

**School with Class
Foundation**

Together in Class

A program for schools joined
by children and young people with
migration and refugee experience

REPORT

Implementation period: 06.2022–10.2023

With the support of



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The Together in Class program was created in response to the outbreak of war in Ukraine in 2022 and the need to urgently support teachers and the classrooms joined by Ukrainian students overnight.

We created it so that we could work with teachers to build bridges between the different cultures and experiences of children and young people. We focused on creating a welcoming and inclusive environment that is supportive of each child and young person. We believe that school can be a space where every student, regardless of background and difficult experiences, can have equal opportunities to develop and nurture their talents.

The School with Class Foundation team



Together in Class from different perspectives

”

I have used the materials from the Together in Class program in workshops [with pedagogy students]. In my opinion, they are helpful in better understanding the phenomenon of diversity in the classroom, as well as in preparing a group of students to coexist with new classmates with a migration experience. This program not only introduces those involved to the world of cultural diversity, but also teaches empathy and understanding towards other cultures. Personally, I think it is a very well-designed resource that pays attention to the social and emotional layer of the children's functioning, as well as fostering group integration. I see great value in this program as a tool to build openness, tolerance and a global outlook among young people.

”

dr Marek Smulczyk
University of Warsaw,
Pedagogy Department

”

(...) after the project, I felt better and more confident in my new school and my new (so far unfamiliar) surroundings. Thank you very much; how good it was that we could meet together, Poles and Ukrainians, get to know each other and talk, talk about everything. I needed this so much, because after arriving in Poland I felt bad, everything was hurting me from fear and uncertainty about what would happen next.

”

Schoolgirl,
statement from the mini grant
narrative report



”

Together in Class is a program with a wealth of attentiveness, support, hospitality and kindness that builds bridges and brings solace. The program materials are unique. Colourful, wonderful. It's a whole lot of ideas, empowering but also fun for teachers, including us librarian teachers, and for our kids in schools. All of them – it doesn't matter what country they come from. And on top of that, a huge amount of interesting, not overwhelming knowledge. My library often turns into a relaxation room – thanks to sensory balls. Into a games room – thanks to the charades. Into a temple of mindfulness – thanks to mindfulness cards. Priceless in a school that is often rushed, with no time for mindfulness.

”

Iwona Pietrzak-Płachta,
2022 Teacher of the Year, teacher and librarian in
the School and Kindergarten Compound
in Pliszczyn

”

I'm very happy with this project, because looking at all the others I'm involved in, it's here that I feel the biggest focus is on the children, to really help them. And also the focus on the fact that I can get some support, at least this group [teacher support group], where I can just speak my mind, because where else? Because where else?

”

Teacher,
statement from
a focus group

”

It was crucial for us that teachers and students worked together. Together we planned the changes to the space [of wellbeing and integration in the school] and then together we oversaw the implementation of the next stages of the work. This allowed for intra-school integration, taught everyone to work as a team and to act with a goal-oriented approach. We used the strengths of the participants – so that the outcome was the best possible and those involved felt pride and satisfaction in their actions.

”

Ewa Nalazek-Kontna, Anna Dubielewska,
Marta Siołkowska
Gen. Józef Haller Secondary School No. XIII in
Bydgoszcz, which implemented a space
transformation grant as part of
the Together in Class
program



Together in Class program - general results

- **1727 schools** (almost 10% of schools in Poland) and **389 non-formal education entities**
- **930,760 participants¹** (total)
- students (girls and boys) in schools and other entities: **840,897**
- students from Ukraine in schools: **39,061** (around 20% from 188,000 children who were/are involved in the Polish educational system in the 2022/2023 school year)
- children and young people from Ukraine that visited libraries, community centres, day care centres and local activity centres involved in the program: **30,699** (estimated data for the 2022/2023 school year)
- teachers: **84,594** (female - 81,7%, male - 18,3%)
- non-formal education entities' employees: **5,269** (female - 80,6%, male - 19,4%)
- **> 2,000 hours** of various forms of educational support reaching more than 550 teachers in 250 schools

- This data allows to qualify the program as **systemic support**.
- The reach of the Together in Class program and the support for students and teachers was **enormous**.
- Many teachers emphasized that it was **the only kind of support they received**.

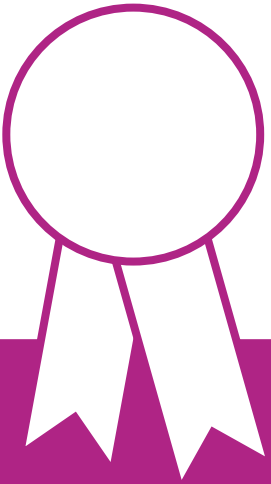
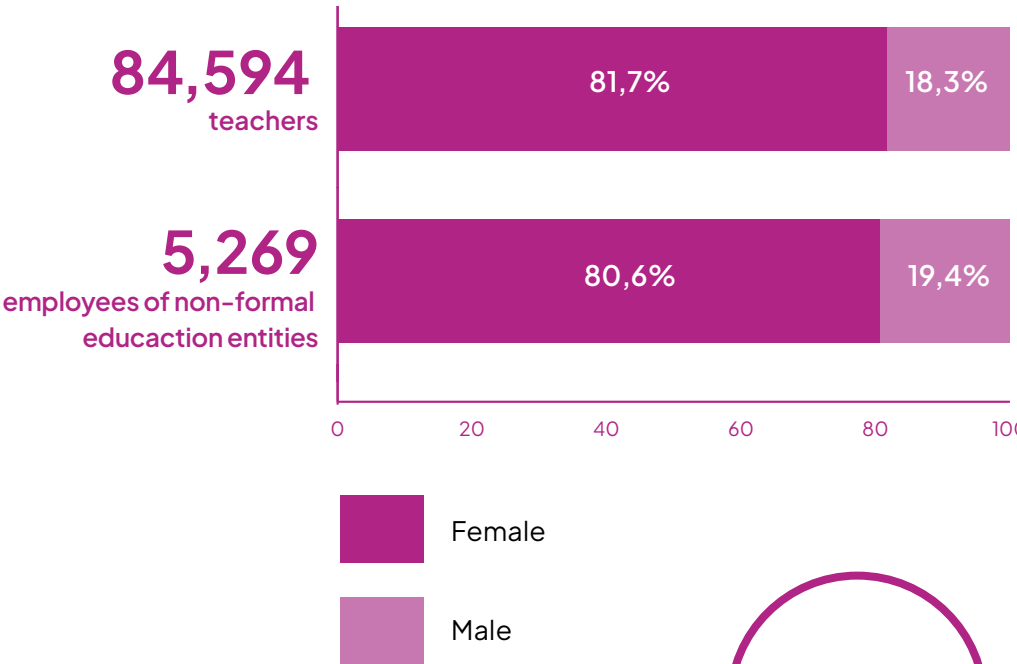
¹ The reported figures are based on the results of a survey summarizing the program, conducted in October and November 2023 among participating institutions.

2,116 schools (almost 10% of schools in Poland) and non-formal education entities

16,485 men

73,378 women

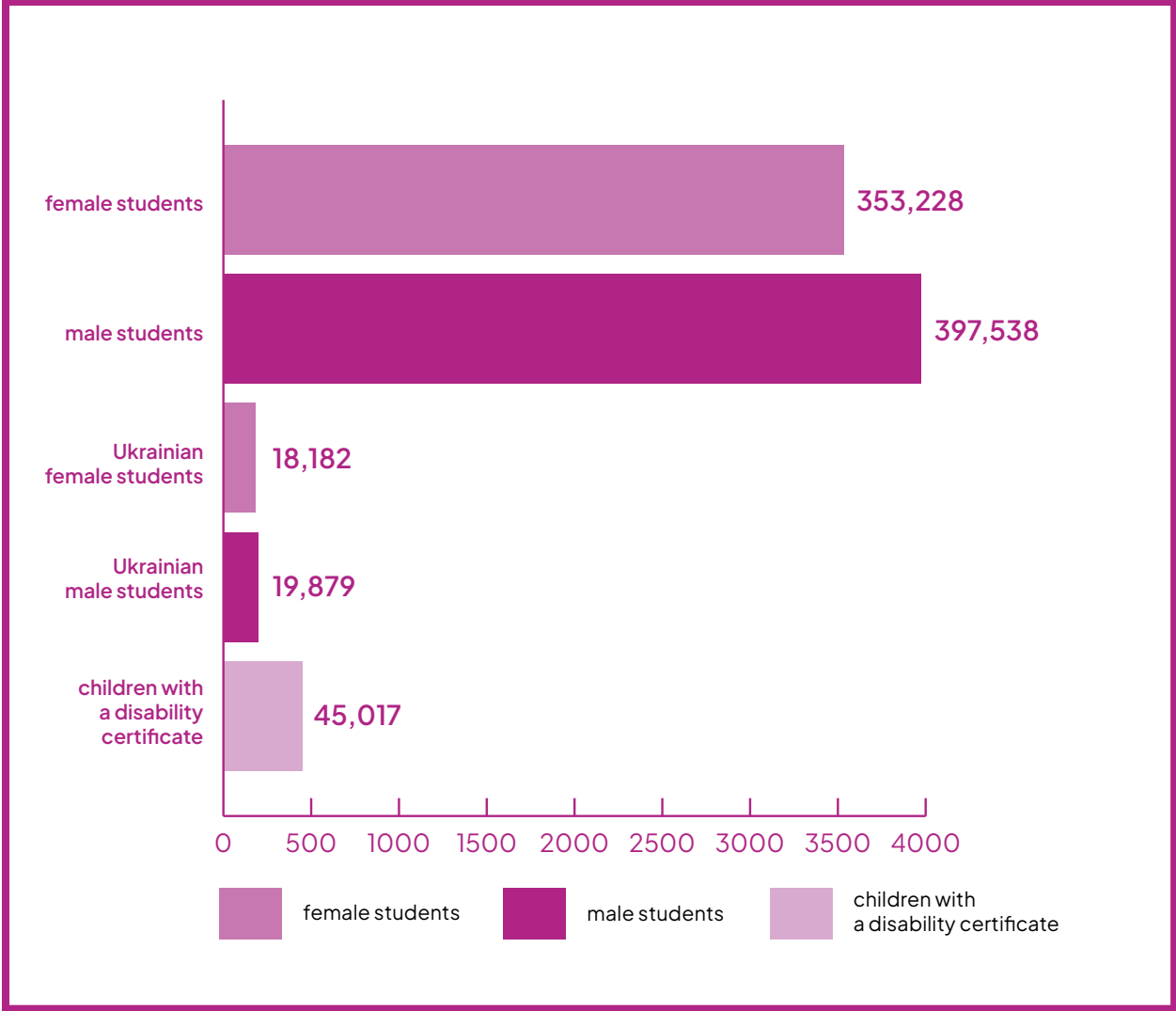
840,897 boys&girls



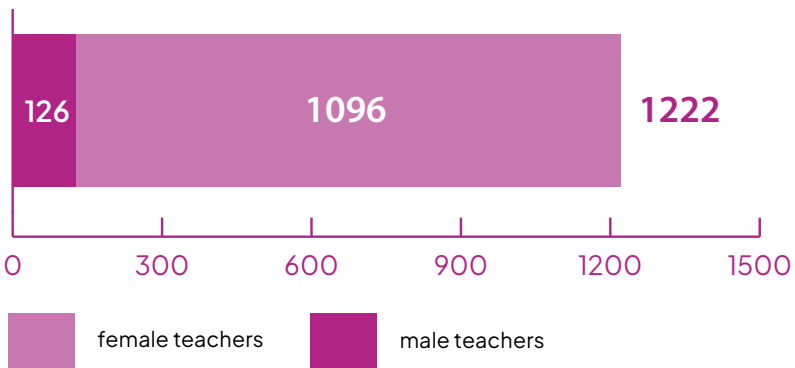
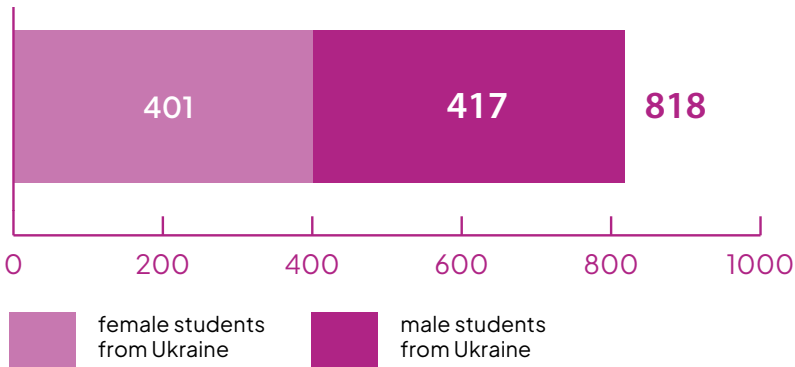
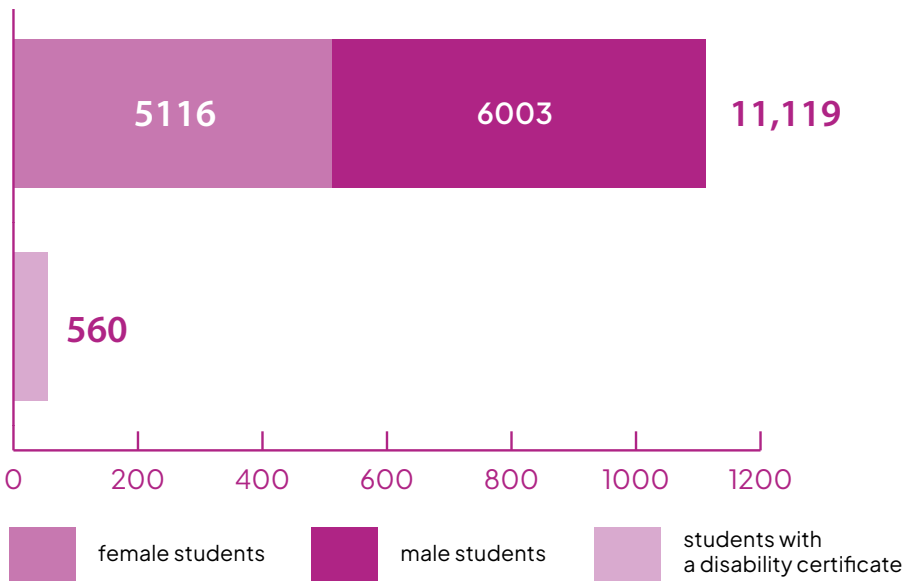
Together in Class in numbers

Number of program participants in schools:

- 69,130 female teachers
- 15,464 male teachers
- 353,228 total female students
- 397,538 male students in total, including
- 18,182 Ukrainian female students
- 19,879 Ukrainian male students
- 45,017 children with a disability certificate.



Mini-grants



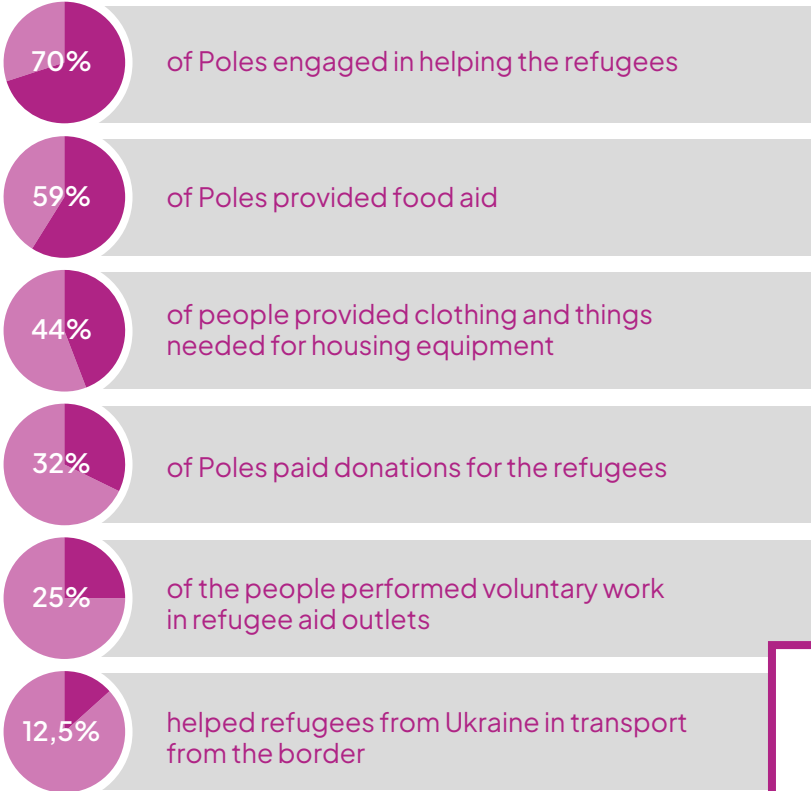
War in Ukraine, Poland's neighbour country

On 24 February 2022, Russia attacked Ukraine. The threat to the safety and lives of Ukrainian citizens has resulted in a multi-million migration to neighbouring countries, in particular Poland. Currently, according to official figures, there are nearly 1 million Ukrainian citizens in Poland who have arrived here as a result of the war².



Polish society's response

The Polish public has mobilised to bring aid to people from Ukraine fleeing war³.



² <https://dane.gov.pl/pl/dataset/2715,zarejestrowane-wnioski-o-nadanie-statusu-ukr/resource/52339/table>, (data as of 14.11.2023) the number of Ukrainian citizens registered, who were assigned the foreigner status pursuant to special regulations. However the Warsaw Enterprise Institute states in its report titled *Migrations: Poland's Missed (For Now) Opportunity* (September 2023), that the total number of immigrants in Poland can be estimated at ca. 3.5–4 million, **60–75% of which are Ukrainians**. <https://wei.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Migracje-niewykorzystana-na-razie-szansa-Polski-raport.pdf>

³ Data based on <https://metropolie.pl/artukul/34-mln-ukraincow-w-polsce-nowy-raport-unii-metropolii-polskich>.

Ukrainian children in Poland

In Poland, children are subject to compulsory education from the age of 7 to 18. The number of Ukrainian children of school and pre-school age in Poland, registered in the register of Ukrainian citizens, is approximately 395,000⁴.

Ukrainian students study either in Polish schools or remotely within the Ukrainian education system. It is common for Ukrainian children to study in both education systems – the Polish one on an on-site basis and in the Ukrainian system online at the same time. Data on this subject, however, is lacking.

- Approximately 188,000 children and young people from Ukraine were educated in the 2022/23 school year in Polish schools and kindergartens.
- Pre-school education covered approximately 44,000 children.
- About 117,000 children were educated in primary schools⁵.
- Approximately 27,000 were educated in secondary schools.
- It is estimated that around 224,000 children and young people were outside the Polish education system⁶.

”

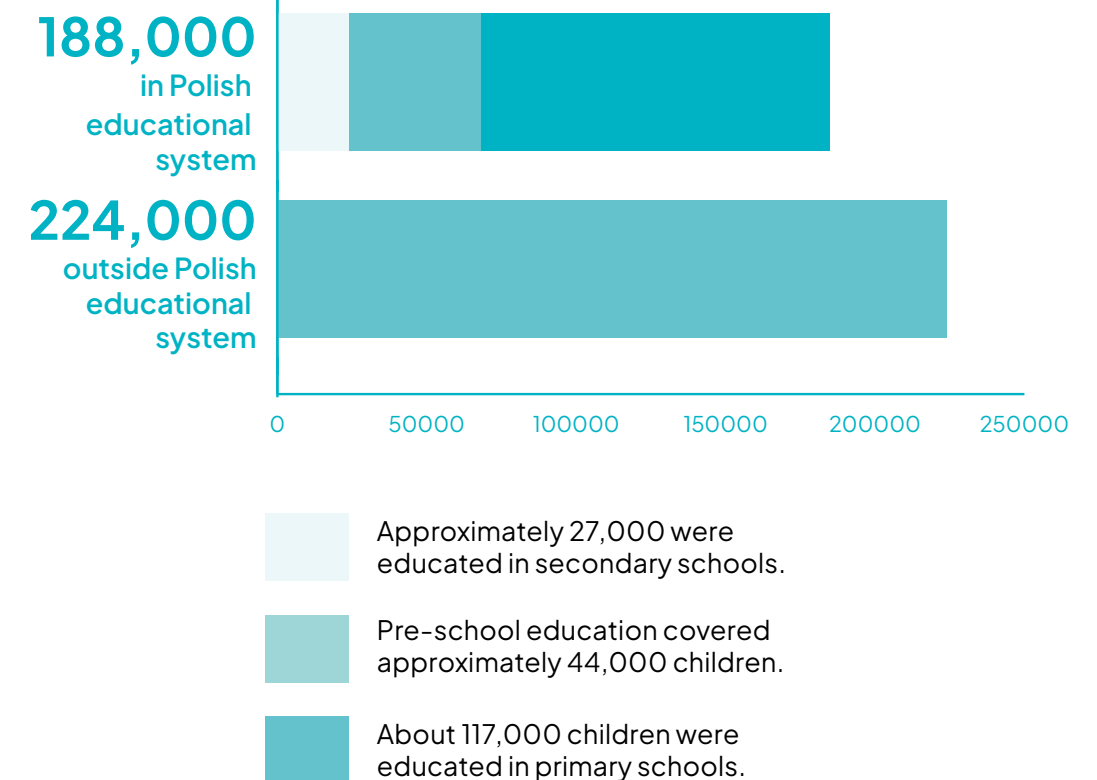
Ensuring a sense of security for pupils with migration and refugee experience, creating a welcoming environment, and building an intercultural bridge was quite a challenge for many schools last school year.

Our school succeeded in this thanks to the materials we received, the content support, the participation of teachers in training sessions and individual meetings organised by the Foundation. Pupils coming from abroad received great support and equal opportunities for development

”

post from a school's Facebook page

Number of refugee children and youth from Ukraine inside and outside the Polish educational system



⁴ Polish government data on people with an alien status pursuant to the special regulation as of 14.11.2023, <https://dane.gov.pl/pl/dataset/2715,zarejestrowane-wnioski-o-nadanie-statusu-ukr/resource/52339/table>

⁵ Data from the Educational Information System (SIO) as of 14.02.2023

⁶ Data based on presentation given by UNICEF in the Education Working Group meeting on 2.08.2023

The importance of the Education in Emergencies

Education in crisis situations refers to quality learning opportunities for all ages in situations of crisis. Education is critical in times of emergencies as it provides physical, psychosocial, and cognitive protection that can sustain and save lives⁷.

Research confirms that there is a correlation between education and social cohesion. Schools help to create a sense of belonging by fostering respect and equal treatment, thus contributing to a more cohesive society that is inclusive and accepting of different groups.

Education, particularly on-site education, plays a very important role in providing a child in crisis with a sense of stability, of belonging, an opportunity to build social relationships and, if necessary, there is the possibility to seek support from schools in terms of psychological support, pedagogical challenges and intercultural assistance.

”

We provided such psychological care, because there were some children who didn't really cope, also with their emotions. And such activities were carried out by our pedagogue with a psychologist right there in their offices to relieve these emotions, and it was done every day.

”

Teacher, statement from a focus group

Education as a key to wellbeing

- Education is a child's right.
- Education plays a key role in supporting children's developmental needs.
- The daily routine of going to school has important emotional and psychosocial benefits for children.
- On-site education is more effective than online education.
- Attending an on-site school can prevent mental illness and feelings of isolation, while building emotional resilience.
- Study completely online should only be done for short periods of time because of the health risks associated with spending time in front of a screen for long periods of time.
- Lack of social interaction with other children, outside of the online environment, can have a detrimental effect on a child's wellbeing.
- Undertaking and continuing education in Poland helps families to feel part of the Polish society and supports social integration and cohesion⁸.

7 INEE Minimum Standards: Orientation for Education Partners, Plan International, October 2022

8 Based on *Kontynuacja nauki i powrót do szkoły* [Continuing education and returning to school], guidebook prepared by the Education Working Group, August 2023

In a situation of war, children are particularly vulnerable to mental health problems. WHO estimates that 9% of people in a humanitarian crisis suffer from moderate or severe mental disorders and 22% have some kind of mental⁹ disorders.

As has been shown in the results of the study, presented in the School with Class Foundation report *Together in the Classroom. Children from Ukraine in Polish Schools. Research Report* (September 2022):

Various issues related to the mental health of this group of children [with migration and refugee experience] also prove to be a challenge. Almost every fifth teacher indicates that half or more of the children in this group have symptoms of depression and low mood, and four teachers out of ten indicate that most or all children from Ukraine with whom they work express concerns and fear for their relatives who stayed in the motherland. On the other hand, seven percent believe that most or all children who started studying in Polish schools show symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Even these sample results clearly show that supporting the mental health of this group of children should be a priority.

Teachers need support related to the assessment of the mental condition of students. Nearly 30 percent of the teachers are unable to evaluate whether their students have symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, and over 19 percent claim that they do not know if their students suffer from lower mood or depression¹⁰.

”

But we also have several such [Ukrainian students] who (...) cause educational problems, are aggressive towards others, have various problems. And here, too, our psychologists, educationalists and parents cooperate. We say that it's also, in a way, their cry for help, or that they can't cope with all that has happened.

”

Teacher, statement
from a focus group



⁹ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-in-emergencies>

¹⁰ *Together in the Classroom. Children from Ukraine in Polish Schools. Research Report*, September 2022

Polish education system – challenges

Recent years have been a difficult time for Polish schools. Both another education reform of 2017, widely considered a failure, and the COVID-19 pandemic have had a detrimental impact on the situation in Polish education, which has already been difficult for many years.

Underfunding and bureaucratisation of schools, a curriculum that does not respond to the needs of the modern world, low salaries and the shortage of staff (in September 2022 there was a shortage of around 70,000 teachers)¹¹, are just a part of all the problems.

The introduction of nearly 190,000 children with migration and refugee experience, often traumatised, to schools over a short period has presented new challenges for teachers.¹²



¹¹ Polish Teachers' Union estimates, September 2022, <https://tvn24.pl/polska/rok-szkolny-20222023-brakuje-nawet-70-tysiecy-nauczycieli-twierdzi-znp-6093166>

¹² Center for Civic Education, report *Culturally Diverse School. Challenges and needs stemming from the arrival of Ukrainian students* https://ceo.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/CCE_Culturally-diverse-school_report_eng.pdf, page 32.

”

Teachers had to manage on their own – there was no systemic support. If the teacher knew how to look, they were able to survive.¹³

”

”

After the time of the pandemic came the time of war, and once again we were left to our own devices. We are coping on our own, we are looking for a solution on our own, we are looking for help on our own, we are creating some answers for ourselves. But actually I think that this psychological support, this mental support, would be very useful for the staff in particular.

”

Teacher, statement from a focus group

The foremost challenges for the Polish school system included:

- lack of experience among teachers and educators in working with students from other countries and cultures,
- lack of systemic support for teachers,
- lack of intercultural assistants,
- communication difficulties (language barrier),
- high dynamics of movement of Ukrainian students¹³,
- burdening of teachers with additional duties¹⁴,
- unconscious incompetence¹⁵.

¹³ Together in the Classroom. Children from Ukraine in Polish Schools. Research Report, School with Class Foundation (September 2022)

¹⁴ Evaluation of the Together in Class program indicates that more than one-quarter of the people from the schools in Program have multiple roles in their schools at the same time: from being a school principal or deputy principal, a subject teacher (teaching 2, 3 or even 4 subjects), a school day-care centre teacher, a librarian, to a pedagogue or psychologist.

¹⁵ Center for Civic Education, report *Culturally Diverse School. Challenges and needs stemming from the arrival of Ukrainian students* (August 2022)

Together in Class program - overview

The premise of the Together in Class program was to support teachers in the Polish education system as effectively and comprehensively as possible in their work with classes joined by children and young people with migration and refugee experience, with a particular focus on children and youth from Ukraine.

The aims were to strengthen teachers' competences to provide integrated educational services, to increase the quality of education for children and youth affected by the Ukraine crisis, including interactive learning activities aimed at safe integration and MH-PSS and to strengthen the capacity of education-based protection networks within Polish classrooms for refugees from Ukraine and their Polish peers.

After six months the program expanded, and involved:

- libraries,
- community centres,
- day care centres
- local activity centres.

The available information and data indicated that many Ukrainian children are outside the Polish formal education system. The non-formal education venues enrolled were (and are) those where there was a chance for integration of children and providing support¹⁶. Involving these places in the program made it possible to reach out with psycho-social and educational support not only to Ukrainian children in Polish schools but also to children outside of the system.

¹⁶ There is no official data on the number of Ukrainian children spending time in non-formal educational facilities, as these facilities are not obliged to keep such statistics. In the 'Library for All' program, conducted by the Information Society Development Foundation and Save the Children, involving 51 libraries, a total of 7,033 refugees received support, highlighting the scale of the needs.

”
Together in Class
is a program in which we build
bridges between the different
cultures and experiences of
children and young people, and
focus on creating a welcoming
and inclusive environment that is
supportive of each pupil.

”
statement from school's
Facebook page



What educational support do teachers need?

Shortly after the program commencement, over 1000 teachers answered pre-test survey questions to map their needs.

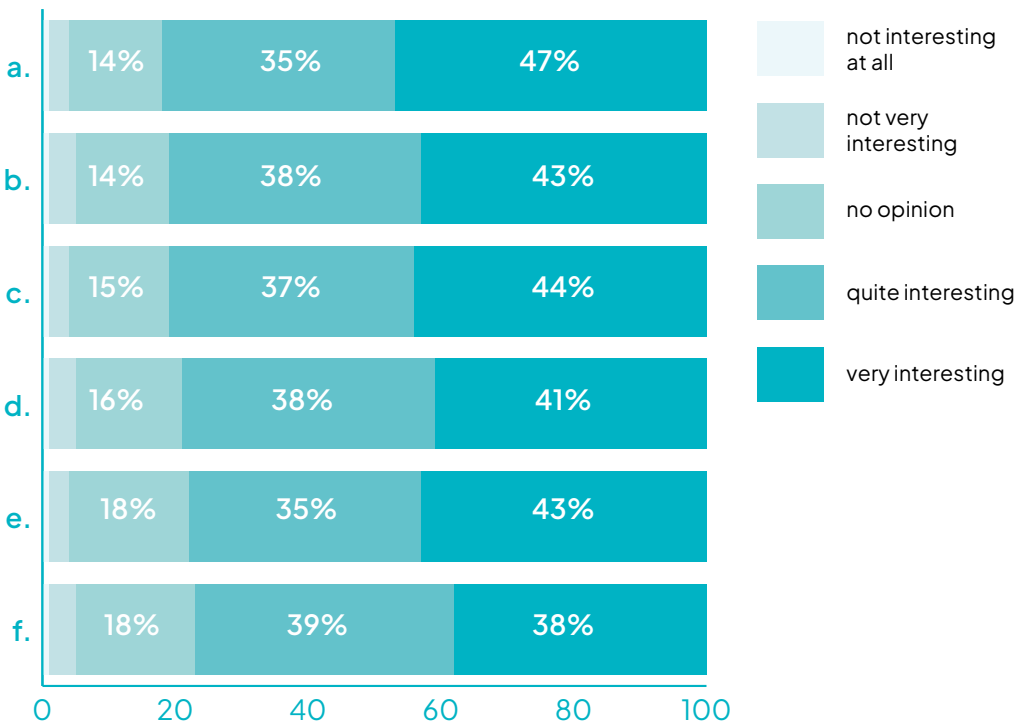
They were asked about difficulties in their daily work in multicultural classes. The survey revealed that one area of difficulty was working with diversity and building an inter-cultural class. Another challenge involved taking special care of the needs of children with migration and refugee experience, focusing on their emotional reactions to change and adaptive stress.



“We need extra time for additional activities, and instead we try to “complete” the curriculum. Your actions seem to be of great support to us, but they require spending extra time during lessons. Time which we lack.

Teacher,
pre-test survey

Relevant topics for teachers in multicultural classrooms: level of interest assessment



- a. The needs of a child with an experience of migration; emotional reaction for a change; referred to as adaptive stress and the ways of working with it.
- b. Working with diversity in the classroom – how to benefit from multiculturalism?
- c. The needs of a child with a refugee experience; psychosocial consequences of exile and the ways to take care of the basic. Risk of crisis and trauma.
- d. Possible pitfalls in intercultural contacts in the classroom – how to understand them, how to avoid them, how to cope with them?
- e. About the tools and methods – materials of the Together in Class program.
- f. From integration to inclusion – building intercultural class teams¹⁷.

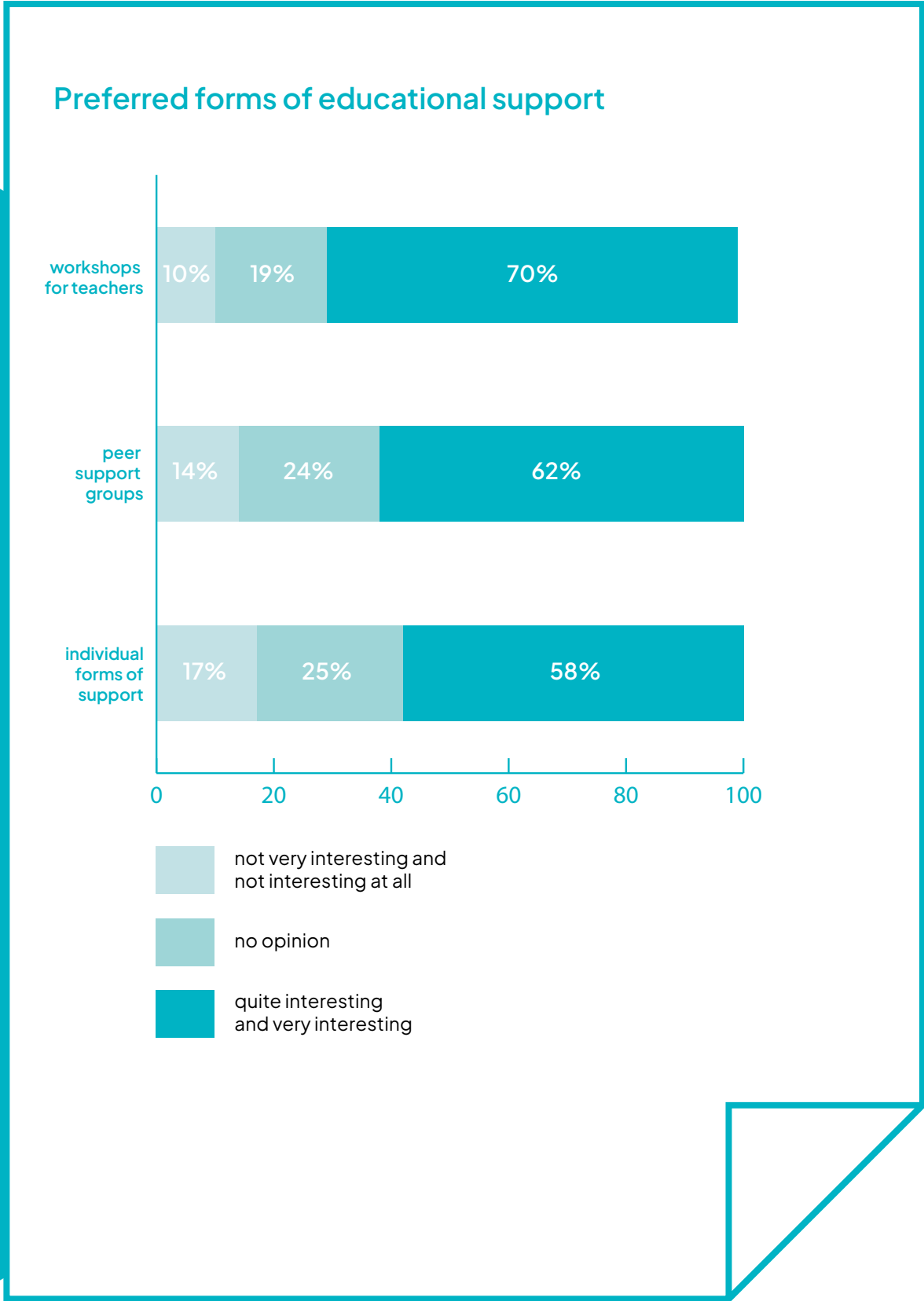
17 A list of topics that could be offered to schools and teachers by the School with Class Foundation and which could be realized through various forms of educational support. How interesting do you find these topics? N=1085 , pre-test survey.

Additionally, teachers were queried about the forms of educational support tentatively planned in the Together in Class program. It became evident that traditional forms of training, particularly workshops, were the most popular among respondents¹⁸.

At the same time, the review has shown that shortness of their time was the greatest problem for teacher (and the greatest challenge for us). Our answer – flexibility and tailoring even for the individual person – was the key.



¹⁸ Together in Class program, pre-test survey.



The program's philosophy

The philosophy of the Together in Class program, which has been translated into the program activities for, in and with schools, was:

- **Supporting without overwhelming**, i.e. responding to the needs reported by teachers and schools and offering a variety of forms of support, not necessarily training,
- Attention to achievement of the MHPSS (**Mental Health and Psychosocial Support**) objectives,
- **Flexibility and agility**, i.e. implementing program changes on an ongoing basis and responding to changing situations in schools, dynamics of migratory processes,
- **Continuous learning and learning from each other** – it is important to support people working in the school, as well as the trainers and program implementation teams,
- **Proactivity**, i.e. don't wait – act,
- **Synergies** and looking for potential – being committed to collaboration, prepared for non-obvious and unexpected opportunities for action.



”
I'm very happy with this project, because looking at all the others I'm involved in, it's here that I feel the biggest focus is on the children, to really help them. And also the focus on the fact that I can get some support, at least this group [teacher support group], where I can just speak my mind, because where else? Because where else?

”
Teacher, statement from a focus group



Supporting without overwhelming

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

Flexibility and agility

Continuous learning and learning from each other

Proactivity

Synergies



Program philosophy

2116 – number of schools and non-formal education establishments in the program

Together in Class program reached 2,116 schools and non-formal education entities. The strategy of recruitment was: reaching out far and wide.

Eventually the program involved 1727 schools in Poland, which is nearly 10% of all. From each school there were at least 2 representatives involved.

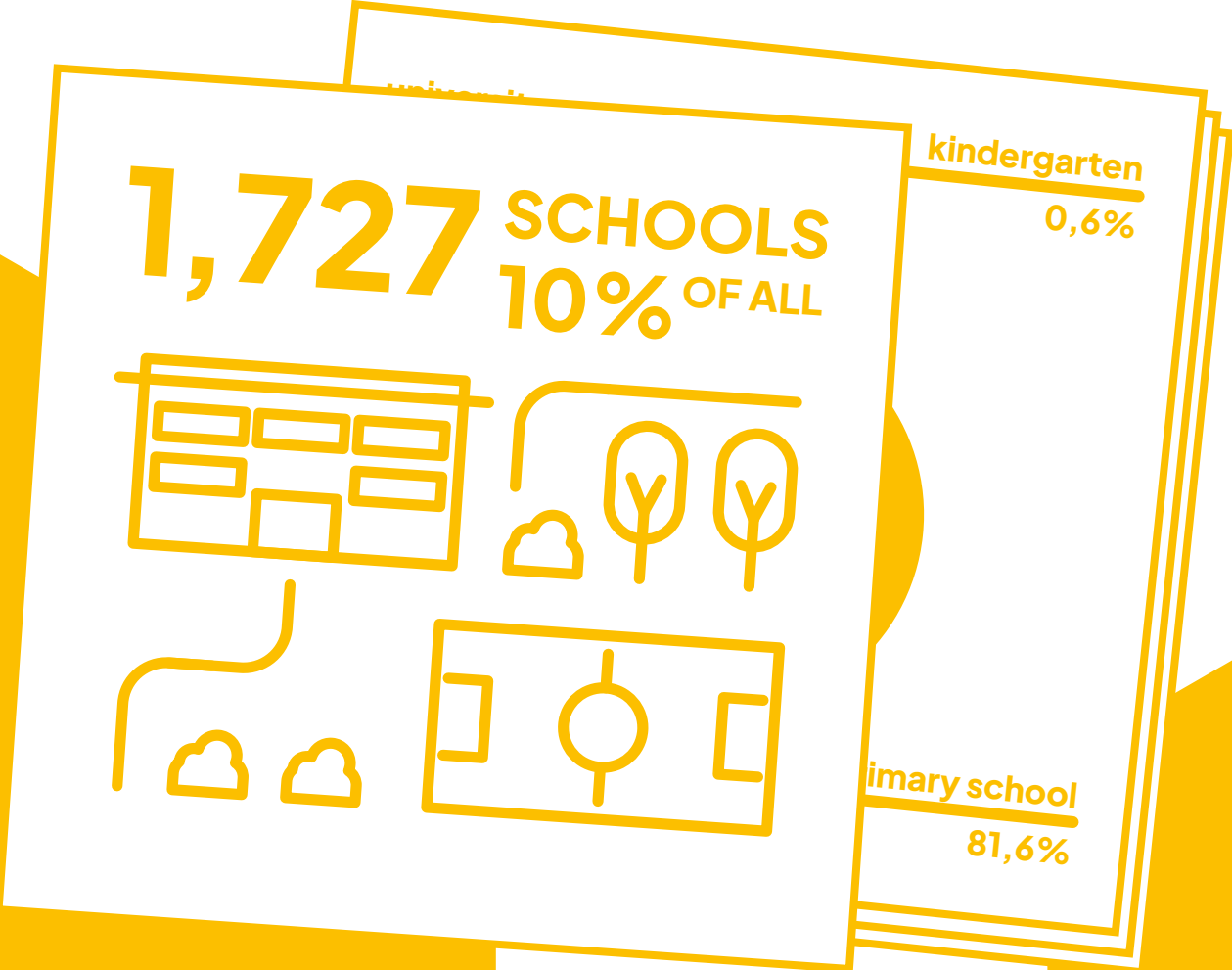
Schools were from large and small towns, as well as from villages. Many teachers emphasized that it was the only kind of support they received.

In schools, the program's support reached approximately 39,061 students from Ukraine, which is around 20% from 188,000 children who were/are involved in the Polish educational system.



”
The greatest success of the Together in Class project has certainly been the full, sincere and authentic integration and action in many areas of work, as well as the joint summary of activities by Polish and Ukrainian pupils (even the initial language barrier could not prevent us, because nothing is impossible!).
”

Teacher, statement from a focus group



Additionally, **389** entities other than schools were participating in the program: **libraries, community centres, day care centres and local activity centres**. The indicative number of children and young people from Ukraine visiting them in the 2022/2023 school year was **30,699**.

The reception of the program among these institutions was very positive. Many reported that previously there had not been an offer of educational materials for intercultural work aimed specifically at them.

Approximately **84,600 teachers** of all types of schools and **5,250 employees of other non-formal educational establishments** all over Poland took part in the program¹⁹.

Thanks to Together in Class, the School with Class Foundation was able to build a small system of support, which was of great importance in the absence of general systemic support from the state.



¹⁹ This is a great amount in comparison with the number of teacher full-time equivalents in Poland which is 512,000, [in:] <https://glos.pl/gus-potwierdzil-nauczycieli-jest-coraz-mniej>



”

The Together in Class program is immense support every step of the way, help in many difficult situations. The aids we are receiving support us teachers and our students alike. They provide students from over the eastern border with a greater sense of security and self-esteem. Thanks to the program, our school became more open and attractive for the pupils.

”

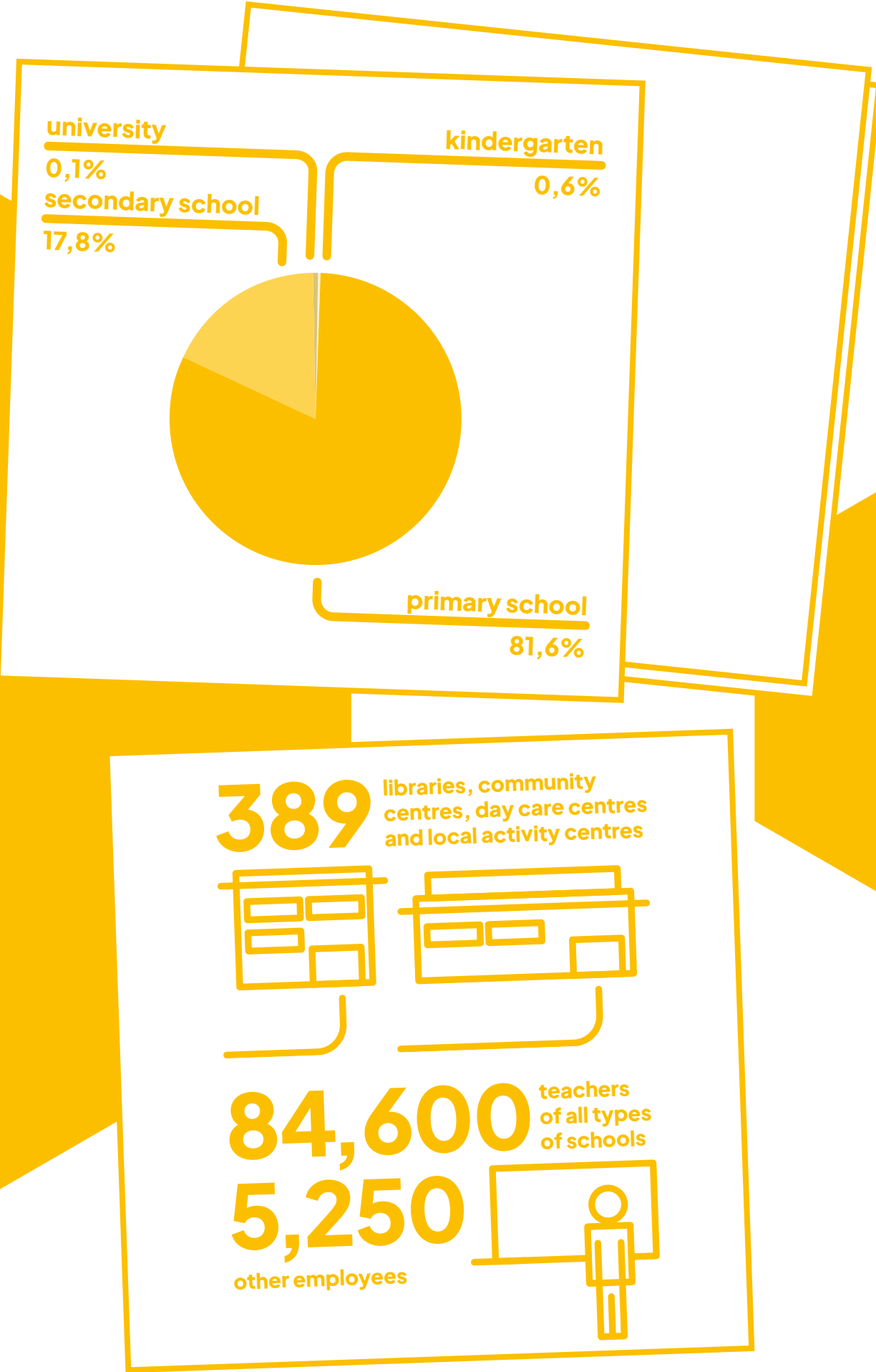
Teacher, statement from a focus group

”

We wanted to say a huge thank you for the materials you sent to our Cultural Centre. The shipment is fantastic and was already being used in our Young Kids' Clubs during sensory activities on the first day after receipt. Your support for schools and cultural institutions is invaluable.

”

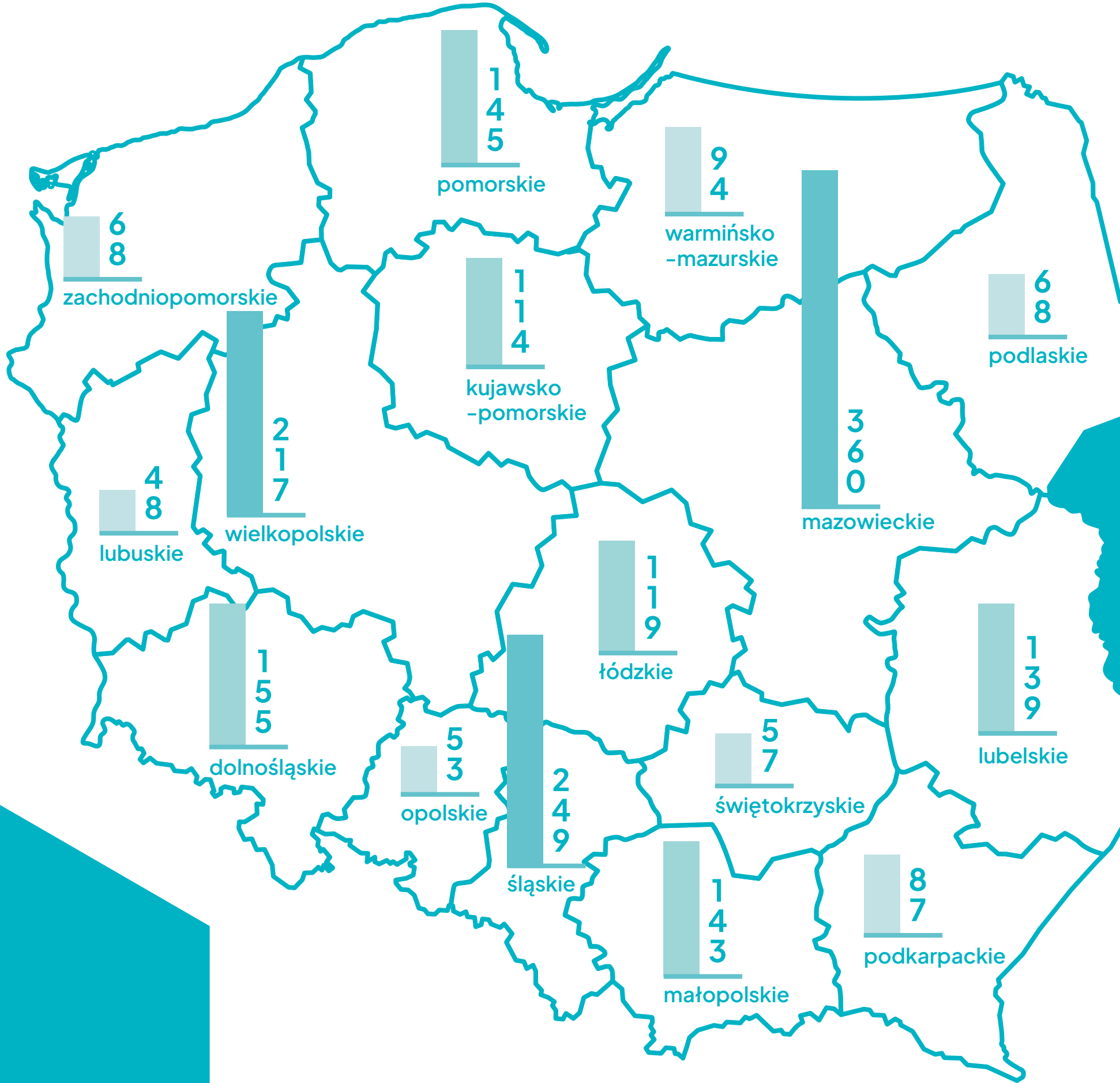
Biskupice Municipal Cultural Centre



Locations where the program
was implemented and number of
establishments

Voivodeship:

- mazowieckie: 360
- śląskie: 249
- wielkopolskie: 217
- dolnośląskie: 155
- pomorskie: 145
- kujawsko-pomorskie: 114
- lubelskie: 139
- lubuskie: 48
- małopolskie: 143
- opolskie: 53
- podkarpackie: 87
- podlaskie: 68
- warmińsko-mazurskie: 94
- zachodniopomorskie: 68
- łódzkie: 119
- świętokrzyskie: 57



Educational materials as the basis

Two sets of **educational materials** were delivered to all 2,116 schools and other entities. The first one was to **support the integration processes** of children and young people in classrooms to build intercultural communities. The second one focused on coping with **stress**, overcoming the **language barrier** and **fun in education**.

The **nutshells of knowledge** and **activity descriptions** for working with children and youth were collected on easy-to-remove cards bundled in a binder, and were accompanied by many easy to use, colourful, reusable, high quality and multi-purpose tools, like sensory balls, large-format colouring sheets, various cards (mindfulness, language charades, cards to present self-regulation techniques).

Program materials were:



”

Thank you very much for the materials you sent. They make the classes more attractive. We can create better conditions for the children to learn Polish. The Polish language teacher who conducts additional classes with Ukrainian students uses them in almost every class. The effects of the work are enormous. Our students are getting better at Polish and our school is a place where they feel great. They say that if they return to Ukraine, what they will miss most is school.

”

headmistress, from an email sent to the School with Class Foundation

”

The variety of materials, enabling changing the learning process towards learning through play, their innovation enabling changing the approach of the teacher organizing the learning process. The tidiness and the layout, attracting the interest of students.

”

teacher, statement from a post-survey conducted upon completing the program

”

What I like the most are the sensory balls and the large-format colouring books. With these tools, children can discharge their negative emotions.

”

teacher, statement from a post-survey conducted upon completing the program

”

The materials facilitated the teaching work, made the lessons more attractive, activated the students and, above all, contributed to building relationships and multicultural integration. Excellently prepared in terms of content.

”

teacher, statement from a post-survey conducted upon completing the program

”

I love how diverse they are. The fact that they are also aimed at calming down, letting off the emotional tension. I was hugely impressed by the Drops of Mindfulness cards.

”

teacher, statement from a post-survey conducted upon completing the program

”

Our favourite game is working with the “Together in Class. A common language” cards. Through this game we learn to understand each other. Immediately after the appearance of this game, students began to use it not only in games, but also in lessons. We also use the game for educational purposes in other lessons. For example, in Polish and English, we try to talk about the graphics on the reverse side, using, for example, only adjectives.

”

teacher, from an email sent to the School with Class Foundation

Webinars

As part of the Together in the Classroom program, we held:

4 webinars on how to work effectively with the educational materials we provided to teachers, understanding stress symptoms and stress reduction, psychological first aid and the importance of MHPSS, caring for the well-being of students and teachers in multicultural classrooms.

3 webinars on other topics related to working in a multicultural classroom:

- From multicultural to intercultural class
- Difficulties with discipline in a multicultural class - how to analyze students' behavior to find solutions to the problem?
- Language that supports integration. How to speak to reach the attention of all students?

In all of them it was emphasized that all people involved in a new, unpredictable and difficult situation are under a lot of stress.



”

Great! Those important tips will certainly come in handy.

”

a participant, opinion from a chat discussion during a webinar

”

Thank you very much for an extremely interesting and helpful meeting.

”

a participant, opinion from a chat discussion during a webinar

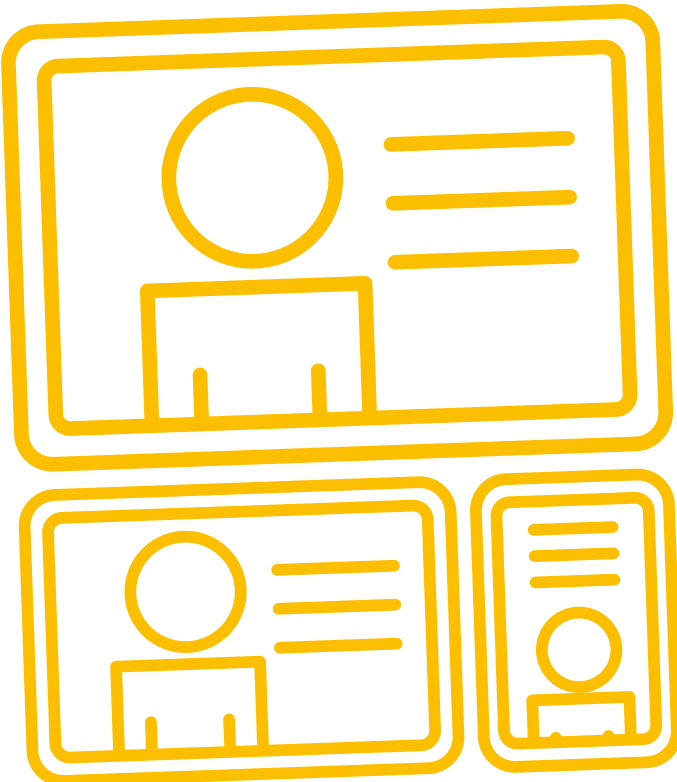
”

Great training, concretely and efficiently delivered.

”

a participant, opinion from a chat discussion during a webinar

6,447 teachers participated in seven educational webinars:
5,562 live online
885 and later on the e-learning platform



Direct forms of educational support

An optional offering of **workshops, meetings of teacher support groups and one-on-one consultations** was addressed to all schools and teachers in the program.

Almost **2000 hours** of direct forms of support were conducted in the program.

Workshops, which education in Poland has known for years, were the educational form most often indicated by teachers as one they were willing to use. At the same time, the result of the survey (pre-test survey), according to which the biggest problem in the way of teachers getting further training was their lack of time, indicated that it would be equally important to develop two other – shorter and more flexible – educational forms that are innovative for teacher education in Poland on such a scale: regular meetings of online teacher support groups and one-on-one consultations (online or offline).

Teacher's Peace of Mind (in Polish (S)pokój nauczycielski) – **support group meetings** on work with multicultural classes:



Groups led by multicultural trainers were not intended to provide expert knowledge and ready-made solutions but to adapt to teachers' needs and make them feel heard and understood. It was a safe space for asking questions and sharing problems and worries teachers experienced in working with multicultural classes.

Consultations: mentoring & tutoring – an unprecedented school support model never used before on this scale in Poland, tailored to the needs of the individual teacher:





Rano poświęć minutę
uchanie dźwięków otoczenia,
odłącz się od napięcia
ośpiechu. Przed wyjściem
z domu, podczas jazdy
busem, przed rozpoczęciem
acy lub nauki skieruj swoją
agę na słuchanie i zanurz się
w dźwiękach i w ciszy.



”

Every teacher should learn about the psychological aspects of students with refugee experiences.

”

teacher, statement from workshops' evaluation questionnaire

”

It is a very good form of support, exchange of experiences, a kind of supervision.

”

teacher, statement from teachers support groups evaluation questionnaire

”

The conversation gave me a lot, I was able to take some weight off my shoulders, share my doubts, gain words of support and encouragement.

”

teacher, statement from consultations' evaluation questionnaire

”

Exceptional attention to the needs of the participant in the consultation and matching their expectations, with a strong emphasis on the variety of uses of the tools presented. Exchange of experiences. Tremendous tact, culture of listening. Good time, used to the full. Great clarification, summary. Kindness. Excellent way of sharing the toolbox and experience on the part of the presenter.

”

teacher, statement from consultations' evaluation questionnaire

”

The opportunity for a one-on-one consultation gave me the chance to talk about my difficulties and successes, and to receive very valuable and practical advice.

”

teacher, statement from consultations' evaluation questionnaire

Multicultural trainers team – building in a short time an experienced team of **20** people ready to be directly present in schools all around Poland is one of the program's greatest successes. It was important to:

- provide the team with common, state-of-the-art knowledge in the field
- make the team an integral part of the program with the same sense of meaning and ownership of activities and the whole idea
- create opportunities to get the team to know each other better and better, and to cooperate and share experiences
- consistently evaluate the team's work to assure the highest standards and give the team an opportunity to improve their work
- hold team workshops and online meetings, maintain a common messaging app and a platform for planning the work

A Word Cloud
about the Together in Class program,
put together by the trainer team.

inclusion well-being synergy creativity
organization openness development empathy
precious cooperation
community support
mindfulness diversity deepening
interesting meetings
caring for the pupils
individual contact
expecting results
good need

”

I appreciate this program a lot, and I think it's a very big plus that it's tailored, that it responds to the needs of the people who apply. It's flexible, in that we [the coaching staff] don't have a ready-made material that we go to everyone with (...) we just ask what you need, if you have a problem, a challenge, and we try to answer that (...).

”

multicultural trainer, statement
from the focus group

”

It's nice that there is flexibility in the program, because there were times when after one workshop I was invited to another. Very often after an hour, hour and a half, these workshops turned into individual consultations, because out of a group of 18 people there were 3 left who wanted to clarify something and this was possible here, it was great.

”

multicultural trainer, statement
from the focus group

”

I love working in a coaching pair, because it gives me a lot, I learn a lot, I take examples of others, maybe someone also takes something from me, so I like it, this catching up, chatting, determining and then meetings, so it is very uplifting and teaching for me, very much so.

”

multicultural trainer, statement
from the focus group

”

As for my assessment of working with the Foundation, I felt throughout this project that I had a lot of flexibility. This is also combined with this sense of my confidence in that I will do things, that I will manage, that I will solve one dilemma or another (...), that I am treated as a partner like this.

”

multicultural trainer, statement
from the focus group



475 – number of applications for mini-grants

475 schools from all over Poland applied for mini-grants for transformation of school spaces, aimed at making them beneficial for the wellbeing and integration of the students. Out of 475 applications, 20 schools received PLN 10,000 each and educational support for carrying out their projects successfully.

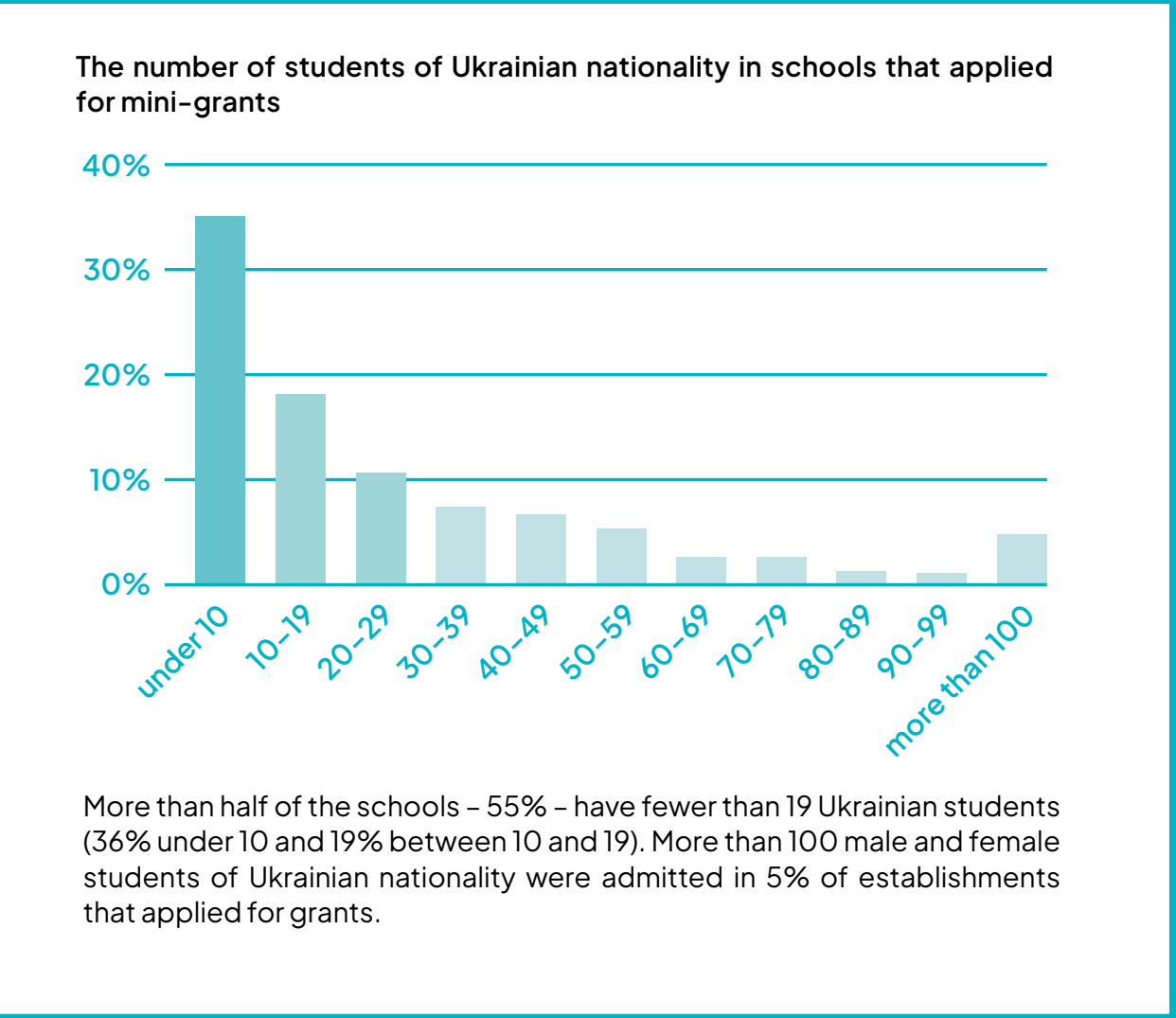
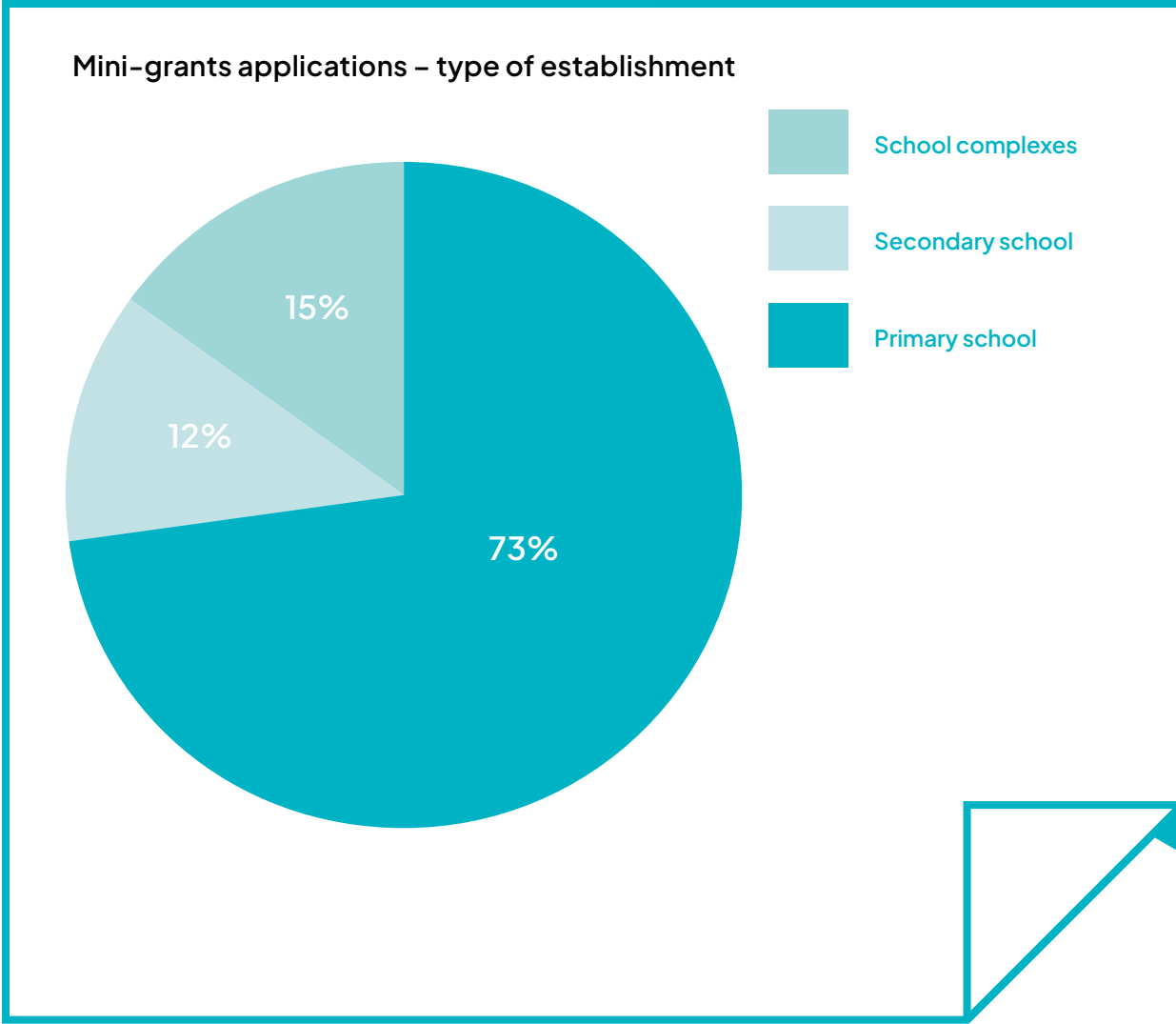
Financial support was closely linked to educational support for the teaching staff.

The largest number of applications were submitted by teachers from primary schools.

By town size, most applications were submitted by schools from small towns of less than 30,000 residents.

Under 30,000 residents – 48%, 19% of applications were from towns with more than 500,000 residents, 17% from towns with 30,000 to 100,000 residents, and 16% from cities with 100,000 to 500,000 residents.

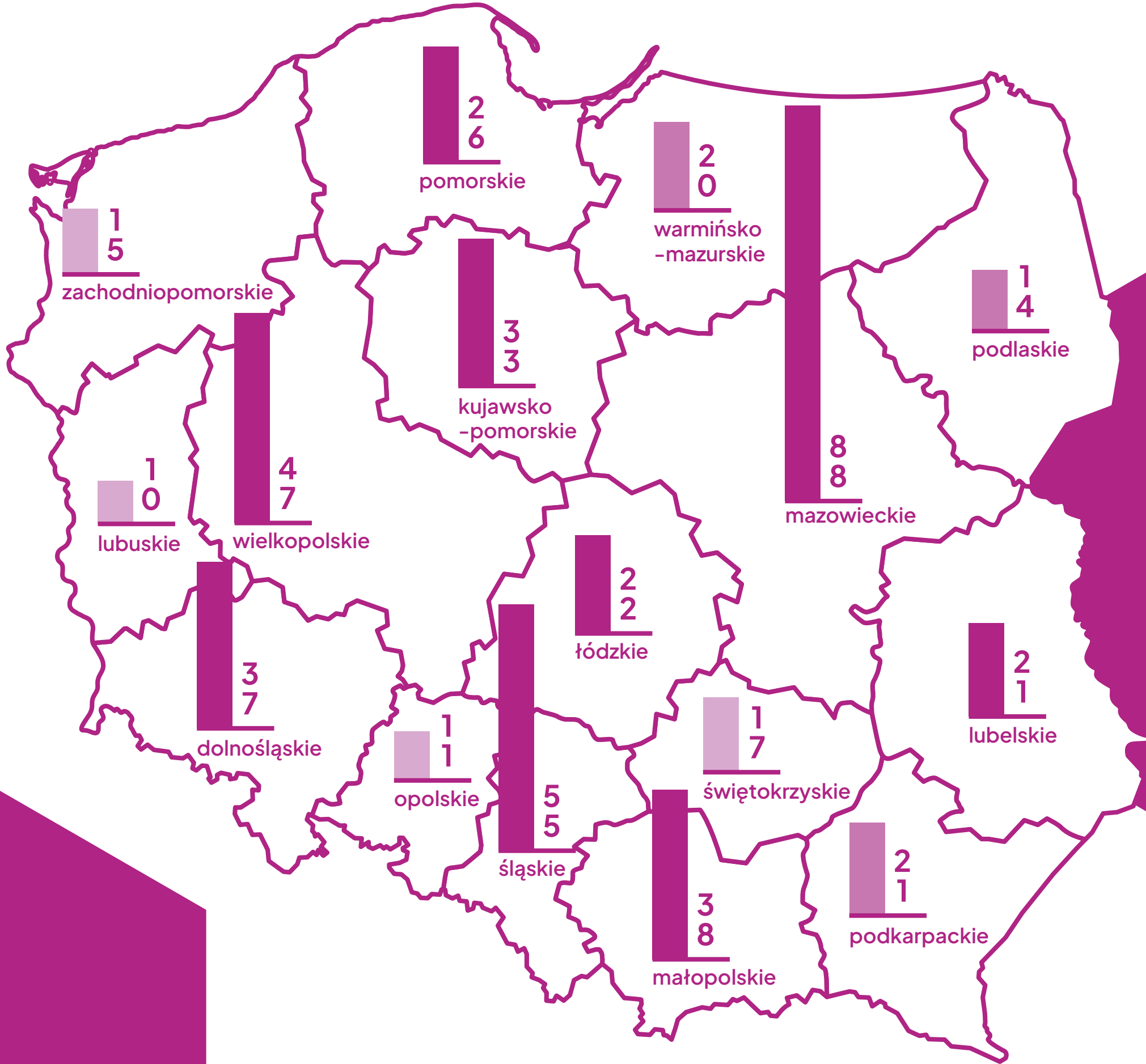
In every school applying for a grant, students of Ukrainian nationality studied together with Polish students. In many cases, students from other countries also studied in the schools.



Location and number of schools that applied for mini-grants

Voivodeship:

- dolnośląskie 37
- kujawsko-pomorskie 33
- lubelskie 21
- lubuskie 10
- mazowieckie 88
- małopolskie 38
- opolskie 11
- podkarpacie 21
- podlaskie 14
- pomorskie 26
- warmińsko-mazurskie 20
- wielkopolskie 47
- zachodniopomorskie 15
- łódzkie 22
- śląskie 55
- świętokrzyskie 17

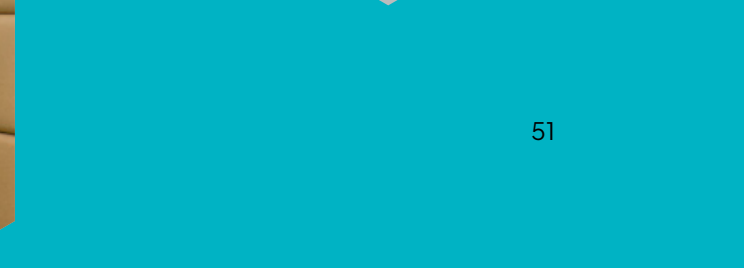


In many of the schools that applied for the grant, one encounters alarming situations where school infrastructure is crumbling, desks are in desperate need of renovation and walls of repainting. However, the lack of basic resources and refurbishments is only part of the problem. The space in Polish schools is often not conducive to the integration and wellbeing of the students. Places where they can spend time together between lessons are lacking. There is a dramatic shortage of common rooms (especially those available for older students) that could serve as spaces for calming down, learning and developing extracurricular interests, waiting for lessons or extra-curricular activities in a friendly environment. Students are also often not provided with spaces where they can spend their breaks in comfort, empty corridors being almost the only space available for this purpose.

Most schools expressed a need to **create a calming, colorful space for relaxation and integration, where students could wind down between or after classes, read books in their native language, take a break from the noise or spend time with their peers playing board games or having breakfast.** Even though these were not some extraordinary needs – rather basic ones – still the schools had no funds to fulfill them.

The corridors are the places schools wanted to transform most often. This seems to stem from a general problem in Polish schools, which deepened after the joining of many new students in a short time: too many students in institutions and the lack of educational spaces for them – gyms, common rooms or even classrooms. Interestingly many schools also wanted to upgrade outdoor spaces like courtyards, gardens and playing fields.

Schools were very focused on finding available spaces which could be adapted for integration and wellbeing purposes, and the needs seem to be huge.

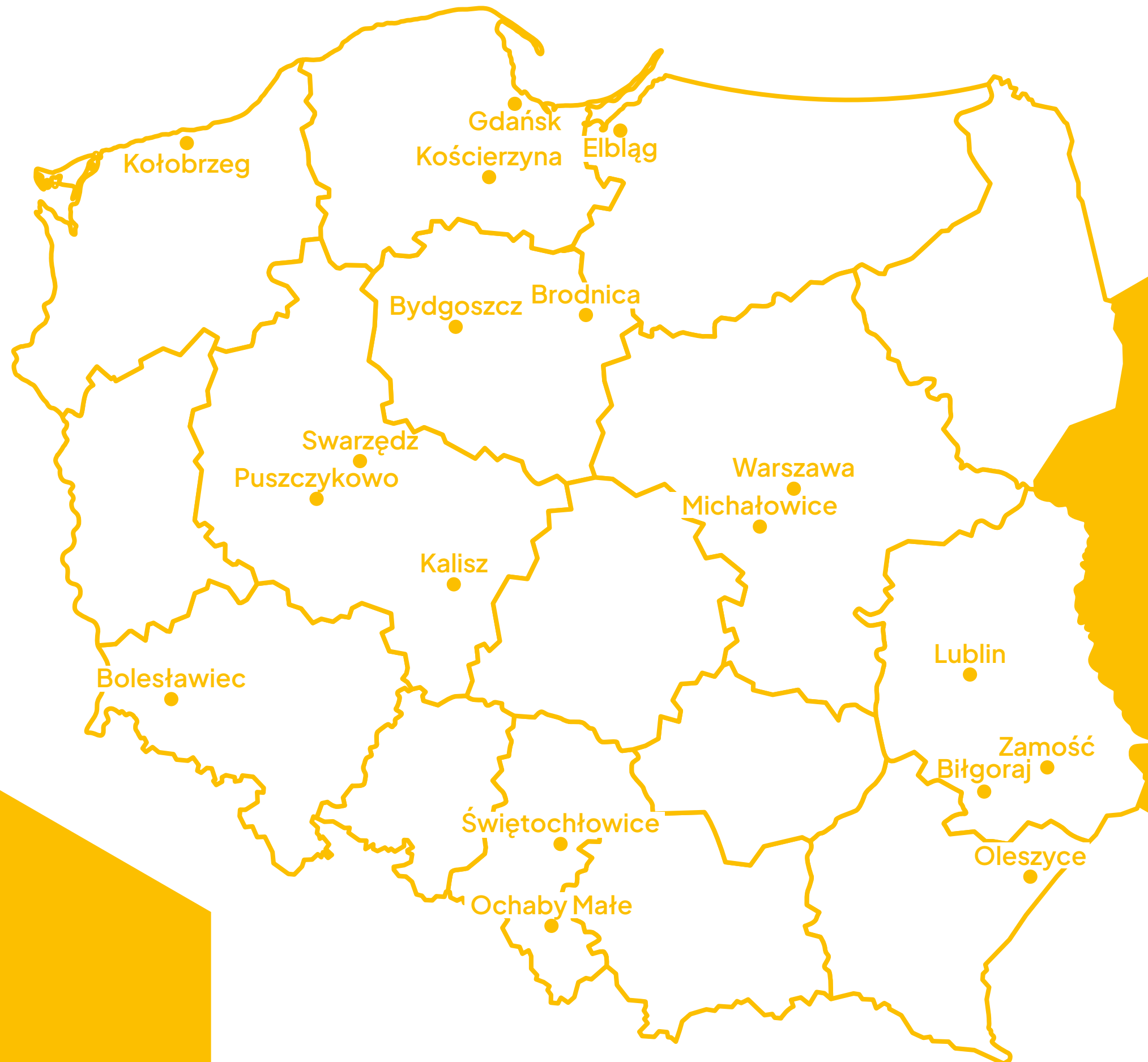


20 schools that received mini-grants

20 schools from all around Poland received mini-grants (**PLN 10,000**) for such transformation of the school spaces as to contribute to **improved wellbeing and integration** of students.

The schools which received the mini-grant were very diverse:

- located all over Poland: in 11 voivodeships
 - 3 each in Pomorskie, Lubelskie and Wielkopolskie, 2 each in Mazowieckie, Śląskie and Kujawsko-Pomorskie, 1 each in Warmińsko-Mazurskie, Małopolskie, Dolnośląskie, Podkarpackie and Zachodniopomorskie,
- 6 schools were from large cities, 10 from medium-sized cities and 2 from small towns, 2 schools were rural schools,
- 13 primary schools, 2 School and Kindergarten Complexes, 2 General Secondary Schools, 1 Technical Secondary School, 1 School Complex of Agricultural Education Centre, 1 Special Purpose School and Education Centre,
- the smallest entity implementing the grant was Janusz Korczak Special Purpose School and Educational Centre No. 1 in Kalisz (101 students), and the largest was Primary School No. 1 in Gdańsk (1144 students).



The total number of children and young people in these institutions who can now benefit from the spaces of wellbeing and integration they have created is **11,119**. The total number of pupils with disabilities is **560**. And **818** are children or young people from Ukraine. The number of teachers in these schools is 1222.

Our grants model was the **combination of financial AND educational support** for the teaching staff as we believe it is the most effective one. There were such elements as: common webinar, offline workshops for the teachers' council in each school and, once funding has been secured, the possibility for further experts' consultations, as well as formal and organizational support of the coordinator on every stage of the projects' implementation.

It translates into a **greater sense of security** for those implementing the project, **greater involvement of the school community** and also, by making the implementation of the grant a **common cause for the whole school**. This strengthens the school team to seek **allies among parents, the community, local businesses**. It also promotes **forming a coalition focusing on the school and children's mental health**.

11,119 children and young people in institutions who can now benefit from the spaces of wellbeing and integration

818 are from Ukraine

560 pupils with disabilities





”

The implementation of the project strengthened the bonds between the pupils, who actively participated in the project. It motivated open communication, getting to know each other, each other's perspectives. It taught compromise and the expression of needs. It showed that cooperation of the school community (students, teachers, administrative staff, parents), their involvement and responsibility for their tasks leads to success.

”

teacher, statement from the mini-grants evaluation questionnaire

”

We have created a space that the whole school can now use. At every break there is a crowd there. We named it BUP ZONE after Belarus, Ukraine and Poland, all the countries we have representatives of in our school. The coolest thing was that we were able to decide for ourselves what the space would look like, and we did all sorts of things ourselves – I, for example, sewed the cushion covers, the guys from the technical class made the flowerbeds and tables in the carpenter's workshop.

”

student, statement from the focus group, mini-grants

”

It was crucial for us that teachers and students worked together. We planned the changes to the space together and then jointly supervised the implementation of the next stages of the work. This allowed for school integration, taught everyone to work as a team and to act with a goal in mind.

”

teacher, statement from the mini-grants evaluation questionnaire

”

We became very integrated in the project. We spent a lot of time together, we talked a lot. Nastia made a banner with different slogans in Ukrainian, Belarussian and Polish, and designed leaflets with a glossary. We also have this tic-tac-toe board and we keep seeing that people integrate during breaks, as they play tic-tac-toe for example.

”

student, statement from the focus group, mini-grants

”

For me, the most important thing about this project is the integration of Ukrainian children and parents with Polish parents and children at our school. Thanks to our cooperation in the project, we have created an environment that fosters mutual understanding and acceptance, which has had a positive impact on the atmosphere at our school and the development of our pupils.

”

teacher, statement from the mini-grants evaluation questionnaire

”

We were able to do something for ourselves and others. We will leave something for posterity. The cool thing was that we were independent and responsible. Everything depended on us.

”

student, statement from the focus group, mini-grants

Highlights (recommended models) + Why It's Worth Pursuing?

Recommendations from the program:

- Be as flexible as possible with your educational model of support to schools.
- Invite at least two teachers from one school to your activities to create the nucleus of a small team there.
- Well-coordinated and professionally prepared external team of experts and educators is a must (in our case the experts were non-formal education trainers and teachers prepared in the program fields).
- Analyze and verify the needs of teachers to create the best possible educational materials.
- Gadgets ready to use with classes (like in our case: sensory balls, cards and charades, posters and large-format colouring sheets) were very appreciated by teachers.
- Remember that ALL people involved in a new, unpredictable and difficult situation are under a huge stress.
- Give mini-grants to schools for well-being and integration of students purposes (we recommend space changes as it really works great on different levels and stays in schools for years).
- Create a model of mini-grants for schools where financial support is followed by/ depending on the educational process/ support for the teachers' councils.

Project's greatest success(es)

- At the very beginning of the program's implementation we created and shared with teachers its **philosophy**. It has been translated in practice into activities for, in and with schools. **It was our compass** through the whole program implementation.
- Our recruiting strategy was to **reach out far and wide** and it was the best strategy as we did not miss even the smallest and far away schools. Finally the program included 1,727 (which is nearly 10%) of schools in Poland. It qualifies as systemic support.
 - In that 1,727 schools we reached approximately **39,061** students from Ukraine which is around 20% from 188,000 children involved in the Polish educational system in years 2022–2023.
 - Additionally 389 non-formal education entities were participating in the program: libraries, community centres, day care centres and local activity centres. The indicative number of children and young people from Ukraine visiting them in the 2022/2023 school year was **30,699**.
- Mini-grants for transforming educational spaces to be more supportive of students' well-being, inclusion and integration were planned as a pilot activity but became **a star!**
 - 20 schools got mini-grants of 10,000 PLN, but **we got almost 500 applications (!)** from different schools - primary, secondary or technical from different sizes of localities (almost 50% below 30,000 inhabitants) with a diverse number of children from Ukraine and also other countries.

- The effects of the mini-grants implementations exceeded our expectations. It was important not only for wellbeing and integration but further for **strengthening the whole community** and **building support networks for children and youth with migration and refugee experience**. It required the **involvement of the whole school community** - headmasters, teachers, students, administrative staff and parents, often local businesses and artists. **The empowerment of children and young people** was visible clearly - this experience has strengthened them and their **sense of agency at school**.

- With our support we were able to reach large cities, which we knew had the highest number of Ukrainian children and young people, but - what is more important from our perspective and our success - **we also reached district towns and small villages, where sometimes there were only one or a few Ukrainian children in school**. Every child that could be supported was equally important to us.
- 2,000 hours of various forms of educational support for schools - workshops, teachers' support groups and individual consultations - were implemented, reaching more than 550 teachers in 250 schools.
 - We treat the flexible forms like teachers' support groups and individual consultations as **innovations** (already tested with success) that can stay in our organization's bunch of methods and forms of working with teachers. They seem to be very, very useful during crisis situations and working in crisis.
- We are proud and like a lot our beautiful and educational language charades,

Drops of Mindfulness cards, self-reg cards, colouring sheets in the XXXL format. We had the chance to cooperate with artists, take care of aesthetics and great materials for production making them reusable, with the idea of endless forms of usage in classes.

Evaluation

This report is based on the following forms of evaluation conducted within a program:

- pre-test and post-test surveys aimed at people participating in the program
- survey addressed to people participating in: consultations, workshops, teachers' support groups
- analysis of 20 reports on the implementation of mini-grants
- analysis of 475 school applications to grants in terms of planned changes in space – desk research
- 6 interviews with teachers responsible for the implementation of grants at school
- 3 focus groups with young people (regarding implementation of grants)
- 4 focus groups with female teachers regarding, among other things, gender is a numerical survey on how many teachers and students participated in the program
- quantitative survey concluding the program



Get Involved!

Seeing the huge needs and demand for the program, we want to continue it. Do you represent an institution that wants to contribute to making a real difference in the world? Would you like to support us?

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of grant activities in the Together in Class program, page number:
5, 18, 22, 24, 28, 45, 51, 54, 55, 56

Photos from the School with Class Foundation archives: cover page
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