



Ukrainian Children and Adolescents in Poland

NOTE FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS



WHO ARE WE? WHAT ARE WE DOING?

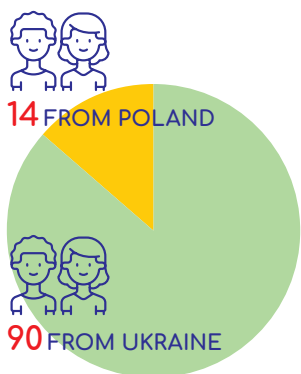
Hello! We are a team of researchers who work together to improve children's and adolescents' safety, their physical and emotional wellbeing, social cohesion and educational opportunities. Together, we conducted research to learn about the experiences of children and adolescents who came from Ukraine to Poland as a result of the war.

Moving to another country because of war can make the life of children and adolescents different, and sometimes difficult. We wanted to learn from them about their everyday life, experiences, and the challenges they face, so that we can support them better, and so that young people's voices can be heard.



HOW DID WE DO THE RESEARCH?

As part of this study, we talked to 90 children and adolescents from Ukraine who live in Poland (Kraków, Warsaw and Wrocław). We also talked to 14 Polish children and adolescents. Next is a picture which shows the range of children we talked to overall.



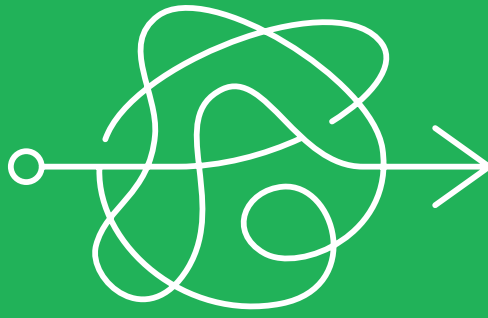
The first time we met with them, we gave them polaroid cameras to take pictures related to their lives. During our second meeting, we talked about the pictures they took and their experiences of living in Poland. We asked them questions along the lines of:

1. HOW DO THEY SPEND THEIR TIME AFTER THEY MOVED TO POLAND?

2. HOW ARE THEY LEARNING AND HOW IS SCHOOL FOR THEM?

3. HOW IS THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH POLISH CHILDREN AND ADULTS?

We also met with Polish children and asked them about the Ukrainian children they knew or had come across.



Pic. 1: "He [fictional character] started playing... More precisely, he started playing computer games, kind of shooters. Well, he plays in the [gamers'] community, of course. In the whole world". Facilitator: "Why did he start?" "Maybe to suppress his feelings of sadness for Ukraine". (Gromsko, 17, boy from Ukraine).



THEY TOLD US ABOUT THEIR EMOTIONS AND WELLBEING

- Many of the children and adolescents we talked to told us that they miss their loved ones and pets that remained in Ukraine.
- They also said that they feel lonely in Poland, and that they don't have that many deep friendships yet.
- Around half of the children and adolescents we spoke to mentioned that they would like to speak to a professional to support them with their mental health and emotional wellbeing. They also said that they would prefer it if that person spoke Ukrainian.
- They spoke about their difficult financial situations, and some of them (especially older adolescents) reported that they are working to make money and support their family.
- To overcome stress, many children and adolescents engage in activities that cheer them up and improve their emotions: some play sports, some do art, some spend time in nature or with their pets. They also told us that they want to know about other activities in which they can participate.



Pic. 2: "It was a bit easier to find [a flat] with a dog than a cat. I know, I also have a friend of my mother's who was looking for a flat with a cat, and she was told that it was not allowed, but they were ready to move us into this flat [with a dog]. I have a dog. Here, a dog" (Tarico, 16, girl from Ukraine).



Pic. 3: "[Cats] help you cope with stress. It's also great to have them around, they're like family members. But it's hard to live with them in Poland. You come here and we couldn't find an apartment for a long time with this cat [...] And then we found it because of the cat. Because the landlady likes red cats. And she actually rented us the flat." (R, 15, girl from Ukraine).



THEY ALSO TOLD US ABOUT SCHOOL AND LEARNING

- Most of the children and adolescents we talked to attend both Polish schools and Ukrainian online classes, which leaves them hardly any free time. Some older adolescents staying in Poland are frustrated that they will need to attend school for a few more years due to the differences between the Polish and Ukrainian school systems.
- Children and adolescents face many challenges in Polish schools. For example, they may struggle with learning in the Polish language. However, they like going to Polish schools because it helps them to better plan their time, meet and see friends, and learn Polish. They also are happy with the teachers and the intercultural assistants who provide them with support.
- Children attending online Ukrainian schools shared relatively negative feedback about online learning for various reasons, including that they found it hard to spend long hours in front of the computer screen. They would prefer to attend online classes at centres where they can meet and learn together with other children and adolescents and get support from teachers there.
- Adolescents who are about to graduate from school were concerned about their higher education and needed help getting more information about opportunities and choosing a path.



Pic. 4: "I actually approached her [the teacher] today and she came to take a picture." (S, 17, girl from Ukraine).



Pic. 5: "I don't like the distance learning! Here's a picture of me, there's a bunch of papers, a laptop, and there's just a huge workload in the 11th grade. You just lie there and die." (SH, 17, boy from Ukraine).

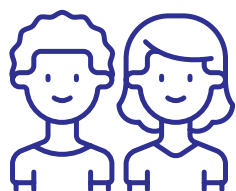


Pic. 6: "This is the Polish and Ukrainian flag and so on, and this is the EU flag, I guess". (Fikus, 17, girl from Ukraine).

Pic. 7: "I made this. This is what I like about Polish school. This is me, and these are my friends and teachers. A characteristic feature here is the bracelets in the colours of Ukraine and Poland" (Capybara, 11, girl from Ukraine).



Pic. 8: "I meant the fist because there were often quarrels during physical education... there was a kicking between students from Poland and students from Ukraine". (Kartofelus, 12, girl from Ukraine).



Pic. 9: "I took a picture of weeds to... because weeds need to be pulled out, and... they [Ukrainians] have bad habits. Disgusting habits that should be weeded" (Serduszko, 12, girl from Poland).

Pic. 10: "I have a picture of a teddy bear with a heart, because I mean that other countries have seen what kind of heart we have, like this teddy bear. And that's why I wanted to show this photo" (Gwiazdka, 11, girl from Poland).

THEY TOLD US ABOUT BEING IN POLAND.



- Many of the children and adolescents we spoke to did not feel like they belonged in Poland. They either wanted to go back to Ukraine or travel somewhere else.
- Some shared with us stories about bullying and mistreatment which they or other Ukrainian children have experienced from Polish children and adults, in schools and public spaces. However, other children shared positive experiences of support by their Polish classmates and teachers.
- Because they still don't speak Polish very well, they don't spend much time with Polish children, who may not understand their situation either. They instead spend more time with Polish adults who support them, such as teachers and landlords.

NEXT STEPS

We will share information collected from the children and adolescents with the government, policymakers and other organisations to plan new policies and activities addressing concerns brought up by the young people we spoke to.



TO HELP CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS FEEL BETTER AND BE HEALTHY:

- We want to work with the government and schools to share more information about activities and services that children can attend to improve their mental health and emotional wellbeing. We will ask them to provide these activities free of charge and by Ukrainian speaking professionals.
- We want to work with families and teachers to enhance their capacity to help children and adolescents, and provide them with emotional support.
- We want to work with mothers to help them manage any anxiety or stress.
- We want to provide extracurricular activities for Ukrainian children to provide them with more opportunities to make friends and connect with their peers.



TO HELP CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS WITH THEIR STUDIES:

- We want to work with teachers to help them support Ukrainian children in schools.
- We want to work with the government and school headmasters to add more Ukrainian assistants in schools.
- We want to work with the government and schools to guide children and adolescents through higher education and college.



TO HELP CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS LIVE BETTER IN POLISH SOCIETY:

- We want to create spaces for Ukrainian and Polish children to meet, play, and spend time together outside of school, by offering activities such as art workshops, sports and trips.
- We want to work with other organisations, the local government and schools to inform young people about available activities they can attend in their free time.
- We want to work with other organisations to provide Polish and Ukrainian language classes for Ukrainian children and adolescents.



DO YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS OR IDEA ABOUT WHAT WE COULD DO TO HELP YOU WITH BETTER LIVING AND INTEGRATING IN POLAND?

Is there anything you would like us to do to make you feel better in Poland?

Let us know via the link below or scanning the QR code. We will make sure to read your message and try to include your suggestions in our work.

<https://ee.humanitarianresponse.info/x/wbicNaHJ>

