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Institutional care during wartime and the extent of potential support for migrants arriving from Ukraine in the light of the actions of education offices in Poland

Troska instytucjonalna w czasie wojny i zakres potencjalnego wsparcia dla imigrantów przybywających z Ukrainy w świetle działań kuratoriów oświaty w Polsce

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to analyse the extent of institutional care for Ukrainian immigrants offered by education offices and to show its evolution over time. The research material consisted of entries on the websites of 16 education offices, from February 24, 2022, to February 24, 2024. The research method used is "netnography". This research identifies several areas of action of the education offices: official, educational, methodological, economic, psychological-pedagogical, health-related, and local. The authors refer their

findings to a 4-phase care model by Joan Tronto's theory. Over the second year of the war, an evident evolution of institutional care can be observed.

Keywords: institutional care, war in Ukraine, websites, education offices, support, evolutionary change, immigration.

Introduction

The outbreak of war in Ukraine on 24 February 2022 resulted in the largest refugee migration in Europe since World War II. As it follows from the data of the Office for Foreigners, were currently under temporary protection in Poland in 2023[1] People from Ukraine form the largest group of foreigners in Poland, accounting for slightly more than 80 percent of all the foreigners settling in our country.

Due to the lack of a clearly defined migration policy, the significant inflow of immigrants to Poland was highly dispersed. As a result, in the first reception period, uncoordinated activities prevailed, or operations were often based on rapidly established social networks and individual initiatives. The pre-existing social networks of immigrants, helping those arriving in Poland to assimilate and acculturate for years, also stepped up their activities (Kindler and Wójcikowska-Baniak, 2019).

Education offices (EO) in Poland also joined the efforts to support immigrants and started to post information useful for Ukrainians. What is interesting, however, is whether the assistance and support provided, in the second year of the war, is still as intense as it was previously and how the forms of institutional support have evolved.

Institutional care

Care is the primary research category used in this paper. One of the widest definitions of care has been developed by Joan Tronto and Bernice Fisher, describing it as all activities that help "maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible" (Tronto, 1993, p. 40). Owing to its great generality, this definition has many applications, including in pedagogy, social care, or medicine. For Tronto, caring was not a trait or a good intention, but an actual action whose intention would benefit the other person. Together with the definition, Tronto has developed a 4-phase model

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[1]   Obywatele Ukrainy w Polsce – aktualne dane migracyjne, https://www.gov.pl/web/udsc/obywatele-ukrainy-w-polsce--aktualne-dane-migracyjne2, access: 24.02.2023.

of care pointing to the relationship between the phases of care and ethical traits. The first phase, i.e., the recognition of need, requires attentiveness, the second one, namely the willingness to respond, demonstrates responsibility, and the third one, the direct action, requires competence. The final phase is the care receiver's reaction to the care process and the promptness of this reaction (responsiveness). Recognising the actions taken by education offices concerning migrants from Ukraine as an expression of care, it is possible to indicate the implementation of the three necessary phases of care. The last phase can be identified based on the number of views of individual posts, for example, on the website of the EO in Białystok, in the banner "Children from Ukraine in schools" there are 18 posts, of which 13 contain records, which have a total number of 12,202 views[2].

For each identified need of refugees arriving in Poland, this cycle is repeated several times (phases 1 and 2), and action is taken by competent professionals (phase 3). The response to the organized support may be confirmed by the number of views of individual entries, included in the specification on the website of the education office (phase 4). An analysis of the posts on the websites of the education authorities even indicates an increasing attentiveness and ability of the personnel to identify further needs of people arriving from Ukraine.

From a historical perspective, there were a variety of approaches to care. For years, its understanding had been situated in the private sphere – from Aristotle, who considered care as an activity belonging only to the family, to the works by John Locke. More recently, the ethics of care have been associated with feminism and the "kingdom of women", e.g., in the work by Nel Noddings or Sarah Ruddick (Engster, 2007, p. 1). While the latter approach is not consistent with the notion of care as represented in this paper, its significant merit lies in challenging the location of the notion of care only in the private sphere (Sepczyńska, 2012). In this paper, the authors characterise care of an institutional nature and therefore located in the public sphere. They introduce the new term - "**institutional care**" and use it as a main category for the research.

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[2]   https://kuratorium.bialystok.pl/; access: 20.05.2024.

Research methodology

This paper aims to analyse the extent of institutional care for Ukrainian immigrants as demonstrated in the actions of education offices and to show its evolution over time. The aim is not to check the effectiveness of the actions (responsiveness, phase 4 of Tronto model), but only to explore the potential seen on EOs' websites, as they do not monitor the use of the websites and specific forms of support.

Following the outbreak of Russia's war against Ukraine, information on organised support and aid for children arriving from Ukraine appeared on the websites of governmental and non-governmental organisations. Similarly, the websites of all sixteen Polish EOs featured this kind of information. Analysing the posts from the websites of the latter made it possible to identify not only the actors but also the organisational forms of assistance provided to children arriving from Ukraine. We are aware that the active links provided on the websites of education offices, leading to websites of other support providers, require a separate study. Still, due to the narrowing of the topic to the websites of EOs, we highlight another area requiring separate research. The analysis of the posts not only reveals not the extensiveness of the support process towards Ukrainian children, but also its evolution, and the gradual changes in the organisation of assistance: from individual campaigns, and spontaneous actions of volunteers, to systemic solutions undertaken by the government, but also NGOs in coalitions with other parties, as well as assistance from the academia.

The objective of our study was to seek answers to the following research question:

What is the extent of institutional care demonstrated in all education offices in Poland?

For this purpose, the authors collected research material from the websites of sixteen EOs, which consisted of contents published between 24 February 2022 and 24 February 2024, so during the two years of Russia's war against Ukraine. We have analysed all the posts included in the "News" tabs and in the dedicated spaces that some office websites featured, marked with a banner in the colours of the Ukrainian flag.

The study consisted of two complementary phases:

1. The first phase – organised just after the outbreak of war and involving an analysis of website contents from 24 February to 24 March 2022.

2. The second phase – organised a year and a half after the out-break of the war. It involved an analysis of posts from 24 March 2022 to 24 February 2024.

The first and second phases of the study supplement the analysis aimed at determining who organised support for Ukrainian children and how, in the light of an examination of the posts on the websites of EOs published in the one-and-a-half-year period of Russia's war against Ukraine. The objective was also to determine whether the information provided was gathered in one place, signalled with a banner, or had to be searched under the "News" tab, which was significantly more difficult.

The first phase of the research involved an analysis of posts from the EO's websites published in the first four weeks since the outbreak of the war. The mere archiving of the contents appearing on the websites took the authors two months and consisted of copying the posts or creating screen-shot clips (banners, flyers) and then placing the titles of the posts alone in tables in chronological order from 24 February to 24 March 2022. The research work consisted of analysing the archived posts, documents and, at the same time, referring to the education offices' websites to confirm the presence of the contents in question. The work lasted six months, from March 2022 to July 2022, and involved repeated analysis of extensive material.

The study's second phase came after a year's interval. It involved an analysis of online content regarding support for Ukraine that was published on EOs' websites from 24 March 2022 to 24 February 2024, two years since the outbreak of the war. It took a month to archive the material posted on the websites, and another month to examine it. Based on archived posts from the websites, which were significantly lower in number than in the first and second months of the warfare, and repeated analysis of the content of each education office's homepage, it was possible to capture not only quantitative but also qualitative changes related to the number and manner in which information on support for Ukrainian children was communicated one month after the outbreak and in the following months of the war.

To gather data from websites, we used virtual ethnography, which is referred to in the literature as "web ethnography", "digital ethnography", "internet ethnography", and "netnography". Virtual ethnography expands knowledge about certain human life aspects that do not necessarily show up in the non-virtual world but can be found in the online spaces (Jemielniak, 2013). The data collection process represents an extremely important phase of the work, as it requires the structuring of the material gathered and its archiving (Kozinets, 2012).

The online contents from the sixteen websites constituted a set of pre-existing sources (Szatur-Jaworska, 2010), which helped in the pursuit of the research question (Łuczewski and Bednarz-Łuczewska, 2012). The posts have been archived and arranged in sixteen tables. The complete group, i.e., websites of all sixteen education offices, was selected for the study: Dolnośląskie in Wrocław, Kujawsko-Pomorskie in Bydgoszcz (archival page; link redirecting to the website of the Ministry of Education and Science), Lubelskie in Lublin, Lubuskie in Gorzów Wielkopolski, Łódzkie in Łódź, Małopolskie in Kraków, Mazowieckie in Warsaw, Opolskie in Opole, Podkarpackie in Rzeszów, Podlaskie in Białystok, Pomorskie in Gdańsk, Śląskie in Katowice, Świętokrzyskie in Kielce, Warmińsko-Mazurskie in Olsztyn, Wielkopolskie in Poznań, and Zachodniopomorskie in Szczecin.

Among others, the following documents were analysed: Regulation of the Minister of Education and Science on the Organisation of Education, Upbringing and Care of Children and Adolescents who are Citizens of Ukraine; Law of 12 March 2022 on assistance to citizens of Ukraine in connection with armed conflict on the territory of that country; "Principles for the acceptance of foreigners into Polish schools in the context of the current situation in Ukraine"; as well as recommendations for teachers and school pedagogues, practical tips for schools, welcome packs, letters from the Minister of Education and Science and educational materials helpful in working with Ukrainian pupils.

Activities of education offices in support of migrants arriving from Ukraine

Based on an analysis of the documents that were published on the EO's websites within a month of the outbreak of Russia's war against Ukraine, it was possible to identify the organisers of the support, which include the central government, NGOs, and volunteers, and its implementers: teachers, school pedagogues, pupils, parents, and volunteers, as well as to identify the forms of support (consultation, workshops, training, conferences, language courses, development of educational materials, assistance in caring for and teaching children). Governmental and non-governmental institutions, and people implementing the support, i.e., teachers, psychologists, pedagogues, and volunteers, could be identified through systematic posts already in the first month of the war. The institutions and organisations that became involved in arranging the support included: psychological and pedagogical counselling centres, teacher training centres, the Polish Language and Culture Centre for Polish People from Abroad and Foreigners at the Maria Curie-Skłodowska

University (UMCS), Faces of Depression Foundation, the Library Mirror, the Centre for Citizenship Education and many other actors willing to help Ukraine (Garbat and Szplit, 2023).

At first, most of the posts were located in a "News" tab, which made it significantly more challenging to find the desired content, primarily if it had been published several days earlier. Only some education offices created separate tabs or placed helpful banners on the website right from the start (e.g., Świętokrzyskie EO in Kielce (Dobrołowicz and Garbat, 2022). In October 2023 such banners and special tabs were on the websites of 12 out of 16 education offices in Poland. Such tabs were only missing from the websites of the EOs in Bydgoszcz, Kraków, Olsztyn, and Rzeszów. However, the EO site in Bydgoszcz redirected users to the Ministry of Education and Science's website. After two years of war, such banners and special tabs can be found only on 9 out of 16 websites of the education offices (Table 1).

Table 1. List of tabs dedicated to assistance to Ukraine on the websites of the education offices in Poland on 03.10.2023 and on 07.05.2024

Education Office/ City	Tabs	Access 03.10.2023	Access 07.05.2024.
Białystok	„Children from Ukraine in schools" („Dzieci z Ukrainy w szkołach")	X	X
Gdańsk	"Ukraine - Help" („Ukraina – Pomoc")	X	No longer exists
Gorzów Wielkopolski	„Articles about help for refugees from Ukraine" („Artykuły o pomocy dla uchodźców z Ukrainy")	X	X
Katowice	"Help for Ukraine" („Pomoc dla Ukrainy")	X	X
Kielce	"Help for Ukraine" („Pomoc Ukrainie")	X	X
Lublin	„Ukrainian children in schools" („Dzieci ukraińskie w szkole")	X	X (In „News")
Łódź	„Education of refugee children from Ukraine in the Polish education system" („Kształcenie dzieci uchodźców z Ukrainy w polskim systemie oświaty")	X	X
Opole	"Help for Ukraine" („Pomoc dla Ukrainy")	X	X
Poznań	"Help for Ukraine" („Pomoc dla Ukrainy")	X	No longer exists
Szczecin	„School for you" („Szkoła dla Was")	X	X

Warszawa	„Parents and pupils" („Rodzice i uczniowie"); subtab „Migrant children" („Dzieci migrujące")	X	No longer exists
Wrocław	"Help for Ukraine" („Pomoc dla Ukrainy")	X	X

Source: own research

In the second year of the war, a more careful and deliberate preparation of the tabs and banners on the websites can be seen. The solution applied on the website of the Śląskie EO in Katowice, where six sub-tabs have been created within the active "Help for Ukraine" banner to organise the search process, may be regarded as exemplary. The first sub-tab informs on the team for the organisation of the assistance that has been established and lists the visiting officer and the prominent specialists by name, together with information on the language they speak (Ukrainian, Russian, English). It also features phone numbers and email addresses for contact. The second sub-tab, "Useful websites", contains an active link to the Department of Civil Affairs and Foreigners of the Śląskie Voivodship Office in Katowice. The third sub-tab, "Initiatives", provides information on grants and support actions, e.g., the collection of flashlights for children from Ukraine. The fourth sub-tab, "Training for teachers", contains advertisements of available courses with links to the websites of the organisers. In the fifth sub-tab, "Regulations", there are interactive links to current announcements, regulations, laws, and principles related to accepting children from Ukraine in Polish schools. The content of the "Support for Ukraine" banner can be accessed from the horizontally placed main tab: "Education and Training". It is a very handy solution, enabling the user to reach information about assistance to Ukraine not only by clicking on the active banner but also from the main tab.

On the website of the Wielkopolskie EO in Poznań, back in October 2023, there was an interactive banner with nine active sub-tabs named: "General information" (e.g., regarding the team for foreigners, recognition of education, Integration Centres for Foreigners in Wielkopolska), "Admission to schools" (e.g., a film on foreigners in a Polish school); "Polish language for foreigners" (institutions, associations, foundations providing Polish language teaching as a foreign language, whether in class or on-line); "Psychological and educational support" (organisations, foundations, private entities); "Jobs for teachers from Ukraine" (database of job opportunities, list of offices to submit job offers); "Polish education system. Ukrainian education system" (among other things: a letter from the Minister of Education and Science to principals, teachers, education staff, local government officials, parents and pupils regarding the Ukrainian education system); "Initiatives

for foreigners" (e.g., activities of the Teacher Training Centre (TTC) in Konin as part of the "TTC for Ukraine" project; establishment of a reading room for Ukrainian books in the Public Pedagogical Library in Konin); "Volunteer database"; "Law" (information on systemic solutions for the provision of care and education to pupils who are Ukrainian citizens). In June 2024, the EO in Poznań website only has the "Migrant Students" banner. This shows how quickly information appears and disappears on the Internet.

A user-friendly solution on the website of the EO in Lublin is also worth noting, where the tab on Ukraine can be accessed from both the news and a banner. In turn, the EO in Warsaw provides additional links to helpful websites, and the site of the EO in Szczecin features a direct link to the Ombudsman's for Children's Rights website and includes practical mini guides.

A year and a half into the war, contents appeared on the websites of education offices in Poland, covering several areas of activity:

1. **Official** area, where further Minister's Letters on systemic solutions for providing care and education to Ukrainian pupils were found, as well as amendments and revisions to regulations on the education, upbringing, and care of children and adolescents from Ukraine. The websites of EOs also feature rules for the organisation of summer holidays for Polish and Ukrainian children and an official helpline for Ukrainians. Furthermore, the websites offer access to an "Information Chatbot" for school enrolment for children.

2. **The educational area covers posts on the facilitation of** the learning process for pupils from Ukraine, as well as the Central Examination Board's announcements on the eighth-grade exam and the matriculation exam for Ukrainian citizens. There is also information on institutions teaching Polish as a foreign language, e.g., Centre of Polish Language and Culture for International Students at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. There are also links to the website of the Centre for Education Development (Integrated Education Platform) and the Centre for Citizenship Education (War in Ukraine – Support and Educational materials).

3. **Methodological** area, allowing access to educational material for children: colouring books, games, vocabulary posters (Klett Polska publishing house). As part of this area, free materials for teaching Polish as a foreign language and links to websites with publications in Ukrainian are provided. It also encourages participation in conferences, such as: "Discourses – Cultures – Frontiers. Didactics of the Polish language as a non-native/second

language and Ukrainian pupils in the Polish educational system" (Zachodniopomorskie Centre for Teacher Excellence and Faculty of Humanities of the University of Szczecin), as well as a series of online meetings on the topic of "Education in Ukraine – between theory and practice" (Centre for Education Development, Maria Grzegorzewska University). One can also place an application for an online course for intercultural assistants (Polish Migration Forum) here.

4. **Local initiatives** include list of sports clubs, and registration for a daycare centre for Ukrainian children (Natanaelum Association), information about the competitions ("Give a hand to Ukraine" and "A music note for peace" - Voivodeship Police Headquarters in Kielce), campaigns such as "Light for Ukraine" involving the donation of flashlights – a symbol of "Light from the World" – to children in Ukraine (Uniters Foundation) and "A bar of chocolate for Ukraine" ("Kacper Pomaga" Foundation based in Łódź); an invitation to the exhibition of works by Ukrainian artists who live and work in Łódź; provision of 7,000 English-Polish-Ukrainian dictionaries with phrasebooks for children in preparatory departments (Catholic University of Lublin, EO in Poznań); proposals for educational workshops aimed at creating local initiatives to integrate Ukrainian refugees (Foundation for the Development of the Education System).

5. **Economic area** – including information on job opportunities for teachers from Ukraine. As part of this area, information is provided on the need to prepare a report on using the Assistance Fund for pupils from Ukraine and campaigns such as collecting computer equipment for pupils, "#SchoolsForWas".

6. **Psychological-pedagogical area**, offering a mini-guide for schools and hosts of Ukrainians, produced by psychology students (Academy of Humanities and Economics in Łódź); materials on working with pupils with migration backgrounds (the Rej Foundation); guides, e.g., "From a multicultural to an intercultural classroom" (Copernicus Science Centre, Deloitte Foundation, School with Class Foundation); a publication by the Centre for Education Development on supporting traumatised pupils. This area also covers information on conferences, e.g., in a hybrid form: "Recommendations for diagnosing the psychological needs of children and adolescents in forced migration from Ukraine" (Kraków

branch of the Polish Psychological Society (PTP)); webinars on psychological and pedagogical support for children and parents fleeing Ukraine; invitations to free conferences on diagnosing the psychological needs of children and adolescents in forced migration from Ukraine (Jagiellonian University). Announcements on free psychological and psychiatric help for Polish and Ukrainian pupils (Faces of Depression Foundation).

7. **Health area** – information on vaccination against infectious diseases (Chief Sanitary Inspectorate).

The areas of institutional support for Ukrainian citizens described above could be identified owing to the creation of "virtual help areas" on the websites. Thanks to the very presence of the tabs, the information posted there could be disseminated, making it clear that an increasing number of different institutions are joining in to assist, forming coalitions, and thus increasing the dimensions of organised assistance as part of the institutional care.

The article includes an analysis of two years of aid activities presented on the websites of 16 education offices in Poland, all government units supervising the work of schools and educational institutions in voivodeship. During the two years of the war between Russia and Ukraine, a difference can be seen in the information and assistance solutions used on office websites, mainly reduction of the number of banners/tabs and giving direct links to the website of the supervising body - the Ministry of National Education. We believe that the presence of banners and tabs on the websites of regional EOs significantly facilitates obtaining the necessary information about support and enables contact with people who make up the team organizing help in a given school board (e.g. EO in Katowice). Thanks to their presence, it was possible to present a four-phase model of care, the fourth phase of which, however, requires extension and supplementation with interviews with employees of institutions organizing aid, which will be the subject of our next study.

Conclusions

Since the onset of the war in Ukraine, all the education offices in Poland featured information on their websites on the organised support and assistance for the Ukrainian citizens. These activities can be referred to as institutional care, as they were organised by state institutions and by competent professionals. Following Joan Tronto's 4-phase model of care, all four phases of care can be seen in the activities of EOs. The last phase is not

visible only because of the chosen research method (netnography), which does not allow adequate data to be collected for its purpose.

Notwithstanding the prolonged armed conflict, the activity of the EOs is not losing momentum; it is even showing a significant evolution. New tabs and further forms of wide-ranging care are being added to the websites, e.g tabs about migrant children. We can observe an increase in the offer of support and its broader scope.

However, the fact that there are websites informing on support for people from Ukraine and that there are tabs on these websites with information tailored to the needs of immigrants is a testimony to institutional care. The education offices are creating a space for care, as well as social networks, leading from their websites to universities or other institutions providing support. Therefore, they build an ever-widening support environment and demonstrate their institutional care.

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