procedures, of easily accessible didactic materials, the fact teachers lacked competencies in teaching a nationally-diverse group of students of different ages, plus the sense of temporariness of the situation all resulted in the **teachers not including (or minimally including) Ukrainian students into the educational process**. The widely used **google translator didn't work in the long run** – it is a time-consuming communication method, which completely does not fit the reality of a 45-minute lesson.

Ukrainian students were usually given tasks: same as Polish students or alternative ones. At the same time, the latter were often **not fitting with their knowledge or abilities** (i.e 6-graders coloring flags or copying notes), and their purpose was first of all keeping the Ukrainian children occupied and going back to working with Polish students.



***Right now, it's all pretend-learning, next year is going to be actual learning. (CS IDI teach)***

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***At first, they were just sitting there doing nothing. I don't speak Russian or Ukrainian, so I could not create any materials (...) I was looking for various things that could get them interested. (CS IDI teach)***

*I was just so “lucky” that when these Ukrainian kids joined, we were going through a Polish mandatory reading book. How can I require anything from a child that doesn't know the book and doesn't speak Polish? **They were just sitting there. Talking.** Whenever the class was writing, I was talking to them. **I tried speaking Polish through a translator.** Just exchanging simple sentences. (CS IDI Polish teacher)*

*And everyone **just sits there on the lessons playing on their phones.** Because they just get bored when they don't understand. (CS FGI student PL)*

*I rather **try to focus on giving the Polish kids my time, because we have a program to go through and they have the Matura exam...** We're actually forced to focus on our kids, because I can't be certain what happens next with the Ukrainian children. If they will stay in Poland or not. (CS IDI teach)*

Some teachers **were also not interested in giving feedback to Ukrainian students**, because they thought that “it’s not actual learning”. They also lacked information on the students’ level of knowledge and lacked language competencies to provide feedback.

Whether the Ukrainian students will be able to learn anything on the classes depends on their command of Polish and how many children in the class are Ukrainian.

**The better a student knows Polish (active or passive ability), the more they can learn on mixed class lessons.** Not just for the obvious lack of the language barrier, but also as it is easier for the teacher to work with such a student (they more often work with students who have competencies needed for working with them).

Students who know Polish well, and people with high interpersonal skills, are treated the same as Polish students.

A poor level of Polish would limit, or in many cases would make impossible successfully learning in mixed classes.

**The number of Ukrainian children in the class is significant – the more there are, the more “visible” they become for the teacher.** The effort put into preparing extra materials for people from Ukraine seems more justified in the situation when there are more students.

## SOLUTIONS USED

### DUAL PRESENTATION

In one of the high schools in a smaller town, a geography teacher had lessons using a power point presentation she prepared in two languages.

### POP QUIZZES IN TWO LANGUAGES

A biology teacher prepared a pop quiz with instructions in two language versions: Polish and English.

### TEACHER FROM UKRAINE IN MIXED CLASS

*I learned much on math. I could not understand the whole minus and plus thing in Ukraine. But the math teacher in Poland explained it to me. She’s from Ukraine, she speaks Russian. She can really explain things clearly. (CS student from Ukraine)*

### EDUCATIONAL GAMES IN TWO LANGUAGES

In one of the elementary schools, a teacher prepared games in two languages – every token or card had Polish and Ukrainian descriptions.

### ACCEPTING A SOLUTION USED IN UKRAINE

A math teacher allowed a Ukrainian student to present the method of solving a math problem from his school and she later adapted that method to her lesson.

**The inflow of Ukrainian students to Polish schools had no negative impact on the quality of education of Polish students. This is a commonplace opinion among the teachers and students.**

A certain decline in the learning and teaching pace was noticeable only in the first weeks after the new students joined, and the situation was not long-lasting.

Unfortunately, as the data shows, this was largely due to the lack of an actual, conscious planning of processes with the consideration of educational objectives of Ukrainian students and because mixed classes simply chose to “make it” to the end of the year. Speaking directly, the educational needs of the newly arrived students were overlooked.

Moreover, the schools often avoided accepting students to the final grades (8th in elementary, 4th in secondary school), teachers explained this as wanting to protect refugees from exam stress. However, another reason could be that they needed to focus on preparing Polish students for the exams and... The school keeping its position in the rankings.

**Parents were more often concerned about the educational situation of their children:**

- Students from the **oldest years**, who were concerned about the preparation for external exams.
- students from classes that were joined by **many students from Ukraine**.
- students **with diagnosed learning challenges**, because classes became larger and individualisation was limited

No information or guidelines from the Ministry regarding the functioning of schools that accept students from the war migration and the perspective of a long-term situation makes teachers and parents feel concerned about the quality of education of the Polish students in the coming school year.



*These lessons were slower at first, to adapt to everything. **But it's all become quite even now.** (CS FGI student PL)*

*I don't think that the Polish children are losing anything. On the contrary, **they are benefiting, they can see how hard it is for these children** who are taken from their country and put somewhere they don't know. (CS DI z Polish teacher and speech therapist)*

*I feel **the teaching quality dropped**. My child has a learning difficulty, they really gave him great treatment before [worried about class growing larger]. (CS IDI parent PL)*

*Everyone is worried if it won't impact the teaching quality... And we're right before the 8th grade exam... **The school is also not telling us how they will solve that problem.** The first lesson starts September 1st and the pressure will continue growing in us. **There could be conflicts...** Especially as there are many Ukrainians in [name of region]. (CS IDI parent PL)*

*It's about changing your priorities. The students felt like the necessary evil (...) the kids wanted to make up on the material after the break, but 5 people were put in our class. T out of 21 students are Ukrainians. The lessons weren't done normally, instead there was just focus on Ukrainian citizens – **the kids lost so much in the first month.** (CS IDI parent PL)*



## IGNORING THE NEEDS OF UKRAINIAN STUDENTS

*Perhaps, if I focused really strongly on the Ukrainian children and dedicated half of the lesson to them, then our Polish kids would be losing something. But honestly, I did the lessons exactly the same as before. Maybe I added some slight changes, for example I project things and write on the board so the Ukrainian children can copy it. Sometimes I may approach a Ukrainian child and show something, but we're really talking about very minimal changes.  
(CS geography teacher)*

**We have identified factors that supported effective teaching and learning of students from Ukraine**

**COMMUNICATION**
**INTENSIVE COURSE OF POLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE FOR STUDENTS FROM UKRAINE**

Teaching the language of “everyday” communication, as well as the language of education that enables effective learning (such as the terminology of the subjects, instructions).

**TEACHER REMAINING OPEN TO FLEXIBLE COMMUNICATION IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES**

Teachers who use Russian, Ukrainian or English for communicating with students in a situation when they can’t communicate in Polish.

Teachers knowing basics of Russian or Ukrainian.

**STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS THAT SPEAK UKRAINIAN**

Hiring teachers from Ukraine or using the “resource”, that are Ukrainian teachers that had been working in the school before.

Using the help of people from the school’s close environment who speak Ukrainian well (i.e. member of local community, who during the first phase of the kids’ stay in school, would come to the classes and help translate) and cultural assistants to help teachers..

Students who know Ukrainian/ Russian, who went to the school before and who acted as additional translators.

**SIMPLIFICATION AND EASY ACCESS**

Using simplified instructions to the tasks, but also making sure that there is written communication together with verbal.

**DIAGNOZING THE LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE AND EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

From planned conversations with students, all the way to standardized tools.

**EXTENSIVE APPLICATION OF GROUP TASKS**

Using group projects on different subjects, among others to more effectively use the lesson time, to enable students to learn from one another, giving Ukrainian students a more comfortable, more intimate setting to learn than on the forum of the class.

**WORKING WITH LESSON GOALS AND CRITERIA**

Which gives students from Ukraine a clear picture of the scope of a given lesson and making it easier to learn the material presented.

**WORK BASED ON THE STUDENT’S EXPERIENCE**

Enabling students to learn a given subject/ problem using their current knowledge and experiences that students feel safe with (i.e. preparing a presentation about Ukraine on geography, or presentation about a math problem that had been discussed in Ukraine)

**AWARENESS OF THE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IDEA AND THE CONCEPT OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT**

Having certain values that had been internalized by the faculty and that are found in the school’s work culture, result in nobody ever questioning the importance of integrating the children from the war migration.

**PRIOR EXPERIENCES OF THE TEACHERS OF WORKING WITH FOREIGN STUDENTS**
**WORK METHODS**
**OTHER**

**The language barrier takes first place among the obstacles to effective learning and teaching.**

**It is emphasized by the teachers as well as students – from Ukraine, but also Poland, as they look at their peers' situation.**

The term “language barrier/ language” – which came up so often in the research participants' narratives – actually entails several different issues, such as the limitations of new technologies, controversies tied to Russian, not knowing foreign languages or reluctance to use them. Each of these may require different action strategies/ a different offer of support for schools.

**KOMUNIKACJA - BARIERY JĘZYKOWE**

### THE LIMITATIONS OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES

The electronic translator does not provide smooth communication, requires time/ slows down the class dynamics. As a result, it happens often that teachers and students become discouraged and give up on the interaction altogether.

### CONTROVERSIAL RUSSIAN

Using Russian in communication with students from Ukraine is a complex subject. The justification of the opposition to Russian language is the students' reluctance to using the “language of the aggressor”. Although these situations definitely do take place, we have acquired certain data which shows that:

- The argument that students dislike Russian is used to rationalize one's own inhibitions about using Russian
- Students feel that they are expected to show a negative attitude to using Russian.

Students from Ukraine are from regions that speak Ukrainian and Russian. We have not heard of any case in which the problem of using Russian was discussed with the students (teachers rely on their intuitions and own beliefs).

### TEACHERS' RELUCTANCE TO USING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

In some cases, communication in Russian or English could make it easier to work with Ukrainian students (i.e. giving an instruction, explaining a problem). However, the teachers are used to working in a culturally and nationally homogeneous environment - “switching” to other languages is not natural for them. They are also concerned they will be judged for their knowledge of other languages.

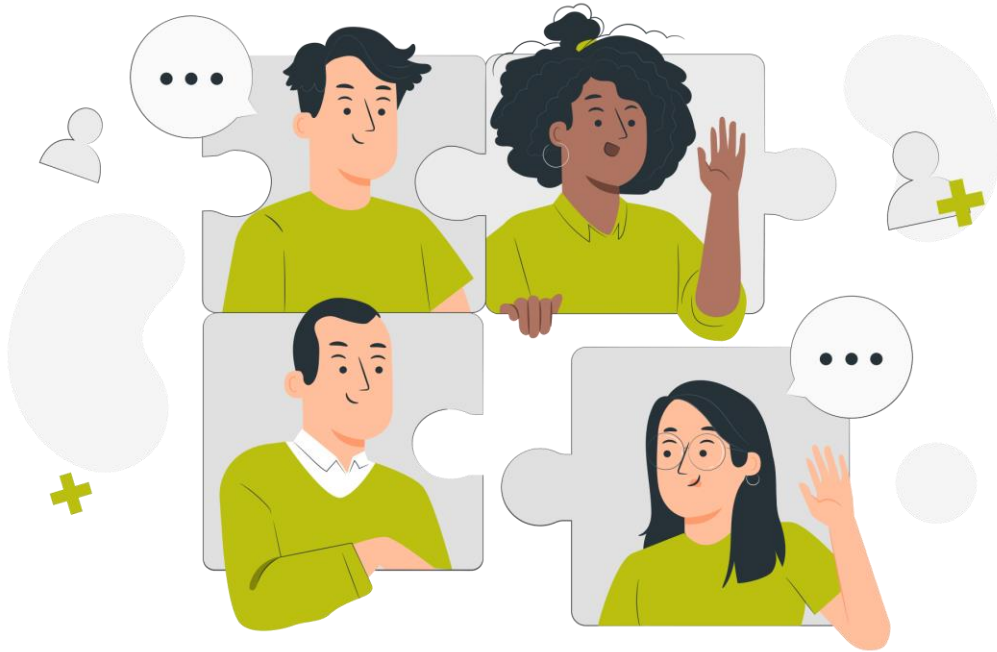
### INSUFFICIENT COMMAND OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Teachers don't always know the languages, their barrier is also the low English level of many students from Ukraine.

### STUDENTS' AVOIDANCE

It is also worth keeping in mind, that the students may signal that they don't understand instructions or the classes as this is their strategy for coping (not coping) with the educational challenges.





*I didn't really want to speak Russian as... Maybe they are traumatized or something, it was just hard. And Ukrainians... Some spoke Polish, it was just all very basic, but they communicated. It worked somehow.*

*[researcher]: But did you ask them about speaking Russian?*

*No, I never did. I never touched on that subject at all. (CS IDI teach)*

## MATERIALS

**LIMITED AVAILABILITY OF DIDACTIC AIDS**

There is a lack of verified, adequate and easily accessible sources with didactic materials for working with foreigner students in the preparatory and mixed classes. See. → [“TEACHER PREPARATION: DIDACTIC MATERIALS”](#)

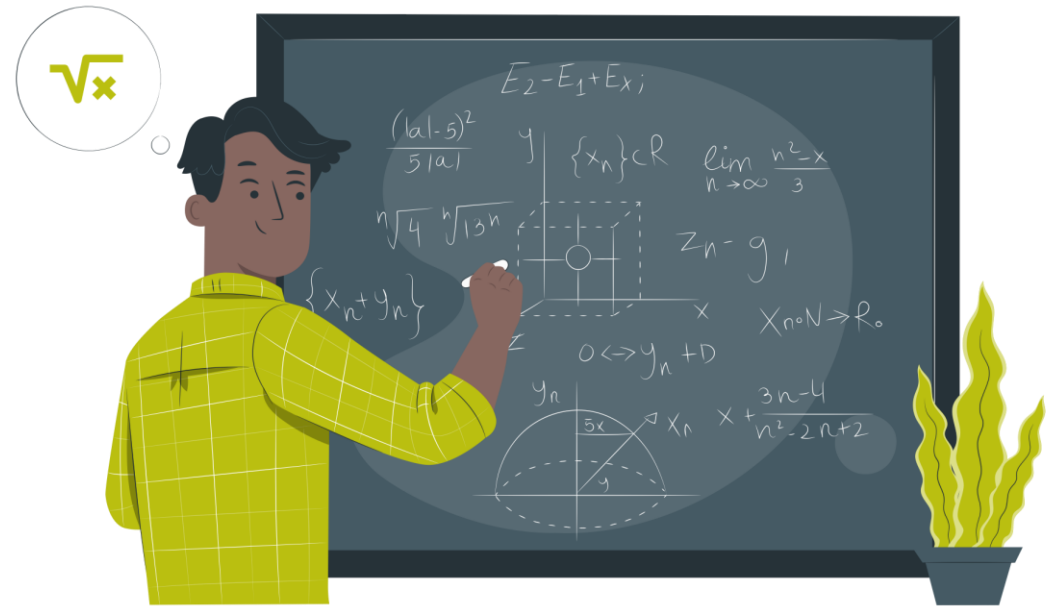
**NO EXPERIENCE OR competencies WORKING WITH AN AGE-DIVERSE AND/ OR CULTURALLY-DIVERSE GROUP**

This is a barrier for achieving educational goals in the preparatory classes and the mixed ones. Even the teachers with prior experience in working with foreigners emphasize that they don't feel prepared to work in classes that are very diverse as far as age goes, with large groups (regarding preparatory classes) or in Polish-Ukrainian classes.

**NO EXPERIENCE AND NO CULTURE OF WORKING ON THE LESSONS USING ACTIVATING METHODS, ENABLING THE STUDENTS TO LEARN FROM ONE ANOTHER**

Methods such as working in groups/ pairs or peer assessment were rarely or never used by Polish teachers even before the war in Ukraine, and their workshop mostly consisted of expository methods. Therefore, even if they feel that activating strategies would be useful, their implementation becomes a huge challenge. In the meantime, limiting the course of the class to only a teacher's lecture, interspersed with questions to students asked in public, makes it harder for foreign students to follow the teacher and gives little time to respond (i.e. answer to the question, to write something down), and it could make students too intimidated to speak up.

## WORK METHODS



**DELIVERY METHOD IS NOT SUITED TO THE NEEDS**

Giving only oral instructions, which is harder for the students to take in. No “reinforcement” or support in the form of a written version.

”

*The language of math or chemical formulas are **easier to understand than giving oral instructions in Polish**. Someone should **translate the instructions on the tests and lessons**. We can write in Polish, but the instructions should at least be in Ukrainian. More things in Ukrainian in general. (CS FGI student UKR)*

**KNOWING DIFFERENT PROBLEM SOLUTIONS**

Students from Ukraine know different solutions to some problems than the ones used in Poland (i.e. math problems), which makes it harder for them to become involved in the classes. Teachers don’t take these differences into consideration.

”

*You all simply solve these tasks differently, that’s why I could not understand what it’s about. It was only later that my classmate explained it to me. (CS FGI student UKR)*

METHODS OF WORK

**LESSON = SUBJECT, NOT THE GOALS OR SUCCESS CRITERIA**

When students’ information about the lesson’s structure is limited only to the subject, they find it difficult to figure out what is key for learning and following all the concepts coming up on the classes.

”

*Teachers had to manage on their own – there was no systemic support. If they knew how to search, they could survive. (CS IDI princ)*

*I only took part in two webinars, but they focused more on integration and how to talk to our kids to make them receive the Ukrainians well... **As far as didactics is concerned, I don’t think I ever found any type of specific aid.** (CS IDI teach)*

METHODS OF WORK

## NOT KNOWING STUDENTS

## LACK OF STUDENT DIAGNOSIS

Teachers usually don't have access to the student's history from the Ukrainian school (documents had usually been destroyed or stayed in Ukraine, parents can't provide information or the language barrier makes it impossible). There is no information on what subjects they were taught, what grades they got, what educational needs they have.

On the other hand, diagnosis is done very rarely in Poland: schools or psychological-pedagogy clinics lack the tools. It was also believed that the effort put into any diagnosis is ineffective when there are only several months left until the end of the year and due to the students' unstable situation (returning to Ukraine).

## ROTATION

Both the arrivals as well as departures of Ukrainian students or their abandoning of school are unexpected. The families often make spontaneous decisions (about staying or leaving), or change their mind at the last second. In such a situation, it is difficult to have systematic, planned work with a single student and the whole class if there are constantly new faces appearing.

The sense of temporariness discourages teachers from working with students from Ukraine and it's frustrating. They feel like their labor is futile.

## OTHER

## DIFFERENCES IN THE CORE CURRICULA

Teachers do not have access to the teaching curricula of subjects in Ukraine, but they also won't put too much effort into reaching such information.



*I have no idea what education level they have at the moment. What schools are they from? Were those vocational schools? High schools or middle schools? Nobody tells us anything about that. (CS IDI teach)*

*I actually did some research to learn what coursebooks they used and when they stopped their education in Ukrainian schools. I found these books online, saw what they should know. **I compared that with your Polish teaching curriculum.** Then, when I wanted to check their knowledge, I picked tasks from Ukrainian coursebooks that fit the stuff we were doing on our lessons. So, the Ukrainian students had to learn things in line with the Polish curriculum, but the instructions were in Ukrainian. It all came out average, but **I was aware that I did all that I could do to help them function in the school.** (CS IDI teach)*

*I rather try to **dedicate my time to the Polish, also because the Matura exam is forcing us to that.** Also, I'm not sure what'll happen with these guys. Are they going to stay in Poland or not? **If I were certain that they will stay in Poland, then obviously I'd have to give them more of my time.** (CS IDI teach)*

*These kids fled from war and it's already great if they took their passports. But school documents? Nobody had that. In the first two or three months, **we had no idea who these kids are and what level they represent.**(CS IDI form tutor from pc)*

*Some of them go back to Ukraine, others arrive here, some stay permanently... Another issue is that **someone is there on my lesson but I can't remember their name,** as they just arrived 2 days ago. (CS IDI ENG teacher from UKR in pc)*

Because Polish schools found themselves in a very urgent situation, and because decisions needed to be made immediately in an overall informative chaos, due to the perceived lack of support from the Ministry of Education, and because there were less than three months of time for working with students from Ukraine and because of the massive student rotation, **there was a general sense that the whole situation is temporary and vague.**

In the preparatory classes, where it was easier to define short-term goals, and where students were “taken care of better” as far as education goes (at least with respect to teaching Polish as a second language) than their mixed-class peers. The former (especially those with poorer command of Polish) were rather in a “vegetative” state of education.

Schools did not find the space or time to plan actions, there was a widespread belief that any planning won’t be effective in such short time (and in such an unstable situation).

**Principals and teachers have enormous expectations of the Ministry of Education with regards to guidelines, that would then constitute a framework for work in the schools (among others with respect to work organisation, making up for differences in the teaching programs, grading rules), but they also require a concrete offer for supporting schools in the conducted actions (didactic materials, teacher training offer, etc).**

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*Honestly, I think we’re **all just waiting for the year to end, soldiering on every day, without any specific plans. At this point, nobody is thinking about becoming involved to help these kids. Instead, everyone is just waiting to survive until the end, and we’ll see what happens in September. I’m no longer thinking about how to involve them or help them. (CS IDI teach)***





## TENSION: “AM I DOING IT RIGHT?”

Thrown into a completely new and unexpected school reality, with “old tools” in hand and feeling alone (in the class or school), teachers feel a strong dose of anxiety and frustration. Their narratives indicate that they need a sense of sureness if their methods are “the right ones”.

They are unsure first of all about the following:

- Grading methods of Ukrainian students
- Creating rules for organizing classwork.
- Strategy for responding in situations when Ukrainian students don’t follow the rules.

*The only thing the Ministry gave me was their resolution. (CS IDI teach)*

”

A subject that comes up many times are the teacher’s dilemmas concerning the rules about mobile phones on the lessons/ during tests/ at school. What speaks in favor of permitting Ukrainian students to use phones are: possibility to use translator apps, staying in touch with their dear ones, the world left behind in Ukraine (according to some teachers, it can help alleviate the trauma, provide a sense of emotional security).

At the same time, teachers feel that the students are not treated fairly (Poles are not allowed to use the phones), which also has consequences for education (the phone is not only used for checking the translation, but also for finding the correct answer). It is an obvious “distractor”. Besides that, it’s not just the teachers’ intuition: Polish students openly say that they feel it is unfair.

Other debatable problems: requiring activity on the lesson, solving problems, doing homework.

*When I first learned we’re going to be participating in this research, honestly, I was frightened. Because... I don’t really know if I’m doing it right? (CS DI teach)*



Grading is the problem that teachers are the most concerned about. The lack of the Ministry's guidelines on how to act, whether they should be grading and what criteria to use is the most frustrating.

Principals declare that the issue of grading Ukrainian students is not a priority in their schools. What is instead more important is focusing on ensuring the student's emotional security. At the same time, in many of the tested schools, there were no school-level systemic solutions that followed.

Teachers would individually decide about the rules on their subjects. This made Ukrainian students feel confused and stressed, they had a problem figuring out the multitude of the solutions.

Furthermore, the lack of concrete guidelines from the Ministry and the announcement communicated in May, about the necessity to credit war migration students generated many negative emotions among the teachers and was a source of stress, uncertainty, and negatively impacted their work comfort.



*I remember this history pop quiz. They were stressed as they didn't even know the language. The teacher say she'd be grading their work and effort, not the Polish, and phew, better. But that's one teacher, others want to give grades (CS IDI assistant)*

*Most of the teachers tried to grade them (Ukrainian students) somehow, but it didn't really work out. (CS IDI parent PL)*

*The teachers feel frustrated, they have expectations, questions are asked as to how to promote the kids to the next grade, how to grade these children. (CS IDI teach).*

*What do I do with this one student that doesn't want to do anything? How do I grade her? **I don't know up to this point**, and it's almost the end of the year. (CS IDI teach)*

### DIFFERENT GRADING STRATEGIES IN SCHOOLS



#### Softening the grades

Using different grading criteria than for Polish students, such as involvement, effort put in, activity.

#### Avoiding giving grades

Giving grades only in last resort, i.e. for tests or for student projects, to be able to give any grade at the end of the school year.

#### Descriptive assessments

They are of course applied as standard in 1-3 elementary levels, but they are also often used by foreign language teachers and preparatory class teachers (regardless of the subject taught). They are however rare.

Art and PE teachers find it easiest to give up grading, whereas teachers of humanities and sciences, or the "exam-required" subjects, such as Polish, math, or history, find it hardest to give up grading.

The opinions of teachers, students and parents about grading Ukrainian students are tied to the culture of the Polish school and the attachment to measuring education outcomes using “hard” indicators.

Most teachers declare that newly arrived students should not be graded, so that they feel more comfortable. But there is a clear tension between this idea, and the need for verifying the effects (which is interesting, because teachers also talk about how teaching refugees is ineffective), for hard proof, becoming part of the system, realizing the motivating role of the grade. This applies both to Polish, as well as Ukrainian teachers.

Polish students display different levels of acceptance for the different grading standards used for Ukrainian students. Most understand this exceptional situation. Many point to the absurdity the idea to grade war migration students in the first period of their stay in Poland and they acknowledge that it would be better to give up grading, instead of using double standards, as it’s just unfair to the Polish students. Polish parents expressed similar opinions.

On the other hand, Ukrainian students emphasize the need for being treated equally to Polish students. They don’t want to be seen as the privileged group. An additional challenge is adapting to the Polish grading system.



*We keep telling ourselves that we’re not comparing the Polish and Ukrainian kids. That the C is different for a Polish child and a Ukrainian child. But is that the right way to go? (CS DI teach)*

*Whenever I take any test, I give the Ukrainians something much easier than what the others have. And they solve problems using different methods. I do that to give them some grades. But I’d prefer for them to be following our program, if they are in this classroom, you know, like the other students. (CS IDI teach)*

*There’s this idea that: <If you’re not giving me a grade, I won’t study>. There has to be some kind of reward for what you do. That’s why (CS IDI teacher in pc)*

*[students from Ukr] won’t be quizzed on lessons in the same way, so that they have higher grades and we don’t pressure or require too much, or else the child becomes stressed. (CS IDI teacher assistant)*

*When they first started saying on television that they are here on the same rules as the other students, so they should have a school graduation certificate, then we started introducing tests for them, because they didn’t care for the lessons at first. It was only after they figured out we’re going to be grading them that they started learning. (CS IDI teach)*

*They say: Why did Serhij get an A without doing anything? He gets an A for effort, I got a D because I got the answer wrong. I mean, I don’t blame them. (CS IDI teach)*

*When our Sasza does poorly on a test, the teacher won’t grade it. I understand that, because they don’t know what’s going on here, they were learning different things in Ukraine. (CS FGI student PL)*

*I can’t learn if there’s no grades. If I were learning and there were no grades, then it would not be a school for me. I like the grades. (CS FGI student UKR)*

*I know it’s all a sham, but teachers have to come up with a way to grade them, but it’s pointless for them to ask papers. They can’t learn what we have. They left their education and got into the middle of ours. (CS, FGI student PL)*

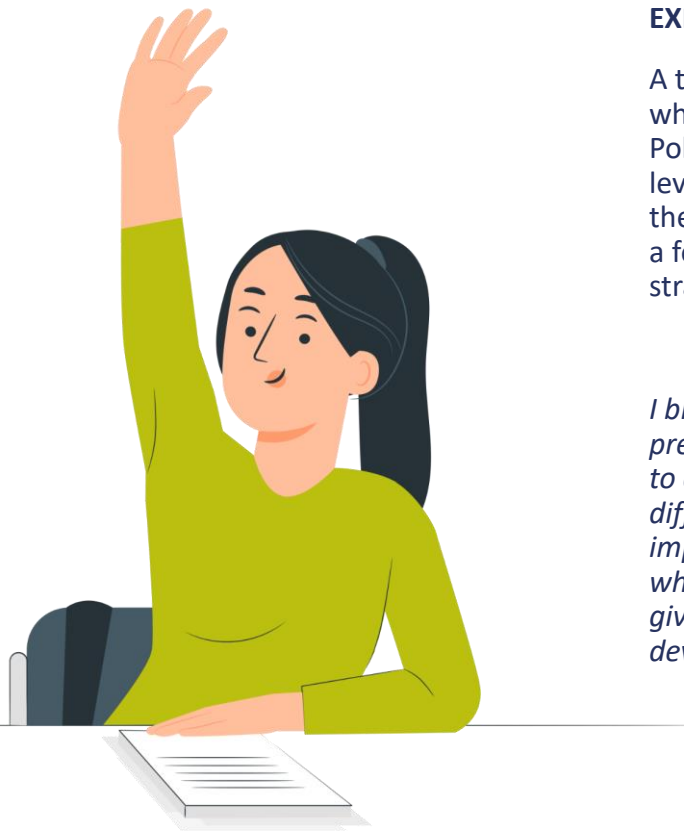
*It’s good that the English teacher gave me an E, because I didn’t know how to answer. It was fair. Nobody was asking why I got an A if the other girl didn’t. (CS, FGI students UKR)*

### FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT AND IMPACT OF PANDEMIC TEACHING

In one of the schools, the experience of the pandemic transformed the meaning of “traditional” grading. Respondents noticed the necessity for investing in relations between members of the school community. For many years, the school has been implementing formative teaching, and the pandemic has speeded up the change of the grading system. All of these are positively impacting the grading of Ukrainian students: teachers don’t feel the pressure of using grades, don’t see any benefits to such a solution.

New Ukrainian students are also receiving feedback from the teachers.

*Yes. If they do anything and i.e. do something I ask of them very well, they get feedback, I say that it was very good and if you want, I can give you a grade. The others are writing a character bio, you can write a short description and then yes, I give them a grade. Of course, they read it out later in front of the class and that is a practice of reading out loud. You know, it also allows them to brag sometimes and they enjoy that. (CS, IDI teach pc)*



### EXPERIENCE

A teacher in elementary school mentioned a situation when Polish students refused to accept that the tests for Polish and Ukrainian students had different difficulty levels. She invited Polish students to a simulation – so they can experience what it’s like to receive education in a foreign language and to show what’s behind her strategy.

*I brought this very simple Russian exercise, that was prepared by a foreign student and asked Polish students to do it. (...) They never complained about the different difficulty levels again, so perhaps it worked. It’s just important to show that it’s harder for these kids, which is why they have easier tasks... But it doesn’t mean we’re giving them leeway, we’re just giving them time to develop. (CS IDI\_teach)*

## TWO SYSTEMS SIMULTANEOUSLY

A description of the education integration would not be complete without mentioning that some Ukrainian students function in two parallel educational systems – Polish and Ukrainian.

In the past year, some of the students from Ukraine also attended a Ukrainian online school.

There were various **motivations** for doing so:

- Precaution if they were returning to their home country (so that their education continued uninterrupted).
- Wanting to stay in touch with their classmates (contact with their “pre-war life”) = emotional security.
- For students from the oldest secondary school classes: possibility to complete their education and pass the Matura exam, which could be their ticket to continued education in Ukraine or in other countries.

The Polish school also gave them the possibility of using new opportunities created by the Polish educational system, and meant that younger students are cared for when their mothers are working.

**In consequence, they are living in two worlds, as well as...**

- Students are more burdened with schoolwork, lack of time i.e. to connect with others, for social life, integration.
- Skipping classes in Polish school, irregular attendance, hence more difficulties learning the material, slower pace of learning Polish

Many schools did not raise the issue of education in the Ukrainian system. The principal and teachers, despite being aware of this phenomenon, would leave this up to the parent to decide and did not touch on this problem at all.

In the meantime, it is an important aspect and a challenge for the new school year, to ensure the co-existence of the Polish and Ukrainian school, so that the students can meet their needs as specified on the left.

At present, remote education at Ukrainian schools happening in parallel with learning Polish at a Polish, offline school, requires the principals to carefully navigate current legal solutions and it raises problems connected to funding classes.



*The children completed their education online [Ukrainian education], but they are also using extra Polish classes here. It's a good solution, but... We see no legal justification for it. It's either all, or nothing. There's no intermediary solution, they can't be learning online in Ukraine and doing Polish here. I mean, it would be a solution, because then we would receive funding and just teach Polish on the afternoon classes. (CS IDI princ)*

## PRACTISES IMPLEMENTED

One of the schools considered it valuable if Polish and Ukrainian education could be done in parallel. Ukrainian parents and students from the last or penultimate secondary school grades were encouraged to that solution and attempts were made to help them. In this model, **the preparatory class in Poland is supposed to help “acclimatisation” in Poland**, preparing them to function smoothly (language learning, knowledge of the educational path, competence in taking care of legal matters that permit stay/work in Poland), preparing for education and/or work.

At the same time, **learning in a Ukrainian school makes it possible to pass the Matura exam**, which is a ticket to university, including in Poland.



*We keep telling them that they should absolutely not discontinue their Ukrainian education (...) They can always leave the Polish class, we have a specially prepared room and computers. (CS IDI princ)*

*This is exceptionally important [that they graduate from a Ukrainian school]. As that way, they can get the Ukrainian Matura, and then choose whatever. But if they get into our system, they also get that chance. (CS IDI teach with pc)*



The predominant belief is that Ukrainian students are presently not prepared for passing Polish external exams (8th grader's exam, Matura).

The barrier in this case is insufficient command of Polish, to a degree that would enable taking the exams and inability to learn the basic curriculum requirements from the Matura subject.

According to the teachers and principals, external exams should be taken by students who had all the time needed to learn Polish to a degree that allows more than just communication, but also complete participation in the education and – what's equally important – learning the exam subject material.

At the same time, there is a lack of solutions on how to proceed with students from Ukraine, who are at an age making them eligible for joining the exam classes, without shutting their door to continued education.

In the past school year, the schools' strategy was to allow these students to join the younger grades, but this was an ad hoc action and won't work in the long run.

It is essential to plan support for students not just for intensive language learning, but also to help learn the study material expected on the exams. At present, students who are sufficiently motivated to catch up on the material differences outside the school, plan to study the coursebooks by themselves during the Summer, or to use paid tutoring.



”

*They show up and have an exam two months later. They can't stand a chance during these exams and then, they are sent to much worse schools, only because they don't speak the language. So... **This absolutely should not concern them.** I can't really say what system should be used to admit them to schools, but it should not be exam-based as much as with our students. (CS IDI\_teach pc)*

***It's not right that a child that was learning Ukrainian history for 5 years is now expected to pass a Polish history exam.** (CS IDI form tutor from UKR with pc)*

*I remember this student, she simply showed me history and said **that she has to read all of that in the Summer, all the way to September.** "I'll do it, you'll see". (CS IDI teach)*



### UKRAINIAN STUDENTS

- Learning Polish to a degree that enables comfortable communication and learning at a Polish school.
- Support in overcoming language barriers (instructions in Ukrainian, bilingual work sheets, bilingual coursebooks, etc.)
- Help in quickly and effectively catching up on differences in the curriculum
- Acquiring effective feedback that helps to study
- Possibility to continue education in Poland
- Possibility to discover and pursue interests
- Graduating from Ukrainian school/ getting a Ukrainian Matura = opportunities for future education not only in Ukraine
- The need to be treated the same by teachers as Polish students



### POLISH STUDENTS

- Need for transparent grading criteria (and more broadly – educational requirements)
- Need for an undisturbed process of studying
- Need for undisturbed process of preparing for external examinations



*We all jumped on a running train, and it was going fast. (CS, form tutor in PC from UKR)*

## TEACHERS in PREPARATORY CLASSES

### FROM UKRAINE:

- Need for safety – stable employment, clear rules of employment (contract length, conditions/ possibility to extend contract, scope of responsibilities, etc.)
- “Onboarding” – introduction into procedures, specific character of working at school (i.e. training on how to use Librus, informing about teacher office hours, or use of school equipment, etc.).
- Support in defining their career development in Poland (showing opportunities, benefits and limitations).
- Support in using the development offer (i.e. subsidizing/ funding trainings, University courses; work time organisation, support in child care).
- Meeting teachers from Poland who teach children from Ukraine, providing a space/ platform for planning educational processes together.

### LOSS OF A UKRAINIAN TEACHER

*In one of the schools with many Ukrainian students, one of the Ukrainian teachers – a pillar of the organisation and excellent supporter of the preparatory classes – decided to migrate further to the USA, because her contract was not extended in June and she was not sure about her employment in September. That teacher is most likely not coming back, which is a huge loss for the school, due to her experience and great preparation for work.*

### ALL:

- Didactic materials for teaching Polish as a foreign language, for leaning subjects in Ukrainian, in mixed-age groups.
- Ideas for exercises/ scripts of classes that engage students (learning through fun).
- Work methods that enable effectively learning foreign languages in a crowded classroom (i.e. group work, techniques of learning from one another, feedback from colleagues, etc.).
- Support in dealing with difficult emotions
- Easy access to knowledge about the Ukrainian education system, with an analysis of the differences in the program for specific subjects/ grades.
- Clear procedures for how students move from preparatory to mixed classes and an information flow system between teachers in this field.

## NEEDS OF TEACHERS FROM PREPARATORY CLASSES - VERBATIM



*In the first month there were so many things to take care, it was just hard. Why didn't anyone tell me where things are? And they were all in Librus. (CS form tutor from pc)*

*I get my information from the Internet or books... But I don't have many Ukrainian books here, as I thought I'll just spend a week or two here. I have a lot of information from the Internet, same goes for exercises, and I like coming up with tasks for them to do, something they won't find online (CS ENG teacher from UKR in PC)*

*We don't plan together. We just go on field trips together. And that's all we did together. Besides that, we don't have time, it was just three months and we didn't know at all what to do or how to do it together (CS teacher from UKR, pc)*



### TEACHERS in MIXED CLASSES

- Ministry guidelines regarding the organisation of didactic processes in mixed classes (including teaching rules)
- Simple and quick access to didactic materials for teaching students from Ukraine.
- Didactic materials for working with a mixed-nationality class
- Tips on how to conduct lessons in such a class (scripts)
- Being aware of differences in the Polish and Ukrainian teaching curricula (presented in a synthetic and transparent manner)
- Knowing any possible special educational needs of Ukrainian students
- Developing competencies with respect to using activating methods on the classes, to enable students to learn from one another.
- Certainty that I'm teaching and grading Ukrainian students "in the right" way (however, "right" is an elusive category, most often it means "in compliance with the Ministry guidelines").
- |Growing competencies in the field of teaching younger children
- Psychological-pedagogical diagnosis of students from Ukraine, knowing their educational experience thus far, the family's situation and plans
- Ability to communicate better with the parents (translator)
- Work comfort, not being overburdened with responsibilities
- Support in managing difficult emotions
- Easy access to knowledge about the Ukrainian education system, together with an analysis of curriculum differences for specific subjects/ grades



# Relations with the parents and carers



The narratives of Ukrainian parents are filled with many positive opinions about Polish schools. Many of these opinions result from the special situation that foreign students found themselves in. What is emphasized are the partnership-based, “direct” relations of teachers with students, lack of homework or not having too much study materials. Parents also like the school’s new infrastructure.

### PARENTS ARE GRATEFUL AND HAPPY

Parents are very happy about their contacts with the school. It is linked not just due to their sense of a partnership-based relationship and fruitful cooperation, but to the gratitude for the support shown (material aid, admitting the child to school, etc). However, the parents themselves actually have few interactions with the school staff, and these are limited mostly to organisational matters (signing permissions to participate in classes, being informed about events at the school, etc.). Some of the parents participating in the study had only a single interaction with the principal and teachers when they were enrolling the child into the school. Parents don’t seem to want to change this situation.

”

*School is on a different level here, it’s organized so different than Ukrainian school. The teacher’s are more tolerant towards the children. And interactions with the parents are so different. The reception has been so warm. (CS IDI parent UKR)*

*When I need to, I sometimes call the parents – I have a colleague that translates. They have my number as well. They never call. (CS IDI teach form tutor).*

*You see, we never even needed to offer anything. There was just so much care for our children, that we never needed anything ourselves. We were given so much. (CS IDI parent UKR)*



### CONTACT PERSONS

At the schools, individual people contact Ukrainian parents, due to their knowledge of Russian, Ukrainian or their role (form tutor). At that point, they are responsible for communication regarding everyday things such as organisation, education, or material support. Whenever it is required, they need the help of a translator (another teacher, students).

### FEW OPPORTUNITIES TO CONTACT THE SCHOOL AND OTHER PARENTS

The school relatively rarely creates a space where teachers and Polish parents can connect with Ukrainian parents. Especially when they don’t constitute a sizeable minority in the school community. In the mixed classes, the parents did not always receive invitations to parent-teacher meetings, or they were invited to other dates.

During the parent-teacher conferences, parents of newly-arrived students were, according to the Polish parents, rather passive, which was explained by the language barrier.

### SPACES FOR INTEGRATION

Opportunities for interactions and connecting: activities, courses organized for parents (by the school or other entities, such as community centers, NGOs).

**Declarations are made that it is only at the start of the new school year – provided that the students stay in Poland – that the parents will be involved more in the life of the class or school.**

## WHAT HELPS THE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND PARENTS OF UKRAINIAN STUDENTS?

- Getting to know the school, the work methods (i.e. receiving a tour of the school, contact information of key people – principal, form tutor, pedagogue, training students in the use of the electronic diary)
- Choosing communication channels with the school
- Using instant messengers to stay in touch, to connect with a larger group (teachers, other parents)
- Using messengers that are well-known by and used by parents of Ukrainian students (Viber, Telegram) guarantees that they will be used
- Inviting parents to the parent-teacher meetings, form tutor staying personally in touch with them



*We have this **group on Telegram, and everyone is in that group.** Whenever the principal wants to write something to us, they just write – I have this job for you. Or a trip, museum, pizza, we're leaving tomorrow, give kids jackets.>> (CS IDI parent from UKR pc)*

***We don't understand everything on the electronic grade book...** All the information is there, and the teachers write everything there, but we don't understand Polish, these parents are like kids [laughs]. That's when I help out (CS IDI assistant).*

## WHAT MAKES COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND PARENTS OF UKRAINIAN STUDENTS HARDER?

- Women from Ukraine having jobs and taking care of other family members (i.e. younger children) – not as available and not willing to become involved
- Difficulty contacting the parents (don't pick up the phone, don't write back to emails)
- High rotation, leaving for Ukraine without warning
- Cultural differences
- Teachers believing the systems and cultures are similar (they don't feel the need for preparing special instructions or solutions)
- Excluding Ukrainian parents from the communication channels normally used in the school (parent groups on WhatsApp, parent teacher conferences).
- Necessity to use an interpreter (not always available, extra effort)



***I won't make it for the school year ending.** I work in a hospital and I can't get a day off. (CS IDI parent UKR)*

*The system **does not really differ** from the Polish one, so the parents won't be surprised. (CS IDI German teach)*

***I don't think the school cooperates with the parents that much in Ukraine.** They just let the child go there, the child needs to graduate and come back. It's not like they require the parent to be involved in anything. It's a former Eastern Block country after all. (CS IDI pedagogue)*

The character of the parents' relationship to the school varies from school to school. Among other things, it depends largely on whether the school had previous contacts with foreigner families and if they developed solutions in this area, and whether it is possible to connect (rotation intensity, accessibility to people who speak the language, responsiveness of the parents, etc.)

It needs to be stressed that regardless of the above, there are definitely differences in the school – parents relations depending on the type of class that students attend.

At the same time, it needs to be stressed that we noticed very few “touchpoints” of Ukrainian parents with the Polish community. Creating such a space was not the object of interest of the faculty in the schools participating in the study.

### PREPARATORY CLASSES

Parents are “looked after”, their needs are more focused on:

- **The school (teachers, principal) stays constantly in touch** with the parents. They are informed about current events at the school, offered support possibilities, students' activities.
- **Different communication channels are used, attention is drawn to parents' preferences** in this field (i.e. groups on IM apps used by parents – Viber, Telegram; parent-teacher conferences at convenient times, agreed upon with the parents).

**The offer for the parents is a conscious action, intended to support student integration, and designed as complementary to working with students.** For example, the offer of Polish language classes, CV writing/ job market navigation, taking care of administrative issues, etc. This translates into more effective communication, the meeting of needs, emotional security, etc.

### No contact with parents of students from Poland

Ukrainian parents function as a separate community, contacting only the faculty and staff of the school that works in the preparatory classes.

### MIXED CLASSES

Parents contact the teachers/ form tutors less often. Interactions are sometimes limited to Librus or phone call with interventions, whenever a specific problem arises.

**They are not always invited to parent teacher conferences** for parents of Polish students. If they are there – they don't always understand what is going on.

**Very few, isolated cases when they interacted with parents of children from Poland** (they were on the meeting together but did not interact). Different relations with Polish parents are incidental and follow from after-school situations (hosting a Ukrainian family, living in the neighborhood).

**The experiences from the schools with children from the previous migration show that as time goes by, parents from mixed classes successfully integrate (they join the parents' council, join specific class IM groups, etc). The process takes place faster in the case of parents who know Polish.**



*We can contact via the grading book, and we have a whatsapp group. One of them [Ukrainian parent from the pre-war migration] is part of the class council, they are active. The new Ukrainians aren't on Whatsapp though. (CS IDI rodzic PL)*

Examples of actions aimed at parents, with the idea that effective integration of refugee children requires including parents in the process and directing a specific support offer to them.

#### ACTIONS AIMED AT INTEGRATING THE UKRAINIAN COMMUNITY

One of the schools organized a Mother's Day celebration dedicated to people newly arrived from Ukraine. The Polish parents weren't very interested, but it united the Ukrainian community and allowed them to identify one another.

#### STARTING MEETING FOR PARENTS

In one of the schools, when the students began attending the preparatory classes, a meeting was also organized for the parents.

*The school created a group on a social networking portal with the teachers, the principal. Messages were exchanged all the time. We were always discussing things. Asking questions. Responses came so quickly. We came to school every Friday. The school offered the parents of students free Polish language courses. (IDI parent UKR)*

#### CAREER CONSULTING AND TRAINING

Courses for parents on how to write a CV, consultations on how to find jobs, information about occupations, available professional courses, etc.

#### POLISH LANGUAGE COURSE FOR PARENTS

The school organized a free Polish language course for the parents of kids attending the school.

#### OTHER

Meetings intended to familiarize the parents with Polish legal regulations concerning matters such as welfare, the job market, how to take care of administrative issues, etc.

Meeting for parents of high school students focused on the kids' educational options after graduating secondary school.





## POLISH PARENTS' PERSPECTIVE

Alongside the enormous compassion, parents express their concerns about the coming school year and the impact of the Ukrainian students' presence on teaching quality.

Schools don't always provide transparent and up-to-date information that would address their concerns.

Until recently, any communication between parents from Poland and the school about Ukrainian students was practically dominated by material needs and the (co)organisation of various kinds of donation events.

Some parents don't need to be continuously updated on the situation and actions undertaken for the Ukrainian students and their families. However, the lack of transparent communication from the school gives rise to speculations about the situation of Ukrainian families (and their alleged privileges) and fuels prejudice. There were also instances in which, despite the teachers' good intentions, parents judged their actions negatively (first of all applies to different grading standards). This is not conducive to mutual understanding and integration.

Most of the Polish parents were positive and displayed understanding towards refugee students and their families. However, in the face of the drawing out war and the deteriorating economic situation in Poland, one can expect a rise in xenophobic attitudes.



*The school had this request – if any of the teachers can help... It was about pencils, books, pens. These children had nothing. Me and my husband even raised some donations in our building and helped these six kids. (CS IDI parent POL)*

*No, I don't have any contacts with these Ukrainian parents. There was like 1 meeting with them. But the focus was just on the fact that our kids are bad and the Ukrainian ones are fitting in so perfectly. Really odd. (CS IDI parent PL)*

*The school **failed to inform** us how it's going to look when the Ukrainian kids are going to join. Our children simply learned on a given day that there's going to be a new student. (CS IDI parent PL)*

***It is not the objective of the Polish school, to teach Ukrainian children during the school year. Polish schools are for residents of Poland (including foreigners), who are living here permanently, not temporarily. We need to separate the humanitarian attempts from education. (CS IDI parent)***







### UKRAINIAN PARENTS

- Need for security and stability (i.e. stable employment)
- Support in learning how children function in Polish schools, how to use the tools (electronic grade book).
- Need help adapting in Poland (not all)
- Material aid (receiving items needed for school)
- Access to an offering of activities that help hone the kids' interests
- Support in planning the child's continued education
- Professional psychological support
- Need for connection with teachers and parents in the child's class (need for belonging)



### POLISH PARENTS

- Transparent information about the current situation of Ukrainian students at the school, the solutions used (i.e. concerning grading) together with their explanations
- Informing about how teachers will be working with Polish students in the new school year, what actions the school intends to carry out to go ahead with the program and to prepare students for exams
- Level of education at the school not dropping, smoothly going ahead with the program and preparing students for exams



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