



Teaching Opportunities and Support for Ukrainian Educators

3 November 2023

Key messages

- An estimated 10-17% of the millions of refugees forced to flee Ukraine following Russia's war of aggression previously worked in the education sector. Their qualifications and experience could be mobilised to work in schools in their host countries and provide direct support to Ukrainian students in need.
- OECD countries have started hiring Ukrainian teachers and assistants to increase capacity in schools and education institutions through the introduction of exceptional measures. However, significant barriers to entry exist, such as the recognition of qualifications, gaps in training and language barriers.
- It is important for countries to facilitate the recruitment practices of Ukrainian teachers and assistants, make procedures for the recognition of qualifications and assessment of skills more flexible, and offer dedicated training to Ukrainian teachers, assistants and lateral entrants. These measures will not only increase capacities in educational institutions, but will be beneficial for supporting Ukrainian students, and ensuring the continuous professional learning and inclusion of refugee adults.

Background and key issues

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has forced the displacement of millions of Ukrainians across the world, many of whom have been hosted by OECD countries. As of June 2023, more than 6.3 million Ukrainian refugees have been recorded globally, and an estimated 4.9 million have been recorded in OECD countries (UNHCR, 2023^[1]; OECD, 2023^[2]). An estimated 40% of these Ukrainians are children and youth who need to continue their learning. Nonetheless, important barriers exist for enrolling Ukrainian students in host countries' education systems and providing them with the support they need.

Host countries face major challenges in accommodating the growing number of students, especially as some of them already had teacher shortages before the Ukrainian crisis. The 2023 OECD *Survey on Ensuring Continued Learning of Ukrainian Refugee Students* showed that, out of the 28 countries who responded, 32% reported teacher shortages as a major barrier to enrolment of Ukrainian students across all education levels. Responses from the survey also showed that teacher shortages were considered the third highest barrier to enrolment indicated by countries after language barriers (63%) and concerns about the future recognition of skills/competencies/diplomas by Ukraine (48%).

An estimated 10-17% of Ukrainian refugees are qualified education professionals. Both the joint European Union Agency for Asylum and OECD (EUAA; IOM; OECD, 2022^[3]) and the Narodowy Bank Polski (NBP)'s (NBP, 2022^[4]) surveys showed that around one in ten refugees with a recorded work history had been previously employed in the educational sector. A survey by the UNHCR suggests an even larger share at 17% (UNHCR, 2022^[5]). This creates considerable potential to make better use of this valuable resource.

Hiring refugee teachers in host country schools, whether as regular teachers or as teaching assistants, can provide great support to Ukrainian students and help in addressing growing capacity needs (OECD, 2022^[6]). These teachers can provide a sense of familiarity and continuity to the refugee students in both language and curriculum as students transition to the host language and host country curriculum. Additionally, this strategy can be rewarding for the refugee teachers, providing them with a sense of purpose as well as financial stability. In addition, providing teaching opportunities and support to Ukrainian teachers and assistants is one measure to overcome teacher shortages in host countries. Furthermore, it could aid adult refugee employment and help maintain a link between Ukrainian history, culture and schooling alongside that of the host country. This brief sets out some key policy considerations for education systems in supporting Ukrainian teachers and assistants, before discussing some measures that have so far been implemented by host countries.

How are Ukrainian educators currently supported in host countries?

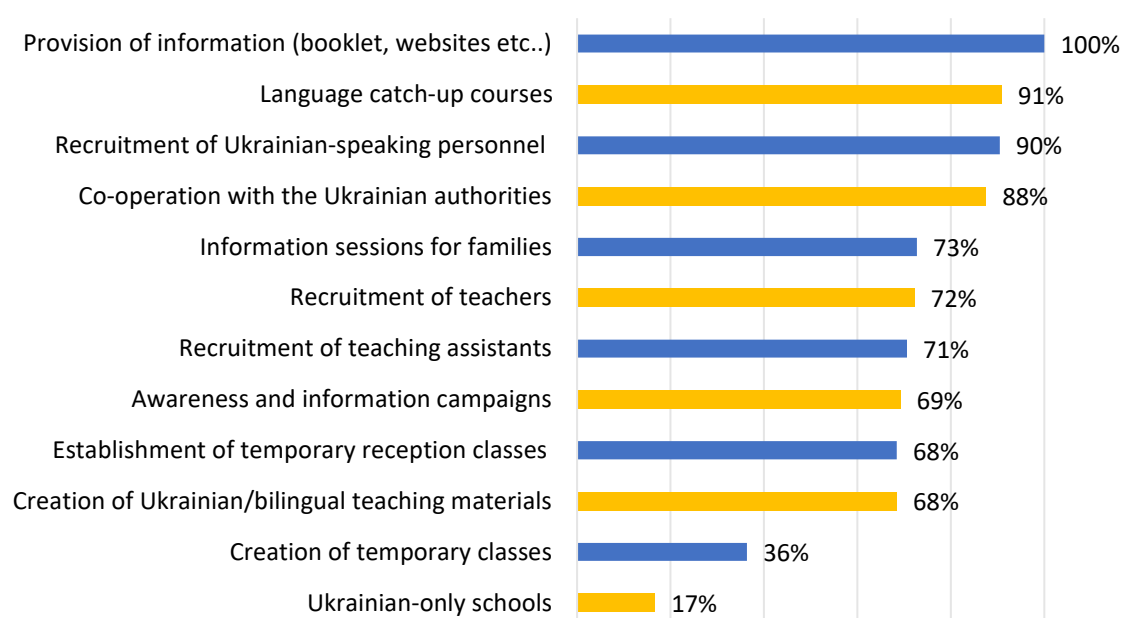
Due to the increasing enrolment of refugee students in host country schools, countries are employing Ukrainian teachers as a short-term measure. (OECD, 2022^[6]). Common practices have included allowing qualified Ukrainian teachers to work under supervision, hiring them for assistant-level positions, and granting them temporary and provisional rights to pursue their activities without recognition of their previous qualifications (European Commission, 2023^[7]). For instance, the Netherlands adopted a new legislation through which primary education teachers from Ukraine may apply for a temporary recognition up to two years to teach Ukrainian children in temporary education facilities (European Commission, 2023^[7]). Another example is from Lithuania, where Ukrainian teachers can work as teaching assistants and do not have to speak the official language for two years (European Commission, 2023^[7]). In Austria, Ukrainian teachers can be assessed by National Academic Recognition Information Centres (ENIC-NARIC), instead of undergoing full recognition procedures. In case of a positive assessment, they can receive a special employment contract to work in a public school in Austria for a fixed amount of time (European Commission, 2023^[7]). Education providers in Finland can temporarily hire Ukrainians without

meeting statutory qualification requirements. In this case, Ukrainians with teaching experience can work as teaching assistants (European Commission, 2023^[7]). Such provisions also exist in the Flemish Community of Belgium, where Ukrainian teaching professionals can be appointed in a few specified short-term posts even with a pending equivalence declaration of their diploma by NARIC (European Commission, 2023^[7]). In Romania, refugees who self-identify as teachers can exceptionally be hired on short-term renewable contracts (European Commission, 2022^[8]).

The OECD (2023^[9]) survey of 25 countries showed that 90% of those surveyed recruited Ukrainian-speaking teaching personnel such as teachers and assistants to facilitate the enrolment in primary education (Figure 1). This is in addition to the recruitment of domestic teachers and assistants, implemented in over 70% of surveyed countries.

Figure 1. Measures taken to facilitate enrolment in primary education

Share of countries that implement measures/policies to support the enrolment of Ukrainian students in schools (at primary level).



Note: The figure only includes instances where countries answer “Yes”, which means that answers “No”, “Not applicable” and “Missing” are excluded. 3 out of 28 countries have not answered these questions. Readers are kindly invited to consult the database on “Ensuring a continued learning for Ukrainian refugees” for further information.

Source: OECD (2023^[9]) survey on *Ensuring a continued learning for Ukrainian refugees*.

Fast-track mechanisms to identify and recruit Ukrainian teachers and those from related professions, such as teaching assistants, have been adopted by several host countries. Ukrainian teachers and those from related professions have been identified by the following means (European Commission, 2022^[10]):

- administrative checks – direct engagement with the Ukrainian authorities to verify teachers’ status on official database, and liaison with higher education institutions to access information about student teacher qualifications;

- self-declaration – a public recruitment drive for Ukrainian teachers on line and via events, working in partnership with teaching associations and civil society organisations to advertise vacancies and to encourage take-up.

Long-term measures could create some stability for Ukrainian teachers and assistants and allow them to be fully included in host country schools and educational institutions. However, several challenges exist, such as the recognition of professional qualifications, and country-specific entry barriers to the education sector. Each of these barriers can complicate and potentially delay the labour integration of Ukrainian refugees qualified in this field (OECD, 2023^[11]). To serve as regular classroom teachers of both Ukrainian and host country students, for example, teachers are usually required to know or learn the language of instruction and gain knowledge of the host country curriculum (OECD, 2022^[6]).

The recognition of professional qualifications is an important step for Ukrainian teachers and those working in the teaching profession to be employed in host countries. An effective tool for recognising professional qualifications is the close co-operation between Ukrainian authorities and host countries for using the Ukrainian [EDEBO database](#) which provides evidence of Ukrainian qualifications. The database is managed by the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science and contains information on qualifications issued in Ukraine after 2015 (European Commission, 2023^[7]).

International tools exist to help facilitate the recognition of prior qualifications. In general, Ukrainian refugees can obtain internationally standardised documents such as the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees or the UNESCO Qualifications Passport. Based on an assessment of the available documentation and a structured interview, these tools provide credible information on refugees' academic and professional qualifications as well as language proficiency (OECD, 2023^[11]). The European Commission issued recommendations to ensure swift, flexible and fair recognition procedures of academic and professional qualifications obtained in Ukraine. Together with the European Training Foundation, it also set up a [Ukraine Resource Hub](#) with information on the Ukrainian education system as well as recognition procedures in European Union countries and guiding Ukrainians to education, further learning and employment opportunities (European Commission, 2023^[12]; European Commission, 2023^[7]). In addition, the ENIC-NARIC network developed a page to facilitate the sharing of information on Ukrainian qualifications and has brought together national information centres on academic recognition of 55 countries (OECD, 2023^[11]).

Some countries removed administrative barriers for entry into the profession and recognition of prior qualifications (European Commission, 2022^[8]). Lithuania, for example waived the host-country language requirement for Ukrainian teachers during a transition period. In Saxony (Germany), self-identified teachers who pass an initial priority assessment are hired on probation while employment checks are completed. Another example stems from Latvia, where support for displaced Ukrainian teachers in early childhood education and care (ECEC) is provided through various measures such as no administrative barriers for entry into profession, the recognition of prior qualifications, and the support from the school community such as online pedagogical materials and support for the multilingual education.

Countries have introduced specific recognition procedures for Ukrainian teachers. Ireland, for instance, adopted a tailored registration process for qualified Ukrainian teachers developed by the Teaching Council. The Council modified the sequencing of processes in the registration process and adjusted vetting and clearance processes to ensure that standards are maintained while considering the unique situation in Ukraine (European Commission, 2023^[7]). In the area of ECEC, every week in the Lithuanian Ministry of Education, Science and Sport meetings of the Commission for the Evaluation and Recognition of the Professional Qualifications of Teachers and Student Support Specialists are held, during which the qualifications of Ukrainian teachers, which allow them to work in Lithuania, are also evaluated and recognised.

Several countries report having already successfully hired Ukrainian school staff. For example, Spain hired 200 Ukrainian language assistants in schools, whose mission is to provide educational support

and integration assistance to recently displaced school children. France has hired Ukrainian-speaking staff to carry out consultations and mediation in schools. Ukrainian teachers can contact local education authorities if they have at least a two-year diploma and wish to work as teachers. The newly hired Ukrainian-speaking staff work in dedicated centres for newly arrived non-French speaking students (CASNAV), who oversee welcoming, academically assessing and guiding new arrivals from Ukraine through the school enrolment process. Luxembourg has recruited Ukrainian-speaking intercultural mediators with a background in education in order to reinforce the teaching teams in schools and to ensure the students' well-being. In the Czech Republic, numbers from March 2023 show that a total of 2 090 Ukrainians under temporary protection status currently work in schools, with 317 holding the position of teachers, and 694 hired as other teaching staff. The remaining 1 079 work as non-pedagogical employees of schools (The Czech Ministry of Education, 2023^[13]).

What more can be done to support Ukrainian educators?

Faster and more flexible recognition of qualifications of Ukrainian teachers and assistants is crucial for working in host countries' schools and educational institutions. One way in which countries have tried to ease access to regulated professions such as teaching is by removing qualification requirements or expediting evaluations (OECD, 2022^[14]). For example, Ukrainian nationals in Romania were able to use an affidavit as a substitute for documents proving their professional qualifications or work experience. In Canada, the Ontario College of Teachers makes flexible provisions for Ukrainian teachers who are not issued teaching certificates in Ukraine. Instead, the College accepts a photocopy of the teacher education diploma (Dyplom) (Ontario College of Teachers, 2023^[15]). Poland has also eased rules on teaching credentials. A Ukrainian citizen granted a temporary residence permit may become a teacher after meeting the same requirements as for a Polish citizen. In addition, a citizen of Ukraine can be employed at a school also based on Article 15 of the Education Law. In this case, it is not necessary for the employed person to meet the qualification requirements, but only to have the appropriate preparation, which is assessed by the school head. The school head, with the consent of the local education authority, may consider the preparation appropriate even in the absence of diploma recognition (European Commission, 2023^[7]). Concentrated efforts, such as these, to facilitate the recognition of qualifications for Ukrainian teachers and assistants are pivotal in enabling their inclusion within host countries' education systems.

Providing alternatives to formal recognition of qualifications is also important to facilitate the inclusion of Ukrainian educators in host countries' education systems. Some countries such as the United Kingdom (and its UK NARIC) have already put in place more flexible ways of recognising qualifications and skills of immigrants and refugees. For example, these include practical assessments including work-related experience and observation, or portfolios of work including reflective essays (Cerna, 2013^[16]). For teachers, such alternative recognition can be in the form of giving demonstration lessons in front of a panel of expert teachers. This can would allow assessing teachers' pedagogical skills and subject matter knowledge. Other alternatives include structured interviews, self-analysis/self-assessment of professional knowledge and skills, and submission of a portfolio/dossier (CEDEFOP, 2007^[17]). In the United Kingdom, previous employers of an applicant may also be able to verify the person's subject knowledge (Refugee Council, n.d.^[18]).

Offering more flexible recruitment practices is another key measure to enable Ukrainian educators to teach and support Ukrainian students in host countries' schools and educational institutions. For example, host countries could offer more flexible contractual models, extend promotion periods or devolve hiring decisions to schools and municipalities. For example, Austria has issued special employment contracts to Ukrainian teachers who are able to work in a public school for a fixed amount of time. Ukrainian teachers also have the possibility to go through an assessment by ENIC-NARIC instead of through a full recognition procedure (European Commission, 2023^[7]). In Finland, providers of education

are able to hire individuals with teacher education from Ukraine. Municipalities can hire Ukrainian teachers or others with pedagogical training as school attendance counsellors or support teachers (European Commission, 2023^[7]).

Providing dedicated training and language classes to Ukrainian teachers, student teachers and lateral entrants facilitates work opportunities in host country schools and education institutions.

For example, Sweden has created university courses for individuals with Ukrainian language skills and pedagogical experience. In Spain, student teachers are employable in schools as part-time language assistants while they complete their qualification (European Commission, 2022^[8]). Ukrainian teachers in Latvia are supported through free priority Latvian language courses. In the Czech Republic, the Educational Institute of the Central Bohemian Region, in co-operation with other regional educational institutions and UNICEF, has been organising courses for teaching assistants from September 2022 (UNICEF, 2023^[19]). These courses are helping both Ukrainian and Czech teaching assistants to gain key skills to support children, including children with special education needs across the Czech Republic.

Providing additional training to existing teachers can also be beneficial. Dedicated training for existing teachers in face of the influx of refugee students also carries many benefits. The Education Ministry in the Slovak Republic issued the provision of materials and voluntary training for teachers on the psychological support and integration of children from Ukraine. Estonia organised additional support and funding for preschool childcare institutions and regional counselling centres, which include speech therapists, special education teachers, and psychological and social-pedagogical counselling. Additional funds were also issued to support the training and hiring of specialist support teachers. In France, training has been created to help teachers deal with students arriving from Ukraine, as well as from other countries facing war (OECD, 2023^[9]). Additional training for teachers in host countries can also ensure that Ukrainian students are effectively supported and included in classrooms.

What are the key considerations for policy makers?

- Host countries have implemented different measures to overcome barriers to enrolment of Ukrainian students. However, more could be done to support Ukrainian educators in times of such uncertainty and hardship.
- Since between estimated 10 and 17% of Ukrainian refugees previously worked in the education sector, they could be mobilised to work in schools and provide a direct link and support to Ukrainian students.
- Facilitating the recognition of (both formal and informal) skills and qualifications of Ukrainian teachers in host countries is important as is working closely with Ukrainian authorities. Providing more alternatives to formal recognition of qualifications is particularly important for facilitating the inclusion of Ukrainian educators in education systems.
- More flexible recruitment procedures for Ukrainian teachers and assistants are crucial to provide access to the education sector.
- Providing dedicated training and language classes to Ukrainian teachers, student teachers and lateral entrants in host countries can also help support Ukrainian students and provide a direct link home. Additional training to existing teachers can also be beneficial.

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Explore further

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