

# VOICES OF UKRAINIAN CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS IN POLAND

MAY 2023

## What is this document about?

Hello! In this document, we will talk about what children and teenagers from Ukraine told a team of researchers about their life in Poland. The war in Ukraine made life dangerous and difficult for many people. Because of this, many children and their families in Ukraine decided to go to other places, where they are safe. Being in a new place can be difficult, but it also has some good parts. Many adults helping young Ukrainians who came to Poland would like to know how they can best support them.

**IMPACT INITIATIVES IS AN ORGANISATION THAT ASKS PEOPLE LIVING IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS ALL AROUND THE WORLD WHAT OTHER ORGANISATIONS AND GOVERNMENTS CAN HELP THEM TO LIVE BETTER LIVES.**

**SAVE THE CHILDREN IS AN ORGANISATION HELPING CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES, SO THAT CHILDREN CAN FEEL SAFE, GROW UP HEALTHY, AND LEARN.**

IMPACT Initiatives and Save the Children believe it is important to listen to children and teenagers, to hear from you how you feel and what you need. That way, we understand what your lives are like and we can give better support to you. In December 2022 and January 2023, we spoke with girls and boys from Ukraine between 8 and 17 years old, like you, about their lives in Poland. 192 young Ukrainians living in Warsaw and Krakow were part of these discussions, including 95 girls and 97 boys. We asked them about:

- what makes them happy or unhappy;
- what activities they do and who supports them;
- what they need most urgently;
- what adults can do to help get what they need.

## What did young Ukrainians tell us?



**Family and friends support children and teenagers the most**

**"IF I HAVE A PROBLEM, I TALK TO MY MOM OR TO MY BEST FRIENDS. I TALK TO MY DOG TOO!"**

**- GIRL, 12-14 YEARS OLD**

Children and teenagers mostly go to their parents (moms first!), siblings or friends when they have a problem. Yet, others said that it can be difficult to talk to their parents about their troubles. They said they feel like their parents sometimes do not understand them, or that parents argue and are too stressed to talk about their troubles. At the same time, some teenagers also said that their parents were asking for their opinions before making decisions, which made them feel good and listened to. Some others were sad not to have enough time to spend with their family, particularly the children who study during the second shift in Ukrainian schools.



**PARENTS AND PEOPLE HELPING UKRAINIANS COULD GIVE CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS THE CHANCE TO EXPRESS THEIR OPINIONS ON DECISIONS THAT CONCERN THEM.**



**Young Ukrainians miss home and the people they love**

**"I WISH GRANDPA AND MY DOG WERE HERE. I MISS MY FRIENDS TOO." - GIRL, 12-14 YEARS OLD**

Children, especially the youngest ones, told us that they miss their family, friends and pets who are still in Ukraine. Some children said that they miss their hometown or that they want to go back to their place in Ukraine. Other children mentioned following the news about what happens in Ukraine, and were often talking about it with their families and friends. They also said this makes them worried.



**ADULTS COULD HELP CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS STAY IN CONTACT WITH THEIR FAMILY AND FRIENDS IN UKRAINE.**



Save the Children


**IMPACT**

Shaping practices  
Influencing policies  
Impacting lives

 **Most young Ukrainians feel safe in Poland**

**"WHEREVER YOU ARE, IT IS SAFE IN POLAND"**  
- GIRL, 15-17 YEARS OLD

Most of the young people from Ukraine said they felt safe in Poland. Children mentioned they were most comfortable in places they know: at home, in parks or at school (especially boys). Many girls mentioned feeling safe everywhere in Poland. Yet some places were also considered unsafe by young Ukrainians, such as public transport or skate parks. They explained this is because they sometimes met people who were mean to them there.

 **PARENTS AND PEOPLE HELPING UKRAINIANS COULD MAKE YOUNG UKRAINIANS FEEL SAFER IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND SKATE PARKS.**

 **Not speaking Polish makes life difficult**

**"I CAN'T TAKE MUSIC CLASSES BECAUSE I DON'T KNOW THE LOCAL LANGUAGE."** - BOY, 8-11 YEARS OLD

Knowing and learning Polish is what young Ukrainians found the most difficult in Poland. Not knowing the language was the biggest problem when they tried to make Polish friends, talk to doctors, or when their parents were searching for a house or a job. Some children also told us that not knowing Polish makes it difficult to participate in activities outside schools, such as sports or dance classes, because they are often not well understood by the instructors.

 **PEOPLE HELPING UKRAINIANS SHOULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR UKRAINIAN CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS TO LEARN POLISH.**

 **Children said that most Poles are kind to them, but sometimes they hear upsetting things**

**"POLISH PEOPLE ARE CHEERFUL. I HAVE MANY FRIENDS. THEY SUPPORT ME AND DO NOT LET ME BE BY MYSELF"**  
- GIRL, 15-17 YEARS OLD

Many children, especially the oldest ones, said that locals were nice to them and very welcoming. But children also shared that some local children said unkind things about Ukraine or that they heard from other Ukrainian children that they were sometimes bullied in Polish schools. Sometimes children said it makes them sad to hear what some Polish adults said about Ukrainians in public places.

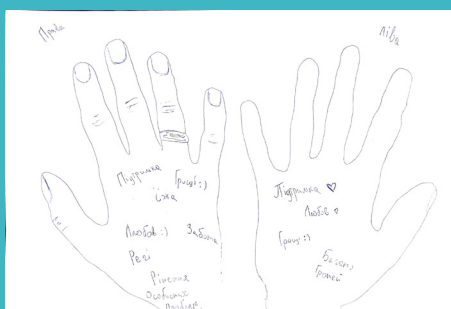
 **PEOPLE HELPING UKRAINIANS COULD CREATE MORE JOINT ACTIVITIES FOR UKRAINIAN AND POLISH CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS, SO THAT THEY HAVE THE CHANCE TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER BETTER AND BECOME FRIENDS.**

 **Young Ukrainians like being in nature or parks**

**"PARKS ARE BEAUTIFUL HERE! I LIKE TO WALK THERE WITH MY MOM."** - BOY, 8-11 YEARS OLD

Parks, lakes, and nature in general seem to be the places young Ukrainians like the most in Poland. They mentioned often going on walks with their family and friends there, and it makes them happy. Children also loved Polish cities' architecture, old museums and big shopping malls.

 **ADULTS COULD CONTINUE TO GIVE CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENJOY PARKS AND NATURE, AND FEEL SAFE THERE.**



**A 15-17-YEAR-OLD GIRL'S DRAWING OF HER OWN HANDS. ON THE RIGHT, SHE DREW WHAT UKRAINIAN CHILDREN NEED FROM ADULTS AND HELPING ORGANISATIONS. ON THE LEFT, WHAT UKRAINIAN CHILDREN NEED FROM OTHER CHILDREN.**



 **Most young Ukrainians like going to schools in Poland**

"I SPEND ALL MY TIME AT SCHOOL! I LIKE STUDYING IN THIS SCHOOL A LOT." - BOY, 8-11 YEARS OLD

Children in Ukrainian schools were happy to meet new friends at school. Some children didn't like that they did not have enough time outside of school to spend with their family or for fun activities. This was particularly a problem for those children who study during the afternoon (the second shift) in Ukrainian schools, leaving them with less free time. Some girls also said that they were following English language classes and enjoyed them.

 **PEOPLE HELPING UKRAINIANS COULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR CHILDREN ATTENDING THE SECOND SHIFT OF SCHOOL TO HAVE ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL.**

 **Young Ukrainians miss the activities they used to do in Ukraine**

"I USED TO DO HORSE RIDING, BUT THERE IS NO SUCH THING HERE. I LOVED IT VERY MUCH" - GIRL, 12-14 YEARS OLD


Outside of school, children and teenagers go for walks, visit museums, or meet friends outside and in activity clubs. They also do sports, dance, or draw. However, many of them said that they used to do more sports and dance in Ukraine, but that in Poland they cannot do them. They explained this is because there are no such clubs, because it is too expensive or because they do not speak Polish very well. Some children also told us that they were too good for the classes they found. Children said they wished there were more clubs to train, and would like to have access to more activities than just football or hockey. They also wished they had more time to train and thought it would be nice to receive support in accessing these activities.

 **PEOPLE HELPING UKRAINIANS COULD GIVE YOUNG UKRAINIANS MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO DO FUN ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF UKRAINIAN SCHOOLS, OTHER THAN FOOTBALL AND HOCKEY, IF POSSIBLE FOR FREE.**

 **Most children and teenagers got basic medical help when they were sick**

"MY MOM AND I GO TO THE HOSPITAL." - GIRL, 12-14 YEARS OLD

Many children and teenagers said they go to the doctor in Poland when they feel unwell. Some of them said this went well. However, other children said they needed to wait a long time, that it was difficult to communicate or that it was very expensive. Some children also mentioned they got medicine from their parents and did not go to the doctor. Some children said they felt less healthy than in Ukraine because they don't have many physical activities anymore. Some children (mostly girls) also told us they would like to talk to a psychologist about their feelings.

 **PEOPLE HELPING UKRAINIANS COULD HELP SOLVE PROBLEMS RELATED TO COST, TIME AND LANGUAGE DIFFERENCES TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR UKRAINIANS TO GO TO THE DOCTOR AND GIVE YOUNG UKRAINIANS THE OPPORTUNITY TO TALK TO A PSYCHOLOGIST.**



**Young Ukrainians suggested these solutions for improving their lives:**

**CHILDREN'S IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS ABOUT WHAT ADULTS CAN DO TO SUPPORT THEM:**

- **TO RESPECT CHILDREN, TO LISTEN TO THEM AND SUPPORT THEM.**
- **TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR THEM TO PLAY SPORTS AND DO OTHER ACTIVITIES IN UKRAINIAN.**
- **TO SUPPORT THEIR PARENTS AND FAMILY IN FINDING THE JOBS THEY HAVE EXPERIENCE IN.**
- **TO CHANGE THE SHIFT SYSTEM AT SCHOOL SO THAT NOT ALWAYS THE SAME STUDENTS WOULD HAVE TO STUDY DURING THE AFTERNOON.**
- **TO SPEND TIME WITH CHILDREN AND SHOW THEM LOVE.**

**CHILDREN'S IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS ABOUT WHAT THEY CAN DO TO HELP OTHERS:**

- **CHEER FOR EACH OTHER AND EXCHANGE GIFTS.**
- **PROMOTE UKRAINIAN CULTURE TO POLISH CHILDREN AND COMMUNICATE WITH THEM MORE.**
- **SUPPORT CHILDREN WITH DIFFICULTIES AT SCHOOL BY HELPING WITH THEIR HOMEWORK.**
- **ORGANISE GROUPS AND ACTIVITIES WITH CHILDREN OF COMMON INTERESTS.**
- **COOK FOR OTHER CHILDREN AND GIVE THEM FOOD TO CHEER THEM UP WHEN THEY FEEL SAD!**

