

“Back to school” information campaign in Hungary

Concept Note – Inclusion Working Group 2024

Educational inclusion of Ukrainian refugee children holding TP status in Hungary, 2024

Approaching the third school year that is facing disruptions as a result of the full-scale war, a protracted education crisis is unfolding for millions of internally displaced children in Ukraine. Education also remains critical for those having fled to other countries. Hungary received millions of border crossers and has extended Temporary Protection (TP) status to 38,000 refugees from Ukraine as of December 2023.

The Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science allows children to continue following online lessons as distance learning students, externships, home education or in an individual educational trajectory using the All-Ukrainian Online School or other remote learning tools. Exams and evaluations are normally organized online for certain grades. As online teaching platform, it uses one initially developed during the COVID-19 pandemic for grades 5 - 11. A more limited learning application for primary school, focusing on literacy and numeracy for grades 1 - 4 has also been made available more recently.

Some organizations in the Regional Refugee Response Plans (RRP) countries, including Hungary, also offer face-to-face education in line with the Ukrainian curriculum, led by Ukrainian teachers. Some of these non-formal Ukrainian schools are recognized by the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science, while some are not. Various models of non-formal Ukrainian schools have emerged in host countries across Europe, including Hungary, of varying quality and with varying degrees of funding. Some of these non-formal education facilities are recognized by Ukrainian authorities. Many have received funding from humanitarian organizations or other donors, with some using existing school infrastructure or renting, or being provided with, premises outside the host country school infrastructure.¹

1. Online learners and out of school children

Data on how many refugee children from Ukraine are learning online or in non-formal education facilities is not available, making it difficult to monitor what kind of learning is taking place and what level of academic performance refugee children and youth from Ukraine are currently attaining.

In Hungary, based on the sample interviewed in the Multi-Sectorial Needs Assessment (MSNA), 78% of school-aged children (6-17 years old) were enrolled in school in Hungary in the school year 2022/23, with 37% of them also following the Ukrainian curriculum online at the same time. 16% were exclusively following the Ukrainian curriculum online, leaving 6% of children out of school.² It is worth noting that the survey is self-declared and might be subject to bias given that enrollment is mandatory for TP holders. In addition, the survey captures enrollment rate but not the quality of learning. According to regional

¹ Detailed information for parents about transfer of grades and option for distance learning are available on the webpage of the Ukraine Ministry, which also support the in person school attendance in the host country, <https://refugee-ed.sqe.gov.ua/to-the-parents-of-children-who-were-forced-to-leave-ukraine/#general>

² <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/105324>

protection profiling and monitoring data from UNHCR, 30 % of the households with school aged children reported at least one child not registered for education in Hungary.³

In general, regional data shows that a significantly lower proportion of secondary school age children are enrolled, compared to younger children enrolled in primary school. In Hungary, during the 2023/24 academic year, 3,753 children are enrolled in primary, 872 children in kindergarten and only 275 children are enrolled in secondary school including dual nationals with Hungarian- Ukrainian citizenships. ⁴ This points to far greater hesitancy for parents to enroll teenagers in local schools in host countries than with parents of children in lower and upper primary, presumably due to greater challenges in language learning and social barriers. Secondary school education is shorter in Ukraine, therefore students in their final years of secondary education are more reluctant to enroll into Hungarian schools.

2. Main risks of children and youth out of school:

- Learning loss: Such extended and profound learning interruptions are known to have long-term detrimental effects on academic performance and lead to lower enrolment in secondary and higher education.
- Lack of safe school environment: Many children risk being further exposed to exploitation, gender-based violence (GBV), harmful coping mechanisms and other risks associated with being out of school. Some initial evidence gathered in Czech Republic and Hungary for example points toward increased vulnerabilities of women and girls to trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as recruitment into irregular employment.
- Decline in well-being and mental health: Sustained periods in online education or other forms of remote learning may lead to social isolation, mental health issues and learning difficulties, with disproportionately large effects on refugee learners. The social and emotional aspect of being able to interact with other children is another important factor. In addition, parents who have children in school suffer less from mental health issues than those whose children are out of school.
- Diminished prospects for inclusion: Out-of-school refugee children typically do not receive the intensive language education, introductory classes or other preparatory programs they would receive in schools in host countries in Europe, which lead to diminishing prospects for inclusion and integration into the host country in the longer term.
- Livelihoods of parents: access to pre-school and school education for children is crucial to allow women to find employment and allow for the time and space to take care of essential daily routines.

In Hungary, applicants for Temporary Protection can access education services from the moment they submit their application. **The child is entitled to the benefits indicated under school education when he/she reaches the age of three, which is the start of compulsory schooling under Hungarian law, until the end of the studies started before the child reaches the age of eighteen.** According to Hungarian law, attendance at kindergarten and school **is mandatory for children between the ages of 3 and 16 years old.**

3. Back to school information campaign (March – September 2024):

Main objective of the campaign: Refugee parents should receive detailed information about education options available to children and youth to allow them to make informed decisions, taking into account the quality and continuity of education:

- States, regions or other education authorities should reach out to refugee populations and ensure parents receive accurate information on education options available for their children. Information

³ <https://data.unhcr.org/ar/dataviz/330>

provided should explain all benefits and disadvantages of each option in formats and languages that are easily accessible for refugees.

- Launch of information campaigns should be **targeted at maximizing enrolment of refugee children in the national education system** of the host country, including educational rights and obligations of TP status holders in Hungary, and the formal recognition of grades.
- Information should also provide options to retain a **link with the Ukrainian education system**, which learning options are available and how these can be graded and certified, which is important for continuity and quality of education.
- Calling attention of parents to properly evaluate the quality and continuity of these education options before considering them. When complementary forms of education in addition to education in the national school system are considered, **parents should ensure that any learning that takes place is recognized and rewarded with official grades or certificates**, to protect their children losing out on credentials and to avoid lack of documentation on academic achievement and skills.

Expected results:

- Reduction in the number of refugee children out of school, with more children participating in in-person education.
- Increased awareness among parents about their children's educational entitlements and obligations, leading to informed decision-making.
- Improved access to education for refugee children, contributing to their overall well-being and future prospects.

IWG partners contribute to the campaign by:

- Integration of campaign messages into community activities and organization of specific information sessions for parents throughout the school enrollment period.
- Provision of phone or in-person assistance and information to parents, with tracking of individual cases and sharing of feedback with the IWG.
- Referral of cases to UNHCR if additional support is needed.
- Enforcing UNHCR's role in coordinating feedback and complaints through the Regional Call Centre.

Supporting information materials and educational supplies:

- Provide information materials for parents, including pamphlets, brochures, and leaflets (UNHCR can print limited copies, partner may contribute).
- Educational videos about the enrollment process and available education options (from 2023).

Whole playlist in Ukrainian:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLVBoMUVGU2UoR_JTi7eN23g7J_46qAZ6Y

Videos by themes:

1 | Nursery: <https://youtu.be/SgNtmp2wxyg>

2 | Kindergarten: https://youtu.be/qpY_gxM-SfA

- 3 | Primary school: <https://youtu.be/BR9nvzufcFA>
- 4 | School life: <https://youtu.be/yI2qHUXDuOO>
- 5 | Exams to secondary school: <https://youtu.be/yAzwX33laco>
- 6 | Secondary school: <https://youtu.be/lAoiIMWQ-vA>

- School packages for children, potentially including educational supplies or resources to support their learning journey (to check with UNICEF)

Feedback and Data Collection:

- Data collection and feedback mechanisms will be implemented to evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign.
- Feedback will be collected in September 2024 to assess campaign outcomes, identify areas for improvement, and inform future initiatives.

Participating partner:	Locations covered:	Outreach methods used*	# persons targeted (estimate)

*For example: 1:1 counselling, group counselling/awareness sessions, information days, leaflet/flyer distribution, online campaign, etc. Please list all that apply

Indicate material contributions of your organization, if any: