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Language Promotion and Development for integration of Ukrainian refugee children in national education systems in host countries

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1. Introduction

The language of instruction plays a key role in refugee children's integration into host country schools, as children spend most of their time at school and this is also where they meet their peers and socialisation take place. Knowledge of the language of instruction enables them to continue their education and learning, fully participate in the host society and overall determines their prospects for future success in work and life and integration in society. Evidence suggests that children who do not know the language of instruction "are more likely to be placed in special education"¹.

In response to increasing migration, European countries have implemented a range of approaches and programmes to promote and support language acquisition for refugee and migrant children. Evidence from implementation has contributed to a paradigm shift from approaches that focus on acquiring the language of instruction of the host country towards promoting language integration, both mother tongue and language of instruction, as well as multilingualism in the classroom and the curriculum.

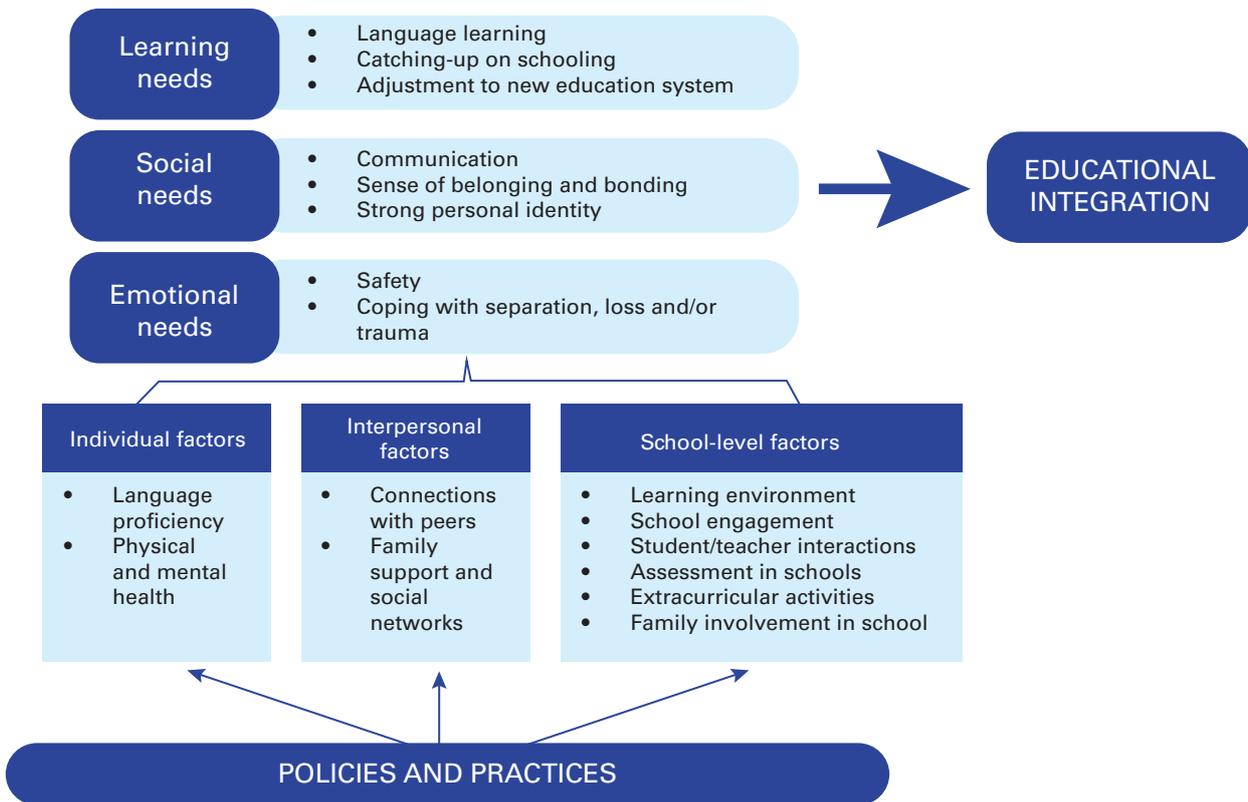
Despite significant investment in language integration policy and various practices established to support the integration of refugee and migrant children in Europe, language remains the most prevalent barrier to school integration across countries hosting Ukrainian children. The lack of knowledge of teachers and schools about the new group of refugees, the traumatic experiences of children caused by the war and displacement, parting from relatives and friends, new educational settings and, more importantly, new languages of instruction pose challenges for both education practitioners that are still to be addressed.

This brief reviews current situation of language instruction in Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungary, and based on evidence of effective approaches to language integration in Europe and internationally and extensive mapping recently conducted by UNICEF Education team in ECARO provides a framework to guide the future policy and professional development of teachers and school staff to support the integration of Ukrainian children in country education systems.

¹ European Commission, 2016, p. 36

2. Theories and evidence on effective approaches in language development

Figure 1. Refugee education: Integration models and practices in OECD countries (Cerna, 2019, p. 34)



3. What works in language development?

In Europe, there are two main models of school and language integration of refugee and migrant students: separate reception classes and direct integration model². Both approaches have benefits depending on the contexts and education system capacities as well as the age of children. There is growing evidence that migrant students benefit more from integration into mainstream classes than from learning in reception classes, where they are isolated from the majority of their peers and therefore most European countries advocate direct immersion. The evidence though shows that combining immersion with other support measures

such as remedial teaching and “intensive language support” provides best results³. The following are examples of good practice from countries:

The European Centre for Modern Languages and the Council of Europe supports comprehensive programme on teacher education for European Member States. Two programmes are most notable and successfully implemented across European countries:

MALEDIVE Programme Teaching the language of schooling in the context of diversity⁴ is implemented in Austria, Italy, France, Germany, Finland and in majority EU countries. The programme promotes plurilingual approaches to address the linguistic and cultural diversity in the classroom

² European Commission/EACES/Eurydice 2022.

³ European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2022, p. 14

⁴ Maledive | Project details (ecml.at)

that focus on the *individual, society and school*, and offers teachers, teacher educators and curriculum developers' materials to promote linguistic diversity as a resource for learning in schools. Consequently, the project embraces the language of instruction, languages as subjects, home languages, and skills in other languages and language varieties.

CLIL – Content and Language Integrated Learning⁵ implemented in majority of European countries, like Denmark, Greece Island, Netherlands, Norway, France, Canada, Germany, Finland Canada and many others. It is an approach in which an additional language is used for learning and teaching of both content and language'. As a rule, CLIL is used to describe all types of teaching that use any second language (foreign language, regional languages, minority languages etc) to teach up to 50% of certain content subjects (e.g., history or biology) at school (Kolb & Raith, 2018, p. 204). The programme provides resources, support and exchange of knowledge and experience that target teachers, teacher educators and curriculum developers. It is also implemented in Switzerland, as a country with experience in hosting immigrants. An example of comprehensive programme for teacher training includes the University of Zurich CLIL training for teachers⁶).

Finland⁷- the Finnish National Agency for Education supports teachers with bilingual preparatory teaching for strengthening language skills in pre-primary and primary education and provides guidelines on integrated learning path for multilingual children. In addition, the Finnish member organisation of the ETUCE/OAJ, which represents about 95% of Finnish teachers, supports teaching immigrant children in their home language until the end of secondary education.

Canton of Zurich Switzerland: QUIMS -Quality in multicultural schools Project⁸- was introduced with the aim to achieve good level of school performance, equal educational opportunities, and integration for all children in schools. Funded by the Canton, it is obligatory for all schools with a high proportion of foreign-language students. The programme has three main components: *language support* to enhance literacy, team-teaching with

⁵<https://www.ecml.at/Thematicareas/ContentandLanguageIntegratedLearning/Otherresources/tabid/4176/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>. ECML/CELV > Thematic areas > Content and Language Integrated Learning > Council of Europe Resources

⁶ Putting theory into practice : a framework for a CLIL course in linguistics in a blended learning environment - Zurich Open Repository and Archive (uzh.ch)

⁷ Finland's education response to the influx of Ukrainian students | UNESCO

⁸ Quality in Multicultural Schools (QUIMS) | Canton of Zurich (zh.ch)

teachers of second language and the integration of heritage language classes; *school success* which includes differentiated learning support and assessment, as well as parents' involvement in learning and transition processes; and *integration* to build a shared culture of appreciation and equity and supports participation by both students and their parents.

Canton of Lucerne, Switzerland: Both reception and mainstream classes⁹- are available for children or adolescents with no or little knowledge of German Students receive intensive instruction of German as a second language and other subjects provided by the curriculum are taught. The transfer to a regular class is carried out on an individual basis, with the maximum length of stay in the reception class being one year. However, individual learners can be directly integrated into mainstream classes and supported with instruction of German as a second language.¹⁰

Portugal - Placement of migrant children into mainstream classrooms in the context of inclusive education actively implemented in the country¹¹. School multidisciplinary teams determine necessary support to ensure that migrant and refugee students effectively participate in education. Measures include building friendly learning environment, both in terms of pedagogy and social relationships and promoting well-being. Portuguese language it is supported both a school subject and the language of schooling. Migrant and refugee students are offered Portuguese as a subject as a second language (PL2) in primary and secondary education. Through interviews and tests, migrant and refugee students are placed at the A1, A2 or B1 language levels and follow a specific PL2 curriculum. Students placed at the B2 and C1 language levels follow the Portuguese subject as described in the national curriculum and can benefit from additional language support classes, while students placed at the A1, A2 and B1 language levels can also benefit from specific assessment criteria in the PL2 subject, as well as adjustments of final exams of PL2. Other specific educational measures, such as universal, selective and/or additional measures can be applied by each school to support immigrant students placed at level A1, in order to ensure their successful school inclusion in the national curriculum.

⁹ Continuing education for working Ukrainian teachers - Events - phlu.ch

¹⁰ Lernende aus der Ukraine: DaZ-Unterricht und Aufnahmeklassen (lu.ch)

¹¹ Ministry of Education, Portugal Country Background Report: Review of Inclusive Education, p31 https://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/Noticias_documentos/country-background-report-portugal-educacao-inclusiva-em-revista-2022.pdf

4. What are host countries currently doing to support language development for Ukrainian students?

Hungary- To support language acquisition of newly arrived Ukrainian children, several approaches have been used with varied success by refugee receiving countries in Hungary.

The programme “[United for Ukraine](#)”¹² implemented in cooperation with the Civil Platform for Public Education and the Civil College Foundation promotes access to integrated education and support for refugee children and youth from the Ukraine in the Hungarian educational system.

In Poland, Germany, Greece and Ireland, programme called Majority and Minority Languages in School Environment: Helping Teachers, Pupils and Parents (MaMLiSE)¹³ i aims to guide teachers on adapting learning materials to work with students with different levels of school language knowledge and the preparation of education practitioners to work efficiently with the principle of scaffolding. The countries also developed an Educational Integration Model for schools admitting migrant students.

The Czech Republic- CLIL approach is predominant, as well as the digitalisation of learning and teaching materials, to reach a wide audience of children, parents and teachers, including age-differentiated apps and online materials, videos to introduce the history and culture of the country along with language learning. Czech schools provide psychological consultation along with language support.

Czech Television together with the National Pedagogical Institute of the Czech Republic (NPI CR) have created the educational programme “[Čeština s Mínou a Týnou](#)” ([Czech with Mina and Tyna](#)) for pre-schoolers.

The web portal of the National Pedagogical Institute of the Czech Republic (NPI CR) which contains materials for inclusion designed for school students with different home languages.

¹² #UnitedforUkraine- CIVIL College Foundation: EDUA Project- United Way Hungary

¹³ Majority and Minority Languages in School Environment: Helping Teachers, Pupils and Parents – Majority and Minority Languages in School Environment: Helping Teachers, Pupils and Parents (amu.edu.pl)

School counselling centres (pedagogical-psychological counselling and special pedagogical centres). Students are tested, and based on the results receive individual classes of Czech or foreign (second) languages at school (max. 3 times a week); an individual curriculum; specially designed tests that will take into account limited knowledge of the Czech language; textbooks for Czech as a foreign/second language for school use and home preparation, special coursebooks for language development); the assistance of a qualified pedagogical worker if a child has learning difficulties; the help of a teaching assistant if a child has other special education needs; and benefits during the entrance exams (e.g. more time, permission to use a dictionary).

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports also provides informational support for organisers of adaptation groups for Ukrainian students. The Czech language courses are also offered by the Institute for Language and Preparatory Studies at Charles University, which has been teaching Czech as a foreign language for more than 60 years, as well as private language schools such as the Jipka language school in Prague.

The Slovak Republic- The [TOY project](#) provides pre-school and primary school children with opportunities for language learning, socialisation, processing of traumatic experiences and special support services. The multilingual and interactive website offers online language courses at different levels (A1, A2, B1, B2) and enables children to learn about the history, culture and landscape of Slovakia. The website of the Comenius University provides valuable tools that support integration into society and language learning.

5. Identified Gaps in language development policy and practice

1. Lack of a holistic and coordinated framework that could serve as a guideline for education practitioners working in the field of language integration in the face of a massive influx of refugee children in a variety of settings and scenarios, e.g., primary and secondary educational establishments, NGOs, and cultural and educational centres that aim to foster migrant children's second language acquisition
2. Absence of a long-lasting policy on language support, multilingualism and multiculturalism in schools in the host countries
3. Insufficient number of qualified professionals

specialised in second language acquisition to deliver classes in the host country's language and provide learning support for Ukrainian refugee children

4. Lack of special courses and materials to train pre- and in-service educators to teach second languages to non-native speakers
5. Shortage of specialists to work with Ukrainian children's traumatic experiences at schools
6. Insufficient cooperation between the ministries of education, UNICEF, universities of teacher education, NGOs, local communities and refugee families.

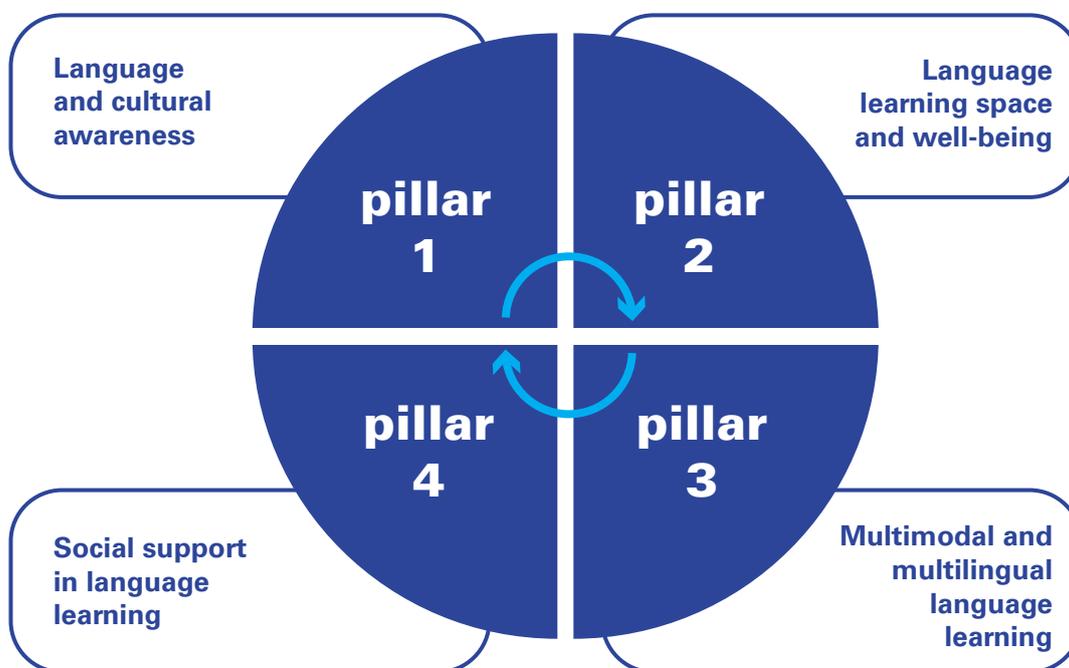
6. How can host countries improve their policy and practise in language development and integration- Proposed framework model

The framework is proposed to address the holistic

needs of Ukrainian refugees and address existing gaps in policy and practise through evidence-based and comprehensive approach to policy and professional development of teachers and school professionals, or more precisely support:

- Inclusion of all students by focusing on multilingual and intercultural language education
- Respect and appreciation of student diversity as a resource in all school practices
- Development of a safe place and support of well-being in learning processes
- Implementation of multimodal and multilingual learning and teaching practices
- Provision of social support in language learning.

It consists of four pillars with key proposed interventions (at policy, school and classroom level) which are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Policy and practise need to ensure that these are implemented as a whole to ensure effective language development and integration (Figure 2):



Pillar 1 – Language and cultural awareness-to evoke the individuals’ lived experiences in terms of languages, cultures and values and encourages critical reflection

Objectives:

- Including home languages in the process of (second) language acquisition
- Implementing multiple critical perspectives in the discussions on worldview and values
- Fostering critical cultural awareness
- Raising bias awareness among teachers and students
- Implementing anti-bias education activities in the classroom.

Policy interventions

- *Social and linguistic justice in language learning and teaching* by considering the home languages and language experiences of the learners, as well as by opening spaces for reflection on diverse cultures, languages and social inequalities, *cultural awareness and expression*.

School level interventions

- Making languages and cultures in the school linguistic landscape visible where students participate in decorating the school building and the classroom with posters and writing in different languages (Figures 3 and 4) with a specific focus on family and minority languages.
- Introducing the culture of the host country to refugee parents and children, as well as providing educators in the host countries with information on the culture, worldview and values of the newly arrived group to overcome biases that may lead to racism, discrimination and unfair judgement.
- Providing teachers with more information about students’ previous knowledge to avoid biases and lower expectations.
- Instructing educators working with migrant students on the power of language to communicate biases in the classroom.
- Prevention of the biased attitudes of refugee parents and children towards the system of education in the host country, which may pose difficulties for a child’s integration and reduce learners’ interest in studies.

Classroom level interventions

- Teachers apply the visual approach of language portraits can be applied to explore the individuals’ experiences with languages (language portraits, self-portraits (Figure 5), a tree of languages (Figure 6).

Teachers use various resources or games, for example the Critical cultural awareness (multilingual and cooperative game ‘Pareanaga’ Materials for Heritage Language Teaching)

Pillar 2 – Language learning spaces to create a physical and social space for language learning and improving well-being

Objectives:

- Creating ideal starting conditions for language learning in schools and at home
- Identifying the psychological and language needs of refugee children in educational systems
- Activating resources for teaching refugee children in host country schools
- Introducing alternative forms of assessment
- Applying the fundamentals of trauma-informed pedagogy

Policy interventions

- Creating safe place, both physical and social space that enables minority students to achieve and maintain the educational benefits of diversity
- Providing resources to enable both access and participation in education and considering children’s subjective feelings and experiences about things such as social participation and social relationships.

School level interventions

A participative approach is promoted to encourage students to design places in the school where they feel happy and safe (Figure 7), inclined to engage in language learning, use the whole linguistic repertoire by multilingual children, express cultural and linguistic identities, make language errors, and get visual language support (Figure 8).

- Applying formative assessment through observation, self- and peer-assessment.

- Assigning a responsible person to provide information and enable networking between different groups and stakeholders.

Classroom level interventions

- Teachers and school professionals implement trauma-informed pedagogy which includes teaching approaches to support students to develop resilience, as well as the pedagogy of a safe space which facilitates academic achievement, social participation and acceptance, mental health in general and language learning in particular.
- Teachers use of picture books and storytelling approaches (at the primary school level) to successfully overcoming traumatic experiences (Figure 9), as well as approaches that foster digital literacy (at the secondary school level) for representation of their (linguistic and cultural) identities.

Pillar 3 – Multimodal and multilingual language learning to foster socially responsible language education

Objectives:

- Implementing the concept of *translanguaging* in language teaching and learning
- Strengthening the potential of individual and societal multilingualism in language learning and teaching
- Fostering multimodal literacy among refugee children
- Exploring the linguistic landscape of the host country

Policy interventions

- Promoting school policy with focus on sharing children's culture, language and religion with other members of that group.

School level interventions

Teachers are supported to learn to recognise the potential and challenges of the linguistically and culturally diverse classroom and support individual learning processes by fostering multilingualism and valuing the whole linguistic repertoire as well as introducing activities to support multilingualism at school (Figure 10,11).

Classroom level interventions

- Teachers implement *translanguaging* model which enable students to use their whole linguistic repertoire in language learning.
- *Teaching focuses on multimodal and multisensorial language aspects* defined as the competence of reading and writing multimodal texts that include at least two semiotic systems.

Teachers use linguistic landscape to foster outdoor learning and language learning in an authentic context but also draws attention to social justice in language education (which help students to develop language awareness, critical cultural awareness and critical thinking (see also Figure 9). Further, students reflect on their linguistic and cultural identity by collecting photographs about languages and culturally and linguistically relevant objects in private space (Figure 12) illustrates the linguistic homescape (Krompák, 2018, 2021) of a seven-year-old boy, whose mother comes from China and selected a poster with a subway map of Beijing as relevant to him in his home environment. See more <https://www.linguistic-landscape.ch/>

Pillar 4 – Social support in language learning-to strengthen social support in language learning by involving parents, peers and communities

Objectives:

- Providing opportunities for families to participate in their children's language education
- Strengthening peer interaction and support in language learning
- Involving refugee children in extracurricular activities that foster language learning
- Involving communities and other educational spaces in language learning

Policy interventions

- Building *the personal, social and learning to learn competence* that enables individuals to reflect upon themselves, effectively manage time and information, and work with others in a constructive way.
- Social support in language learning is generally provided by three major groups: family, peers and teachers in terms of motivation, support and

mediation in language learning.

- Language policy in families (Caldas, 2012) can contribute to fostering the language integration of refugee children.

School level interventions

- Introduction of 'fast-track' culture and language courses and activities for both parents and children in the same groups, as well as the involvement of parents in extracurricular activities at schools, can be beneficial for both social and language integration.
- Cooperation with libraries in providing books, multimodal materials for language learning and additional educational spaces opens new opportunities for integration and studies. Figure 13 illustrates a literary café in a library in Switzerland, where children may select a story in different languages

Classroom level interventions

- Teachers and school professionals provide social support in language learning in school as well as during extracurricular activities, e.g., a 'buddy system' (Figure 14),
- Teachers and school professionals focus on the crucial role of the family in language learning.

In a similar vein, the Swiss project Primano Schrittwiese offers home visits by a person from the same language group to support parents in the literacy and social development of their children. Similarly, the Swiss project kinder-4.ch offers short videos about learning opportunities in 13 languages with the aim of fostering language development in the early years.

7. How can the proposed framework model be implemented?

The framework can be implemented to improve policy and practise in the following areas:
Enrich and complement the existing models of

language integration of Ukrainian refugee children to design local responses in a specific country as part of the current inclusive education reforms.

- Develop specific module-based framework of language integration to guide pre- and in-service *teacher education*, respectively, to prepare specialists to work with linguistically and culturally heterogeneous classes and refugee children.
- Develop school language policies and courses and workshops for in-service teacher training, including for children from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.
- Support schools to strengthen mechanisms to cooperate with other stakeholders such as NGOs, sport clubs, art clubs, libraries, and parents to support social and language integration of refugee children
- Support schools to guide teaching staff and school psychological services to select, design, and use materials on language teaching, trauma pedagogy, and social inclusion.
- Implement language integration approach in order to enable inclusive and socially responsible language education
- Implement multimodal and multilingual resources in language teaching and learning and relevant materials¹⁴
- Implement activities that include authentic learning materials and encourage participative and co-constructive approaches in working with children and young people.

¹⁴ literature and the links, as well as the examples proposed within the framework, can serve as a model for working with multimodal resources in language teaching and learning