



Education

Snapshot of Plan International's Impact
in East and Central Europe (2022-2025)



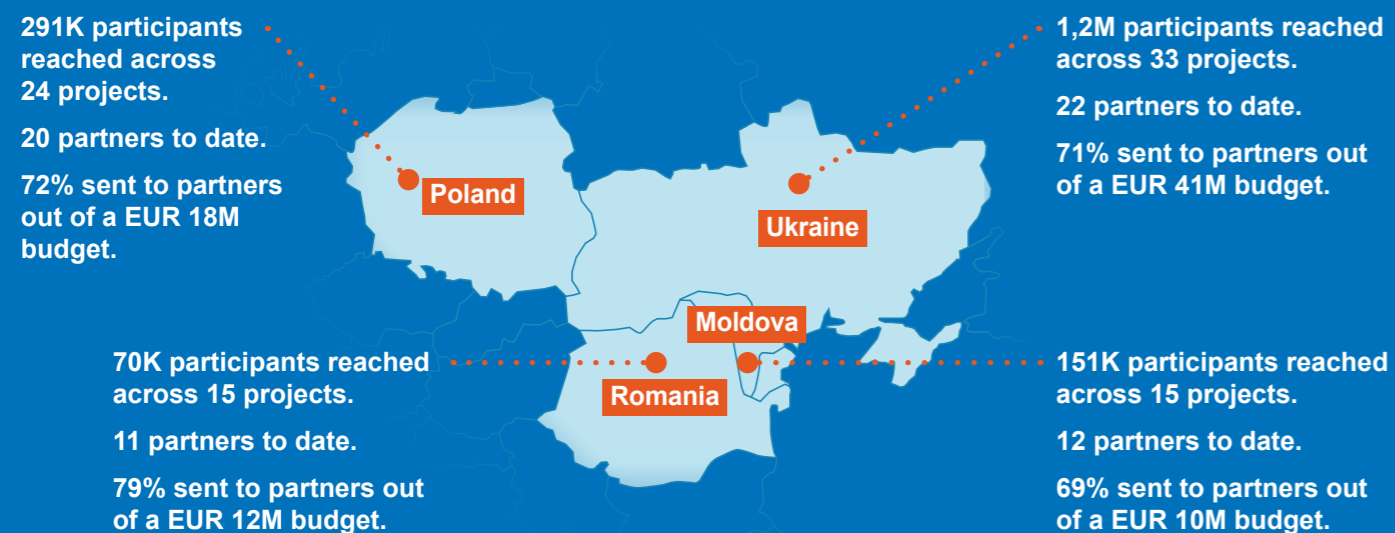
About Plan International's Ukraine Humanitarian Refugee Crisis Response

Plan International initiated its Ukraine Humanitarian Refugee Crisis Response immediately following the escalation of the war in Ukraine in February 2022 by setting up operations in Poland, Moldova, and Romania. The organisation established a presence within Ukraine in August 2022 and has since been amplifying civil society partners' integrated humanitarian programming in East and Central Europe (ECE).

Plan International and partners' humanitarian response aims to reduce the vulnerabilities and risks faced by refugees, displaced and conflict-affected people inside Ukraine and host countries. Whilst providing direct life-saving humanitarian assistance, Plan International's objective is also to address structural inequalities and promote social, gender, and economic justice across ECE by increasing the resilience, well-being, and agency of girls, young people, as well as minority or non-dominant groups.

By consistently maintaining partner spending above 70%, Plan International's localised and partner-led approach has ensured faster, more contextual and sustainable delivery of assistance, whilst strengthening the long-term capacity of local civil society actors in ECE. From 2022 to 2025, this approach has allowed Plan International to reach more than 1.7 million people across 65 partners and 87 projects in four countries.

Plan International's reach by country in ECE



Key insights

Plan International's and partners' education programming across ECE has ensured continued access to quality learning despite conflict, displacement, and systemic challenges. The continuation of education has also been beneficial for the integration of displaced and refugee children, adolescents, and youth (CAY) in their new communities:

- In Ukraine, whilst various modalities delivered by Plan International and partners have ensured CAY stay engaged in learning amidst ongoing disruptions, school rehabilitation efforts have increased access to quality education.

1.1M

people reached by Plan International and partners' **education programming** in ECE.

- In host countries, the continuation of education and social activities provided safe spaces for refugee CAY, and language courses actively supported their integration into host communities.

Impact of Education Interventions¹

From the beginning of Plan International's operations in Ukraine, various remote and in-person modalities, including catch-up classes, remedial education, and extracurricular activities, have ensured CAY remain engaged in learning amidst ongoing disruptions. Plan International's collaboration with the Ministry of Education strengthened system resilience, whilst safe spaces in shelters ensured children could learn in secure environments. More recently, partners ensured that children in grades 5-11 had uninterrupted access to both formal and alternative learning opportunities. Despite ongoing disruptions caused by the conflict, a comprehensive package of catch-up classes in core subjects was delivered. Sessions with speech therapists also addressed individual learning needs and supported overall child development.

Partners' provision of essential equipment and school rehabilitation also increased access to quality educational services in Ukraine. For instance, partners' installation of 13 water access points provided schools and kindergartens in Mykolaiv Oblast with access to drinking water, which increased access to education. Additionally, the restoration of schools in Cherkasy, Khmelnytskyi, Kirovohrad, and

Vinnytsia oblasts has improved learning environments and student engagement, particularly in rural areas. Notable improvements in children's learning environment and the introduction of new educational tools and engaging activities boosted their motivation and involvement. Partners' interventions in Ukraine thus highlight the importance of infrastructure support in strengthening the resilience of educational services.

In host countries, the continuation of education and social activities provided safe spaces for refugee CAY. In **Moldova** and **Romania**, formal and alternative educational activities helped restore a sense of normality for refugee families. Community centres and educational hubs with computer classrooms enabled children continuing with the Ukrainian education system to follow distance learning in a structured environment. This setup also eased the burden on parents who would otherwise need to support their children's online learning at home. Ultimately, whilst they also promoted digital education, computer classrooms offered a semblance of normality for children.

In **Poland**, interventions focusing on children's self-confidence, emotional regulation, and social engagement led to clear behavioural and attitudinal

¹ Plan International has been using an integrated approach in its humanitarian response, working across multiple programmatic areas in projects. Whilst Plan International's entire strategy and project portfolio in ECE is humanitarian, interventions including protection and education work are humanitarian and often life-saving too.



Teacher teaches in the basement of a kindergarten in Kharkiv Oblast © Words Help / Georgiy Ivanchenko

changes amongst participants. For example, theatre, yoga, and leadership sessions supported participants' psychosocial and developmental needs by providing a sense of stability, belonging, and self-expression in a context of prolonged displacement. The mix of artistic, physical, and reflective sessions contributed to their emotional well-being and social reintegration.

Finally, language courses actively supported the integration of refugee CAY in host countries.

In **Poland**, for instance, the breadth of methods employed by Plan International's partners, including the integration of SEL practices, fostered well-being and mutual understanding whilst enhancing integration in classrooms. Intercultural debate clubs and mixed activities also created opportunities for integration beyond the original scope.

Similarly, in **Moldova**, an accelerated education programme, which included Romanian language

bridging, allowed for meeting the immediate and short-term needs of crisis-affected CAY. It re-familiarised them with the classroom and the process of formal learning, whilst delivering non-formal activities designed to strengthen SEL competencies. Adopted by the Ministry of Education and Research, the programme now serves as a core resource for Moldovan schools enrolling refugee learners.

In **Romania** too, language classes supported by Plan International and partners contributed to improved integration outcomes for children and adolescents. With some achieving native-level proficiency, refugee children and adolescents from Ukraine progressively socialised with Romanian peers beyond the classroom. Whilst the interventions enabled refugees to enrol in Romanian schools, some adolescents even expressed a preference for continuing their higher education studies in Romania.



What are the key education needs and challenges in ECE?

Selected findings from Plan International's research

CAY in Ukraine, and those who now live in Poland, Romania, and Moldova, since the escalation of the war, have faced educational disruptions. As many experienced disruptions from COVID-19 online learning, Plan International's research indicates that programmes ensuring continued quality education remain highly relevant in ECE.¹

Security risks linked to in-person education in Ukraine

In **Ukraine**, ongoing **disruptions caused by the need to seek shelter** impact adolescents' ability to attend school, receive a consistent education, and deepen their feelings of insecurity within the school environment. According to Plan International's research, adolescent girls in Ukraine highlighted that the immediate threat of shelling, risking their physical safety, overshadowed their educational experiences.

Whilst adolescents expressed concerns about the risks of in-person education, schools in the western and

central parts of Ukraine have reopened with additional safety and security measures. However, despite building new or strengthening existing bomb shelters, they often **struggle to provide safe in-person lessons** due to the limited capacity of bomb shelters.

Online education is not the preferred option

Although adolescents in Ukraine feel safer at home than at school, they highlight the importance of **direct interaction for learning and socialisation**. Amongst all ages, genders, and countries, adolescents affected by the war express a longing for the moment when they can return to their schools, reconnect with their classmates, and experience "normality".

Ukrainian youth also voiced their frustrations with online learning, noting a decline in teaching standards and learning outcomes, low morale, and increasing challenges in staying motivated or focused on their studies. Since online education heavily depends on access to devices, power, and internet connectivity, a more



Children learn in class at one of the EduTech Labs in Moldova © Amicii dei Bambini

adaptable approach for completing assignments is often necessary when students lack consistent access.

Integrating into new education systems in host countries

Evidence from Plan International's research demonstrates that **language barriers** have been the primary obstacle to adolescents' integration into new educational systems. In **Poland**, textbooks and materials were not tailored to ensure access for Ukrainian students. As they also often attend online classes at their Ukrainian schools to maintain continuous education within the Ukrainian system, the increased workload of students from Ukraine reduces their attendance at Polish schools and their participation in after-school activities.

Similar challenges were reported in **Romania**. As of 1 May 2023, refugee adolescents from Ukraine must be registered in the national education system to be eligible for financial aid. However, without sufficient language skills, adolescents are unable to follow the classes. Many thus reported continuing with remote learning from Ukraine, which can further isolate them from regular social interactions in their host community.

However, opportunities for integration exist. Those who attend a Polish school reported that, although

they face many challenges, it provides some routine, as well as opportunities to learn the Polish language and **build social connections with peers**. Group tasks and activities outside the classroom have been beneficial for Polish and Ukrainian students in fostering connections and creating bonds. Refugee students also appreciate the support provided by some Polish teachers and Ukrainian intercultural assistants.

The need to integrate MHPSS intervention with education

In **Poland**, the lack of psycho-pedagogical support for students from Ukraine was one of the most significant issues observed at the start of the escalation of the war, according to Plan International's research. Whilst school staff were aware of the potential trauma faced by refugees, they recognised a need to develop their skills, including **diagnosing and responding to difficult emotions**, as well as **recognising situations that threaten students' emotional safety** or require specialised interventions. Beyond teachers' training, intercultural assistants have also been vital in providing a sense of emotional security whilst helping students cope with cultural differences, supporting educational processes, and facilitating interactions with parents.



Girl with her new backpack provided by Plan International's partner in Moldova © Plan International

Interested to learn more about education needs and challenges in ECE?

See the following reports:

-  [Culturally Diverse Schools \(August 2022\)](#)
-  [Young People on the War in Ukraine \(June 2023\)](#)
-  ["It is cool here, no doubt about it... but home is home": Exploring the subjective wellbeing of children and adolescents living in Poland in the face of the war in Ukraine \(November 2023\)](#)
-  [Adolescent Girls in Crisis – Voices from Ukraine, Poland and Romania \(June 2024\)](#)



References

i Plan International (2022) Culturally Diverse Schools. Available at: <https://plan-international.org/publications/culturally-diverse-schools/>; Plan International (2023) Young People on the War in Ukraine. Available at: <https://plan-international.org/publications/young-people-on-the-war-in-ukraine/>; UNICEF, Save the Children and Plan International (2023) "It is cool here, no doubt about it... but home is home": Exploring the subjective wellbeing of children and adolescents living

In Poland In the face of the war in Ukraine. Available at: <https://plan-international.org/poland-en/publications/children-adolescents-wellbeing-face-war-ukraine/>; Plan International (2024) Adolescent Girls in Crisis – Voices from Ukraine, Poland and Romania. Available at: <https://plan-international.org/publications/girls-in-crisis-ukraine/>.



About

Plan International

Plan International is an independent development and humanitarian organisation that advances children's rights and equality for girls. We believe in the power and potential of every child but know this is often suppressed by poverty, violence, exclusion and discrimination. And it is girls who are most affected.

Working together with children, young people, supporters and partners, we strive for a just world, tackling the root causes of the challenges girls and vulnerable children face. We support children's rights from birth until they reach adulthood, and we enable children to prepare for and respond to crises and adversity. We drive changes in practice and policy at local, national and global levels using our reach, experience and knowledge.

For over 85 years, we have rallied other determined optimists to transform the lives of all children in more than 80 countries.

We won't stop until we are all equal.



 @plan-international

 @planinternational

 @planinternationaltv

 @plan.international

 @planinternational

 @planinternationalece

 @planglobal

 @planinternationalece