

The War in Ukraine: Challenges for the Polish Education System

Wojna na Ukrainie – wyzwania dla polskiego systemu edukacji

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Abstract: The article takes a closer look at the most relevant issues related to the sudden influx of refugees from Ukraine fleeing from the war to Poland. A significant part of them, according to Polish law, is of an age that is subject to compulsory education or schooling. In view of this, in a short period of time, almost 200 thousand pupils from Ukraine were placed in the units of the Polish education system. The purpose of this article is to present the scale of the problem – statistical data on pupils who are refugees, citizens of Ukraine, the measures taken by the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Ministry of Education and Science that were necessary to meet the considerable challenges, primarily the legal regulations and financial resources allocated from the state budget to provide these measures. According to the reported data, almost 198.3 thousand children and pupils who have arrived from Ukraine since 24 February 2022 (currently more than 182 thousand) are listed in the units of the Polish education system (in pre-school education, primary and secondary schools). Children and pupils – refugees from Ukraine can be found in all 16 provinces, all across Poland, although almost 40% are concentrated in provincial cities, with the highest number in Warsaw – 17 thousand and about 8 thousand in Wrocław and Kraków each. Faced with this situation, a number of ad hoc systemic changes have been introduced and financial resources of around PLN 3 billion have been allocated from the state budget. The war in Ukraine and the exodus caused by it has become a considerable challenge for the Polish education system. Poland, despite the lack of external financial assistance (including from the European Union), opened the doors of its borders, homes and schools from the first days of this military conflict, providing the necessary support to refugees and introducing the necessary systemic changes to enable the absorption of such a large number of children and young people, in a short period of time, in the middle of the school year.

Keywords: war in Ukraine, education of Ukrainians in Poland, education/learning, war refugees, refugee children, Polish education system, educational assistance for war refugees

Abstrakt: Artykuł przybliży najistotniejsze kwestie związane z gwałtownym napływem do Polski uchodźców przed wojną u uchodźców z Ukrainy. Znaczna ich część, zgodnie z polskim prawem, jest w wieku podlegającym obowiązkowi szkolnemu lub obowiązkowi nauki. Wobec tego, w krótkim czasie w jednostkach polskiego systemu oświaty znalazło się niemal 200 tysięcy uczniów z Ukrainy. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest przybliżenie skali problemu – danych statystycznych dotyczących uczniów będących uchodźcami, obywatelami Ukrainy, podjętych przez Rząd Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej i Ministerstwo Edukacji i Nauki działań koniecznych dla sprostania niemałym wyzwaniom, przede wszystkim uregulowań prawnych i środków finansowych przeznaczonych z budżetu państwa na zapewnienie tych działań.



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Wg raportowanych danych, w jednostkach polskiego systemu oświaty (w wychowaniu przedszkolnym, szkołach podstawowych i ponadpodstawowych) wykazano niemal 198,3 tys. dzieci i uczniów, którzy przybyli z Ukrainy od 24.02.2022 r. (aktualnie ponad 182 tys.). Dzieci i uczniowie – uchodźcy z Ukrainy są we wszystkich 16 województwach, na terenie całej Polski, przy czym niemal 40% skupia się w miastach wojewódzkich, najwięcej w Warszawie – 17 tys. i po ok. 8 tys. we Wrocławiu i Krakowie. Wobec tej sytuacji wprowadzono doraźnie liczne zmiany systemowe oraz wyasygnowano z budżetu państwa środki finansowe rządu 3 mld zł. Wojna na Ukrainie i spowodowany nią exodus stał się niemalym wyzwaniem dla polskiego systemu edukacji. Polska, mimo braku zewnętrznego wsparcia finansowego (także ze strony Unii Europejskiej), od pierwszych dni tego konfliktu militarnego, otworzyła drzwi swoich granic, domów i szkół, obejmując niezbędną pomocą uchodźców i wprowadzając niezbędne zmiany systemowe, umożliwiające absorpcję tak dużej liczby dzieci i młodzieży, w krótkim czasie, w trakcie roku szkolnego.

Słowa kluczowe: wojna na Ukrainie, edukacja Ukraińców w Polsce, kształcenie, uchodźcy wojenni, dzieci uchodźcy, system edukacyjny w Polsce, pomoc edukacyjna uchodźcom wojennym

INTRODUCTION

Almost from the first day of the military conflict between Russia and Ukraine, i.e. 24 February 2022, we faced a huge influx of refugees – mostly women – mothers with children. When it seemed that the strength of the COVID-19 pandemic was waning, there began an invasion of Ukraine, arousing much anxiety and fear, not only among the older generation, perhaps still remembering from their childhood the years of the Second World War, but also affecting the younger ones, for whom war was associated only with film, history or play. The sudden influx of so many refugees (in a short period of time more than two million), mainly Ukrainian women and children, caused in many pupils, on the one hand, an increased activity and willingness to get involved in helping others, awakened their sensitivity to the needs of others, but on the other hand – intensified anxiety, fears about the future, and perhaps even greater confinement, a feeling of losing the sense of their own lives, and thus the pointlessness of any effort, an escape into the virtual world and ambivalent feelings, causing a huge crisis of mental condition.¹

Surely we all remember this social spurt of solidarity, the volunteers at the Polish-Ukrainian border or at railway stations (mainly in Przemyśl), the crowds of people willing to carry and take under their roofs the fleeing, often terrified mothers and their children. It became clear very quickly that this was not a temporary, short-term immigration crisis. The decision made by the Russian authorities to invade Ukraine, with tragic consequences, triggered an avalanche of events. Helping the hundreds of thousands of refugees streaming in from Ukraine is a great challenge for Poland, including the Polish school system. In crisis situations, it is essential to act quickly and learn quickly. There is a need for close-to-practice solutions.

¹ Statistical data and other information presented in this paper are taken from the Educational Information System (SIO) and from individual departments of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Poland. The data refers to the period from the outbreak of full-scale war in Ukraine, i.e. from 24 February 2022 to 15 May 2023.

What is most valuable is the concrete experience of those who were affected most severely by the new situation and therefore had to react to it most quickly.

The outbreak of the war in Ukraine and the influx of a wave of refugees were events so sudden and so dramatic that it was necessary to reconsider and accordingly adapt the measures taken for education, prevention and support. What was helpful in making this adjustment was to draw on the experience of all those who worked in schools and institutions close to the border, where refugees had been arriving since the first day of the war and where young people from Ukraine were already studying. It is worth reminding that the invasion of Ukraine started when, pupils from for example the Lubelskie Province were still on winter holidays. A large number of Ukraine-born pupils did not return to school. Some of them, at the age of 18, stayed to defend their country, either by volunteering to help in the fight or by helping in other ways as much as they could. Unfortunately, it was also reported that some of them had already been killed.

It was necessary to provide care and psychological support for pupils who were particularly affected by this new reality, to discuss with them the very difficult topic of the war, and to provide pupils arriving from Ukraine with the opportunity to continue their education or to provide pre-school care for those who were a little younger. In the first three months, the Polish education system received almost 200 thousand children and pupils. In addition, a significant number of children and young people benefited from remote learning in the Ukrainian system.

As a ministry of education, we have prepared detailed legislative solutions to enable nursery schools and schools to meet these challenges. The Act on assistance to Ukrainian citizens in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of that state² was adopted as early as 12 March 2022. On 21 March 2022 the Minister of Education and Science issued a regulation on the organisation of education, upbringing and care for children and young people who are citizens of Ukraine.³ Taking into account the new challenges, necessary amendments or derogations from the application of certain provisions have been made to the Act – the Education Law,⁴ as well as other implementing acts (regulations⁵). From 1 March 2022, headmasters were allowed to introduce additional hours for psychological and pedagogical support. For this purpose alone, an additional amount of 15 million Polish zlotys was transferred from the state budget to local government units in 2022.

According to the data available in the Educational Information System as of 15 May 2023, the system – in primary and secondary education – shows 182,014 children and pupils who have arrived from Ukraine since 24 February 2022, including: 42,971 children in pre-school education, 111,387 pupils in primary

² Journal of Laws item 583 as amended.

³ Journal of Laws item 645 as amended.

⁴ Act of 14 December 2016 – the Education Law (Journal of Laws 2023, item 900).

⁵ Among others, the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 23 August 2017 on the education of persons who are not Polish citizens and persons who are Polish citizens who have received education in schools operating in the education systems of other countries (Journal of Laws of 2020, item 1283 as amended).

schools and 27,656 in secondary schools. It is estimated that approximately 50.85% of these pupils benefit from additional free of charge lessons of Polish language, 95.17% of children and pupils have the Polish Personal Identification Number (PESEL).

The provinces that have accepted the greatest number of children and pupils who are refugees from Ukraine include:

- mazowieckie (Masovian) 32,736,
- śląskie (Silesian) 20,418,
- dolnośląskie (Lower Silesian) 20,169.

According to data from the Ministry of Education and Science, the provinces with the lowest number of children and pupils from Ukraine are:

- świętokrzyskie 3,061,
- podlaskie 2,811.

It should be noted that approximately 39.45% of all Ukrainian children and pupils are concentrated in provincial cities. The highest number was recorded in Warsaw – 17,018, in Wrocław – 8,314, in Krakow – 7,926, while the lowest number in Olsztyn – 783. In the previous school year, there was a record-breaking number of children and pupils (data as of 12.05.2022) which was reported to be 198,291. A significant number of the incoming Ukrainian pupils had no knowledge of the Polish language.

1. INITIATIVES BY THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE (MEiN) FOR THE INCLUSION OF UKRAINIAN PUPILS IN THE POLISH EDUCATION SYSTEM AT PRIMARY AND POST-PRIMARY LEVEL

The need to absorb such a large number of children and young people all of a sudden, in a short period of time and in the middle of the school year resulted in the introduction of numerous system changes in the Polish education system. In response to these challenges, the MEiN has taken the following actions:

1) Changes in the functioning of preparatory units: an increase in the maximum number of pupils from 15 to 25, an increase in the number of hours allocated for teaching Polish from 3 to minimum 6. In the opinion of the Ministry of Education and Science, in the case of pupils who do not know Polish or know it at a level insufficient to benefit from education and who require adaptation of the learning process to their needs and educational capabilities, as well as adaptation of the organisational form supporting the effectiveness of learning, the optimal and recommended solution is a preparatory unit, and its organisation falls within the competence of the authority running the school.

Preparatory units played an important role especially in the second half of the school year 2021/2022, which was the first period of the war in Ukraine. By learning in a preparatory unit, a large number of pupils from Ukraine were given the opportunity to learn the Polish language intensively and to be integrated into the Polish education system gradually, while taking into account their current educational preparation. According to the data from the Educational Information

System (currently indicating that the number of preparatory units attended by this category of pupils has been reduced at least by half compared to the end of the 2021/2022 school year), from September 2022, a significant number of Ukrainian pupils continue their education in regular classes, together with their Polish peers. Pupils are qualified for the preparatory unit by a team appointed by the headmaster, consisting of two teachers and an educator or psychologist. The number of pupils in a preparatory class may not exceed 25 pupils. Teaching in a preparatory unit is carried out on the basis of general education curricula implemented at the school, adapted, in terms of the scope of teaching content and the methods and forms of its implementation, to the developmental and educational needs and psychophysical capabilities of pupils. The highest number of pupils (27.94%) attending such units come from general secondary schools. From 1 September 2022, preparatory units can also be established in sports schools and athletics championship schools.

2) Additional free of charge Classes in the Polish language.

Additional hours of Polish classes are organised for both pupils who are in preparatory units and those who study in regular ones. These are conducted individually or in groups of up to 15 persons; the minimum number of hours in these classes has been increased from 2 to 6 hours per week. In addition, in the school year 2022/2023, it was made possible to provide additional lessons of Polish language in an inter-school group. More than half (50.82%) of Ukrainian pupils benefit from additional lessons of Polish language.

3) Increase in the number of children in a nursery class (by the end of the 2022/2023 school year) to 28 pupils and in classes I-III of the primary school to 29 pupils; increase in the number of pupils for the entire education stage.

4) Increase by no more than 4 (from 25 to 29) in the number of children in common rooms under the care of one teacher.

5) Increase in the number of inclusive and special classes by no more than 2 pupils with disabilities who are Ukrainian citizens.

6) Providing pupils from Ukraine with financial assistance in the form of supplementary benefits.

For pupils who are citizens of Ukraine, financial assistance in the form of supplementary benefits was already launched in March 2022:

- for the 2021/2022 school year (from March to August 2022), school scholarships were awarded to 6,784 pupils, citizens of Ukraine,
- for the 2022/2023 school year (from September to December 2022), school scholarships were awarded to 7,742 pupils, citizens of Ukraine,
- school allowances were received by 3,309 pupils between March and December 2022.

According to the semi-annual report, approximately 12,000 Ukrainian pupils (6.59%) were provided with financial assistance in the form of supplementary benefits.

7) When admitting pupils to school, it was introduced that a declaration could be made not only by parents/guardians, but also by other persons having custody of the pupil.

Persons who are not Polish citizens benefit from education and care respectively in pre-school education institutions, in primary schools, and those who are subject to compulsory schooling, in secondary schools under the terms applicable to Polish citizens until they reach the age of 18 or graduate from a secondary school.

A pupil is admitted to a school on the basis of a diploma, certificate or any other document confirming the fact that the pupil has graduated from a school or accomplished another stage of education abroad or a document issued by a school abroad confirming the fact that the pupil arriving from abroad is attending a school abroad and indicating the grade or stage of education completed by the pupil at the school abroad, and a document confirming the total years of the pupil's school education, or a written statement concerning the total years of the pupil's school education, submitted by the pupil's parent or an adult pupil, if it is not possible to establish the total years of school education on the basis of a diploma, certificate or other document. Documents do not need to be translated into Polish by a sworn translator.

The grade (year of study) is determined on the basis of documents issued by the school abroad, or in the absence thereof, a statement made by the parents on the total years of education abroad. In the case of pupils – refugees from Ukraine – we have introduced the possibility to submit a statement on the child's total years of education in Ukraine not only by the parents/guardians, but also by other persons having custody of the pupil.

Pupils are admitted to primary school *ex officio*, while to secondary school – provided there are free places available at the school.

8) Lack of compulsory education/schooling obligation, as defined by Polish law, for children and pupils from Ukraine who are in Poland and who study in the Ukrainian education system in the distance learning formula.

In view of the special situation of children and young people coming from Ukraine due to the armed conflict on the territory of that country, a regulation has been introduced allowing Ukrainian pupils to receive online education in the Ukrainian education system:

“Children and pupils who are citizens of Ukraine, whose residence on the territory of the Republic of Poland is considered legal, and who receive education in a nursery school or school operating in the Ukrainian education system using methods and techniques of distance learning, shall not be subject to compulsory one-year pre-school preparation, compulsory education or compulsory schooling referred to in the Act – the Education Law. The parent or the person taking care of the child or pupil shall submit to the municipality competent for the place of residence of the child or pupil a declaration that the child or pupil is continuing education in the Ukrainian education system.”⁶

If the child's parent or guardian fails to make such a declaration or withdraws

⁶ §15 of the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Science of 21 March 2022 on the organisation of education, upbringing and care for children and young people who are citizens of Ukraine (Journal of Laws of 2022, item 645as amended).

it, the child must be admitted to a Polish school, thus fulfilling the relevant educational obligations under the Polish legal system.

Simultaneously, Ukrainian pupils have the possibility to take up parallel education in Polish schools. In this case, they are subject to compulsory one-year pre-school preparation, compulsory education or compulsory schooling, as referred to in the Act – the Education Law, and are thus entered on the list of pupils of the school, reported in the Educational Information System and, consequently, funds are allocated to them.

9) Possibility to take the eight-grade exam (primary school final exam), the maturity exam (matura) and the vocational exam by the end of the 2022/2023 school year: a new deadline for submitting the declaration; introduction by the Central Examination Board (CKE) of additional adjustments of conditions for the above exams; possibility to appoint as a member of the team of examiners checking the work of pupils for the eighth-grade or matura exam, persons not entered in the register of examiners who speak Ukrainian.

10) Possibility to establish other locations for carrying out didactic and educational classes and providing after-school care.

Taking into account the number of new pupils from Ukraine, we have introduced the possibility to establish other locations for carrying out didactic and educational classes and providing after-school care, including pre-school education activities, which are organisationally subordinate to nursery schools and schools.

The necessary requirements for nursery school or school facilities were differentiated according to the age of the children and pupils attending them. The schools were allowed to hold classes in facilities that may also be located in a public building or part of a public building in use other than the school. In order to facilitate the establishment of other locations to hold classes in public buildings, the requirement to comply with the procedure for changing the use of a building or part thereof has been temporarily waived. It should be emphasised that this does not remove the obligation to provide safe conditions for education, upbringing and care as defined by the legislation. The implementation of this regulation makes it possible to use any public building, such as an office or social building, which has proved to be particularly helpful in the organisation of education in large cities.

11) Possibility to assign to a teacher, with his/her consent, overtime hours of more than one-half of the mandatory weekly teaching load in the case of establishing an additional unit. The existing statutory regulation⁷ provides for the assignment to a teacher, with his/her consent, of overtime hours not exceeding one-half of the weekly mandatory teaching load.

12) Allowing teachers with entitlement to compensatory benefit to take up employment at the position of a teaching assistance and a teacher in a school where an additional unit will be established, without suspending the right to compensatory benefit.

⁷ Article 35(1) of the Act of 26 January 1982 – the Teacher's Charter (Journal of Laws of 2023, item 984).

13) Facilitating the employment at the position of a teaching assistant of Ukrainian citizens who have knowledge of the Polish language to a sufficient degree to assist a pupil.

14) Enabling the education superintendent to exempt from payment of fees persons from Ukraine applying for confirmation of education received abroad.

15) In the case of special nursery schools, special schools, special education care centres or special education centres – allowing the admission of a disabled pupil who is a citizen of Ukraine on the basis of a statement from the parents or temporary guardian that an application for a certificate has been submitted to the counselling centre, without having to wait for an examination and receiving a certificate on the need for special education.

16) Broadening the catalogue of persons employed in public psychological and pedagogical counselling centres to include persons who are not teachers.

17) Possibility to employ, with the consent of the education superintendent, a person who is not a teacher and has a background recognised by the head of the establishment as suitable for the performance of the tasks specified by the head of the establishment in public educational establishments and public establishments providing care and upbringing for pupils during the period of receiving education outside the place of permanent residence in order to provide classes for children and young people.

18) Possibility of financial assistance for local government units from the funds of the general subsidy reserved for school education and the Assistance Fund.

19) Funding of new tasks: children in pre-school education at the age of 2.5-5 and school transport for pupils.

20) Making it possible to depart from annual classification.

A pupil attending a preparatory unit will not be subject to classification when the teachers' board finds that the pupil does not know Polish or that the pupil's knowledge of the Polish language is insufficient to take part in lessons, or that the range of educational activities carried out at school makes it impossible to proceed with the pupil's annual classification; the pupil will then receive a certificate.

21) In the 2022/2023 school year, a pupil who is a citizen of Ukraine attending a preparatory unit will not be subject to mid-year classification – in the cases indicated in the regulation.

22) Textbook subsidy through which free textbooks were provided for pupils from Ukraine.

23) Determining the need to modify the educational and preventive programme implemented in the school or institution.

In connection with the organisation of education, upbringing and care for children and young people who are citizens of Ukraine, the head of the school or establishment has been obliged to determine, in consultation with the teachers' board and the parents' board, the need to modify, in the school year 2021/2022 and 2022/2023, the educational and preventive programme implemented in the school or establishment and, if necessary, to modify this programme during the school year.

New solutions introduced in the school year 2022/2023 which were not in place in the school year 2021/2022:

1) Extra hours in excess of those specified in Article 35(1) of the Act – the Teachers' Charter may be assigned to a Polish language teacher, with his/her consent, also in a school in which no additional unit has been established to provide education, upbringing and care for children and pupils who are citizens of Ukraine.

2) Possibility for a person using the right to teacher's compensatory benefit to work as a Polish language teacher, also if no additional unit has been established in the school to provide education, upbringing and care for children and pupils who are citizens of Ukraine, without suspending the right to this benefit.

3) Additional lessons of Polish language, as referred to in Article 165(7) of the Act – the Education Law, may be provided in an inter-school group.

In addition, under current legislation, pupils who are not Polish citizens are entitled to:

- additional remedial classes in the subjects taught;
- assistance of a person speaking the language of the country of origin employed as a teaching assistant.

The decision to grant a pupil a given form of support is made by the headmaster of the school, in agreement with the authority managing the school. Simultaneously, a diplomatic or consular establishment of a country of origin of persons who are not Polish citizens operating in Poland or a cultural and educational association of a given nationality may organise at school, in agreement with the headmaster and with the consent of the authority managing the school, lessons in the language and culture of the country of origin (max. 5hrs/week), provided that at least 7 students apply. The school provides rooms and teaching aids free of charge.

Since the first days of the war in Ukraine, the leadership of the Ministry of Education and Science has been in regular contact with education superintendents, indicating desirable or even necessary measures, as well as receiving information on the current situation in the province. The school superintendents, in turn, organised meetings with the headmasters and educational establishments and with representatives of local government units, which are the authorities managing these schools.

In connection with the situation in Ukraine, the school superintendents held 895 regular district meetings with headmasters of schools and institutions, including:

- 248 covering, among others, the following topics: changes in education law, teacher specialist at school, regulations on the classification and grading of pupils, organisation of education for foreigners, in particular for pupils arriving from Ukraine after 24 February 2022;

- 238 were devoted to changes in provisions of the education law effective from 1 September 2022;

- 204 – to the rules of admission of foreigners to Polish schools in the context of the current situation in Ukraine. How to talk to children and pupils about the

situation in Ukraine – recommendations for teachers and school educators. Safety of pupils in school and nursery school;

- 105 on the subject Organisation of education and support for pupils from Ukraine, including the functioning of preparatory units, grading, the number of pupils per class and unit;

- 100 the educational and preventive programme in the context of the diagnosis of the educational situation and the development needs of pupils.

Meetings between representatives of Poland, Ukraine and other neighbouring countries were held at ministerial level as part of the exchange of experience and joint arrangements. The most important of these include:

- On 5 October 2022 Minister Przemysław Czarnek received delegations of ministers from the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, who then (6 October 2022), together with Minister Tomasz Rzymkowski, travelled to Ukraine to attend a meeting of ministers from the region (including a meeting with the Ukrainian Minister of Education and Science).

- On 6-10 October 2022 Minister Tomasz Rzymkowski visited Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk – including a meeting at the Precarpathian National University in Ivano-Frankivsk, a meeting at School No. 10 and School No. 24 in Lviv.

2. FINANCIAL COMMITMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND FOR PUPILS FROM UKRAINE WHO HAVE JOINED THE POLISH EDUCATION SYSTEM AT PRIMARY AND POST-PRIMARY LEVEL

The data below refers to the financing by the Polish state of educational tasks related to pupils from Ukraine who arrived in Poland after 24 February 2022.

The Act of 12 March 2022 on Assistance to citizens of Ukraine provides for the possibility of financial assistance from the funds of the general subsidy reserved for school education or the Assistance Fund for additional educational tasks related to education, upbringing and care of pupils from Ukraine. These funds were allocated exclusively from the Polish state budget.

Support was provided for tasks that had not yet been financed from the education subsidy – funding of pre-school education for children aged 2.5-5 and funding of school transport for pupils.

Transfers for this task from the Assistance Fund, for the period from 24 February 2022 to the end of April 2023 – in monthly instalments – have already been transferred to local governments. Next transfers – will be made analogously, i.e. also in monthly instalments. The total amount of funds accrued on the basis of data for the aforementioned period, intended for the implementation of educational tasks carried out by local government units, amounts to more than PLN 2.7 billion.

3. INITIATIVES OF THE MEiN FOR THE INCLUSION OF UKRAINIAN STUDENTS AND RESEARCHERS IN THE POLISH SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

According to the data in the POL-on system as of 11 May 2023, the total number of Ukrainian students on a full cycle of education registered after 24 February 2022 is 25,741, of which 16,074 are on full-time courses for which the language of education is Polish.

The total number of employees with Ukrainian citizenship who, after 24 February 2022, received employment in institutions supervised by the MEiN and other ministries as academic teachers, other persons giving lectures, persons conducting scientific activities and persons participating in conducting scientific activities is 541.

Statistical data for the 2022/2023 academic year:

- Total number of foreign students from Ukraine: 43,199.
- The majority of Ukrainian students study at non-public higher education institutions in Poland – 26,519 persons. There are 16,085 students in public higher education institutions and 632 students in ecclesiastical higher education institutions.
- There are currently 3,280 refugees living in dormitories.
- The majority of students are on full-time studies – 36,960 persons:
 - on first-cycle studies – 28,712 persons,
 - on second-cycle studies – 6,500 persons,
 - on long-cycle graduate studies – 1,795 pupils.
- On part-time studies – 6,309 persons:
 - on first-cycle studies – 3,755 persons,
 - on second-cycle studies – 1,843 persons,
 - on long-cycle graduate studies – 719 persons.

The current academic year faces problems regarding the lack of possibility for students (mostly men) to leave Ukraine, due to the procedure for obtaining an exit permit from the military command.

As a result, on 27 September 2022 Minister of Education and Science Przemyslaw Czarnek sent recommendations to the rectors of Polish higher education institutions to allow Ukrainian students to study through distance learning methods and technics, as well as individual organisation of studies and leaves of absence from classes.

According to the data from CRASP (Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland), the number of students admitted to HEIs (1st year of studies) is:

- The number of students who were granted dean's leave due to the fact that they could not cross the border is: 213,
- The number of students who will participate remotely due to the fact that they could not cross the border is: 1,051.

There is a special crisis team of CRASP provincial coordinators operating at the Minister of Education and Science under the direction of the AGH University.

The team collects data from individual HEIs and discusses current issues related to Ukrainian refugees in the Polish system of higher education and science.

4. FINANCIAL COMMITMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND FOR STUDENTS AND RESEARCHERS FROM UKRAINE WHO HAVE JOINED THE POLISH SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Citizens of Ukraine studying in Poland are entitled to financial assistance in the form of: the rector's scholarship, the scholarship for persons with disabilities and the allowance under the general rules of the HESL Act⁸ (and after meeting the conditions stipulated in Article 324 (2) (2-8) of the HESL Act also to social scholarship and student loan). They represent the largest group of foreigners – beneficiaries of financial assistance from the state budget.

According to estimated data, approx. 50 million Polish zlotys were allocated for financial assistance, including approx. 39 million for maintenance grants, approx. 6.7 million for the rector's scholarship, approx. 3.3 million for the allowance, approx. 0.5 million for the scholarship for persons with disabilities and 0.05 million for the minister's scholarship.⁹

In the 2021/2022 academic year, 3,148 citizens of Ukraine received financial assistance from the state budget, of which 2,204 received maintenance grants, 1,004 received rector's scholarships, 28 received allowances, 36 received scholarships for persons with disabilities. According to incomplete data as of 11 May 2023, in the 2022/2023 academic year financial assistance from the state budget was granted to 6,630 students from Ukraine, including maintenance grants – 4,299, rector's scholarships – 982, allowances – 2,241, scholarships for persons with disabilities – 75, minister's scholarships – 6.

In addition, funds were allocated from the Polish budget for the following tasks:

- Full-time studies in Polish – according to estimated data, an amount of approx. 241 million Polish zlotys has been allocated;

- The programme of the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange “Solidarity with Ukraine” – funds in the total amount of PLN 24.1 million were planned (PLN 12.7 million for the task “Solidarity with Ukraine – European Universities” and PLN 11.4 million for the task “Solidarity with Ukraine – students and PhD students”), scholarship support was provided to 1.5 thousand students and 18 HEIs participating in the European Universities initiative;

⁸ Act of 20 July 2018 – the Law on higher education and science (Journal of Laws of 2022, item 574 as amended).

⁹ Rates of average monthly benefits according to the latest data published by GUS (Central Statistical office) for 2021. (‘Higher education and its finances in 2021’) – the maintenance grant was PLN 961.46 per month, the scholarship for people with disabilities – PLN 638.15, the rector's scholarship – PLN 691.79, and the allowance – PLN 1,639.3 (one-off). There is an upward trend from year to year.

– Programmes of the National Science Centre for researchers from Ukraine planned funds in the total amount of PLN 7.2 million, support was provided to 51 persons;

– Programmes of the Polish Academy of Sciences for Ukrainian researchers, funds in the amount of PLN 2 million were planned, support was provided to 330 persons.

A total amount of approx. PLN 324 million was allocated for the implementation of the above tasks.

CONCLUSION

This paper provides an overview of the initiatives by the Ministry of Education and Science (MEiN) for the inclusion of Ukrainian pupils in the Polish education system at the primary and post-primary level; discusses the financial commitment of the Republic of Poland for Ukrainian pupils who have joined the Polish education system at the primary and post-primary level; presents the initiatives for the inclusion of Ukrainian students and researchers in the Polish system of higher education and science, as well as the financial commitment of the Republic of Poland for Ukrainian students and researchers who have joined the Polish system of higher education and science. The work done to provide immediate assistance to refugees from Ukraine demonstrates the seriousness of the situation and the scale of the problem faced on a structural and humanitarian level. The systemic solutions adopted efficiently provided care and education to pupils who are citizens of Ukraine and who arrived in the Republic of Poland after 24 February 2022. The analysis of the current situation necessitates further planning in view of the upcoming 2023/2024 school year and proposing further initiatives. As a result of subsequent initiatives, it is planned that children and young people from Ukraine aged 7-18 will be admitted to public schools and will be provided with care and education under the conditions applicable to Polish citizens, whereby:

1) Admission to schools will be possible during the whole school year, and the determination of the grade in which the pupil will continue his/her education will be made on the basis of the sum of the completed years of schooling abroad, according to the documents issued by the school abroad, and in the absence of such documents – a statement of the parents or the person who takes care of the child/ or the actual guardians of the child.

2) Parents may request the headmaster to admit their child to a grade lower than that resulting from the total years of schooling, e.g. because of the child's age.

3) The admission of pupils coming from abroad is regulated at the statutory level. The legal basis of the pupil's residence in Poland is irrelevant for the possibility of admission to a public school and possible forms of educational support.

4) Considering the educational needs of children and youth coming to Poland from Ukraine, which result from the lack or poor knowledge of Polish, as

well as taking into account the necessity to adjust the content taught in preparatory units – adequately to the needs of pupils, the Ministry of Education and Science continues to recommend organising the education of pupils coming from Ukraine in the form of preparatory units.

The amendments to the legislation currently under procedure,¹⁰ including the Act of 12 March 2022 on assistance to citizens of Ukraine in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of that state (Journal of Laws item 583, as amended), provide for recognition of legal residence of Ukrainian citizens until:

1) 31 August 2024 – if these persons:

– on 4 March 2024 are benefiting from pre-school education, fulfilling their compulsory education obligation or fulfilling their compulsory schooling obligation in accordance with the Act – the Education Law, or

– on 4 March 2024 are receiving education in a nursery school or school operating in the Ukrainian education system through distance learning methods and techniques, or

– no later than in the 2022/2023 school year they started their education in second-level vocational school, post-secondary school or school for adults;

2) 30 September 2024 – if these persons take the matura exam referred to in Chapter 3b of the Act of 7 September 1991 on the education system,¹¹ at a resit date.

At the same time, the said amendments provide for prolongation of applicability of the provisions on increasing the funds of the general subsidy reserved for school education, securing funds for the purchase of textbooks, educational materials and exercise materials for pupils who are citizens of Ukraine, organising early development support for children, schoolchildren, pupils or participants of revalidation and education classes, establishing and closing other locations for conducting educational activities, free transport to the school place, material assistance for pupils, additional lessons of Polish language, extra hours for a teacher, employment at the position of a teaching assistant, as well as for the exclusion of the applicability of the provisions on suspending the right to the compensatory benefit.

The applicability of the following provisions will also be extended for the 2023/2024 school year: provisions on increasing the number of pupils in common room activities in a mainstream primary school and of disabled pupils in common room activities in a mainstream school, an inclusive school, a special school and a mainstream school with special units; provisions on the organisation of additional classes of Polish language in groups of no more than 15 pupils and with weekly duration of no less than 6 lesson periods; provisions on admission to a special nursery school, a pre-school unit in a special primary school, a special school, a special education care centre or a special care centre of a disabled child or a disabled pupil on the basis of a statement made by the parent or a person who has

¹⁰ Draft act amending the names of the state service higher education institutions supervised by the minister competent for internal affairs, amending the Act on the Police, the Act on the Border Guard, the Act on the State Fire Service and certain other acts (paper 3133).

¹¹ Journal of Laws of 2022 item 2230.

custody of the child or pupil on submission of an application for a certificate on the need for special education to a public psychological and pedagogical counselling centre, including a public specialist counselling centre; provisions on the determination by the headmaster of a school or institution, in agreement with the teachers' board and the parents' board, of the need to modify the educational and preventive programme implemented in the school or institution, and to modify this programme if necessary; provisions on employment in a public psychological and pedagogical counselling centre, in justified cases and with consent of the education superintendent, of a person who is not a teacher and who is prepared by the head of the counselling centre to carry out specific tasks in this respect.

Units, grades and groups, with an increased number of children, schoolchildren and pupils in the school years 2021/2022 and 2022/2023, can function respectively until the completion of pre-school education and throughout the entire stage of education. On the other hand, due to the stable number of pupils from Ukraine in Polish education system units, the applicability of the provisions allowing for an increase in the number of pupils in further established units is not extended for the 2023/2024 school year.

The following provisions will remain unchanged and continue to apply:

1) provisions on lack of compulsory one-year pre-school preparation, compulsory education and compulsory schooling obligation for children and pupils who are citizens of Ukraine and who receive their education in a nursery school or school operating in the Ukrainian education system through distance learning methods and techniques,

2) provisions on other locations for conducting educational activities.

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Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 23 August 2017 on the education of persons who are not Polish citizens and persons who are Polish citizens who have received education in schools operating in the education systems of other countries, Journal of Laws of 2020, item 1283 as amended.

Act of 20 July 2018 – the Law on higher education and science, Journal of Laws of 2022, item 574 as amended.

Act of 12 March 2022 on assistance to Ukrainian citizens in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine, Journal of Laws 583 as amended.

Regulation of the Minister of Education and Science of 21 March 2022 on the organisation of education, upbringing and care for children and young people who are citizens of Ukraine, Journal of Laws 645 as amended.