

Education of Ukrainian refugees: an initial policy dialogue amongst refugee receiving jurisdictions

Seminar report (3-4 May 2022)



Education International
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Since the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, millions have fled Ukraine for neighboring countries-Poland, Romania, Moldova, Hungary, and Slovakia. According to the UNHCR, 90% of those arriving are women and school age children (under 18 years old).

While the Ukrainian refugee crisis poses unprecedented challenges, during the last decades many international organisations, governments, trade unions and civil society networks have acquired immeasurable evidence of policies and practice on how to ensure successful inclusion of refugee students and teachers in education.

Thus, Education International (EI) organised a two-day hybrid seminar to pull the existing knowledge base together, in collaboration with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and hosted by Związek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego (ZNP), EI member organisation in Poland, Związek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego (ZNP). The seminar aimed to create a space for exchange and dialogue between educators and education authorities, to help design tailor-made solutions that effectively support and address the various needs of refugees, education personnel and education systems in hosting countries.

Utilising a cross-sectoral approach, the event brought together representatives of local jurisdictions, policymakers and education trade unions from Ukraine and bordering countries, as well as representatives of international organisations with experience in the field of migrant/ and refugee education. Participants joined online and on-site in Warsaw, Poland on May 3rd and 4th 2022. The seminar was organised into five sessions, and Mialy Dermish, of the SIRIUS Policy Network on Migrant Education served as the event moderator.

The objectives of the different sessions were to:

- Identify and discuss challenges and needs in relation to refugees' education (sessions 1 & 2);
- Facilitate international exchanges concerning lessons learnt from previous crises in other contexts (sessions 3 & 4);
- Initiate a conversation about short- and medium-term policy options to support the education of Ukrainian refugees in hosting jurisdictions and possible international support in this regard (session 5).

Seminar overview

Following opening remarks by David Edwards (Education International General Secretary), Andreas Schleicher (Director for the Directorate of Education and Skills and Special Advisor to the Secretary-General of the OECD), and Larry Flanagan (President of EI's European Region – the European Trade Union Committee for Education), speakers from Ukraine addressed the group.



In an online intervention, Andriy Vitrenko, First Deputy Minister for Education and Science of Ukraine, provided participants with an update on the situation of education in Ukraine, stressing that, at the time, over 100 educational institutions, 10 to 15% of all education institutions in the country, had been destroyed, with many others severely damaged.

The First Deputy Minister also spoke of the online resources the Ukrainian government is making available to support the education of refugee students, including online classes and schoolbooks in Ukrainian. Olha Chabaniuk, Vice President of the Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Ukraine, EI member organisation in the country, spoke of the impact of the war on education and the teaching profession. The union leader stressed that because many Ukrainian teachers are women, a significant part of the profession has now fled the war to neighbouring countries.

Interventions were also made by Maryna Mruga, a State Expert from the Directorate of Pre-higher Professional and Higher Education of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, and Vitaliy Nosok, State Expert from the Directorate of Pre-higher Professional and Higher Education of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, on the challenges posed by national standardised testing and academic mobility for university students. They also discussed the use of online content provided by the ministry, including video lessons and online textbooks.

In the second session, information on the needs of Ukrainian refugee students and the challenges facing host communities was also provided by education unions in countries bordering Ukraine which have received millions of refugees. Participants heard from representatives of EI member organisations ZNP and KSN NSZZ "Solidarnosc" (Poland), OZPSAV (Slovakia), PSZ-SEH and PDSZ (Hungary), and "Alma Mater" NTUF (Romania).

From hosting refugees in union buildings, to organising donations and volunteering at border crossings and reception centres, education unions and their members have shown great solidarity with those fleeing the war.

Challenges highlighted by EI member organisations included, *inter alia*, teachers lacking training to support the acquisition of the local language by refugee students, the need for psychosocial support, refugees' reluctance to enroll in local education systems, funding needs, and aspects related to examinations.

Local authorities also took the floor in this session to present the situation in their jurisdictions and the measures put in place to support refugee access to education. Joining from Poland, Wojciech Bakun, Mayor of Przemyśl, and Andrzej Suchenek from the Department of Education of the City of Warsaw, spoke about support offered to Ukrainian refugees in their cities and the needs that must be met as a matter of urgency (in particular, financial needs). Katarína Kremser, from ZMOS, an Association of municipalities in Slovakia, provided insights about refugees in



Slovakia and presented successful pilot strategies implemented in the city of Senec to support the inclusion of refugee students in education.

The third session was aimed at providing insights from jurisdictions who have experienced previous refugee influxes in Europe. GEW, EI member organisation in Germany, and Silvana Safouane from the Ministry of General and Vocational Education in Hamburg shared the lessons of the 2015 Syrian refugee crisis. She noted that the measures and structures put in place since 2015 to include refugee students (e.g., study groups in reception centres, language training in preparatory classes) have helped accelerate the response to the current crisis.

The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE), EI's European region, presented the outcomes of their project "European Sectoral Social Partners in Education promoting effective integration of migrants and refugees in education" which looked at educational responses to the 2015 refugee crisis in Spain, Serbia, and Belgium. Susan Flocken and Ekaterina Efimenko stressed that the guidelines and quality framework developed throughout the project could support the education response in countries hosting Ukrainian refugees.

The fourth session provided perspectives from international organisations, who outlined lessons from prior work concerning refugee education and ways these lessons can be applied in the context of the Ukrainian refugee crisis. Andreas Schleicher of the OECD emphasized the importance of building robust extra-curricular activities in supporting students' socio-emotional learning, language support, and developing individual education plans by presenting examples of current and past practices in OECD countries. He also provided examples of ways to best engage Ukrainian refugee teachers in host country schools. Frederik Smets of UNHCR provided up to date statistics and information gathered by UNHCR. He highlighted key challenges including teacher shortages and school capacities in hosting jurisdictions, and presented key principles and practical guidance concerning the education response (inclusion of refugee students in national education systems and long-term sustainability). Karen Mundy and Stephanie Bengtsson, of UNESCO-IIEP, shared lessons learned from their research on effective teacher management policies in refugee settings. Long-term crisis-sensitive planning can build equity and resilience in and through education with positive impacts on the host and refugee communities alike. Mialy Dermish, of the SIRIUS Policy Network, explained the importance of individualised learning plans for students and viewing all parents as assets when providing support for students.

Key challenges and takeaways

Although each context is unique, several shared challenges emerged, including:



- **LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION:** Access to quality language acquisition classes for students and their families, including through the hiring of Ukrainian language teachers, and providing professional development for language teachers.
- **PSYCHOSOCIAL, WHOLE CHILD SUPPORT:** Creation of full-service schools that provide for extra needs, such as health care, counselling, study support, language learning and childcare.
- **RESOURCES:** Need to increase financing for schools, now welcoming thousands of new students who require dedicated support. Need to facilitate access to resources, information, and local NGOs/community associations: a mapping of resources and needs is required, there is no need to “re-invent the wheel”. Policies to reduce class sizes and increase resources for schools with certain numbers of students whose first language is not the language of instruction. Providing wrap-around services that also support families: many children have fled with only one (female) parent with limited resources, which can affect capacity to enroll and finance studies.
- **TEACHER PREPARATION & SHORTAGE:** Recruitment of immigrant-origin and bilingual students to initial teacher preparation programmes; flexibility in credentialing foreign-qualified teachers. On top of existing teacher shortages, shortages of teachers in preparatory programmes, assistant teachers, and mental health and psycho-social support personnel are expected.
- **COLLABORATION:** civil society, NGOs, social partners, and families, must work together with the government. Teacher unions need to be viewed as partners who have resources, experience, and have a track record in handling these problems.
- **INCLUSION:** Parallel education systems must be avoided, and Ukrainian refugees must be included in the host country’s education system in a way that still allows students to maintain ties to Ukrainian language, culture, and curriculum. When safe return is possible, we need to ensure the education students receive while in host countries is compatible with their return.

Outcomes

As a result of the seminar, EI and its affiliates made several commitments:

- Reaffirmed their commitment to all refugee students and teachers and solidarity with the Ukrainian affiliates.



- EI will create an online space for affiliates and partners to exchange and access the most relevant information and resources.
- EI will explore avenues to support affiliates in providing social-emotional support to refugee students over the summer.
- EI and affiliates will utilise the strong political will to advocate for further resources.
- EI member organisations will continue to coordinate and work across borders to ensure all refugee students have access to quality education and all refugee teachers are supported throughout this crisis.
- EI will plan for further spaces to bring education authorities and unions together to facilitate social dialogue on refugee inclusion.

Annex: Agenda of the seminar

Note: The following agenda includes links to speakers' presentations.

Programme

Day 1, May 3rd

Welcome coffee for on-site participants (14:00-14:15 CEST)

Opening (14:15-14:30 CEST)

- *David Edwards, General Secretary, Education International*
- *Andreas Schleicher, Director for Education and Skills, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)*
- *Larry Flanagan, President, European Trade Union Committee for Education*
- *Greetings from local hosts*

Part 1 – Mapping challenges and needs

Session 1: Keynote address from Ukraine (14:30-15:00 CEST)

The First Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine, his Excellency Mr. Andriy Vitrenko, and the Vice-President of the Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Ukraine, Ms. Olha



Chabaniuk: actions taken so far in relation to the education of students displaced by the war, challenges faced and identified needs.

Session 2: Perspectives from neighbouring countries receiving Ukrainian refugees (15:00-16:30 CEST)

Representatives of education unions (and when applicable, local authorities): actions taken in their local context, main challenges related to the education of Ukrainian refugees and principal areas of interest:

- **Poland:** *Przemysl & [Warsaw Municipalities](#), [ZNP](#), & [KSN NSZZ "Solidarnosc"](#)*
- **Slovakia:** *[Association of Towns and Communities](#) & [OZPSAV](#)*
- **Hungary:** *[PSZ-SEH](#) & [PDSZ](#)*
- **Romania:** *["Alma Mater" NTUF](#)*

*****Coffee Break*****

Part 2 - Lessons learnt: international perspectives

Session 3: Perspectives from other refugee hosting jurisdictions (17:00-18:30 CEST)

Representatives of education unions (and when applicable, local/national authorities): respective experiences and successful practices implemented in different national/local contexts to support the education of refugees:

- [Perspectives from Germany:](#)
 - *Elina Stock, GEW*
 - *Silvana Safouane, Advisor, Ministry of General and Vocational Education in Hamburg*
- [Lessons from the ETUCE-EFEE project "European Sectoral Social Partners in Education promoting effective integration of migrants and refugees in education"](#), *Susan Flocken & Ekaterina Efimenko, ETUCE.*

*****Dinner for on-site participants*****

Day 2, May 4th

Session 4: Perspectives from international organisations (9:00-10:30 CEST)



Lessons learnt from prior experience/work concerning refugee education and ways to apply these in the context of the Ukrainian refugee crisis:

- [OECD](#), *Andreas Schleicher*
- [UNHCR](#), *Frederik Smets*
- [UNESCO-IIEP](#), *Karen Mundy and Stephanie Bengtsson*
- [SIRIUS Policy Network on Migrant Education](#), *Mialy Dermish*

*****Coffee break*****

Part 3- Moving Forward

Session 5: Brainstorming solutions (11:00-12:30 CEST)

Short- and medium-term policy options to support the education of Ukrainian refugees in hosting jurisdictions and possible international support.

Closing - "The Way forward" (12:30-13:00 CEST)

- *David Edwards, General Secretary, Education International*
- *Andreas Schleicher, Director for Education and Skills, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)*
- *Sławomir Broniarz, President, Związek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego (Polish Teachers' Union, ZNP)*