

The school students of Ukraine need access to quality, inclusive education!

Memorandum approved by the OBESSU Board

3rd of April, Rome

TO: The attendees of the Council of ministers of education, Luxembourg, 5th of April 2022

FROM: The Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions

The Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU) is the platform for cooperation between the national school student unions active in general secondary and secondary vocational education in Europe.

Following the beginning of the Russian military aggression in Ukraine, on the 24th of February of this year, more than 2.8 million Ukrainian nationals have fled their home country, in an attempt to reach a safer environment, as reported by the United Nations. According to UNICEF, almost half of the Ukrainian refugees are children. Most of these children were attending some form of primary or secondary education before being displaced. However, after fleeing their home country, they are faced with the quasi-impossible situation of integrating in the educational system of the country they seek asylum in, since most refugees do not speak the language of the country. This is, however, not a unique situation - in the past years, refugees seeking asylum in EU countries have faced immense difficulties in being active in society (and in formal education specifically, in the case of school students) due to this language barrier.

In an effort to facilitate the integration of Ukrainian school students in national educational systems, governments have implemented various measures, which have proven themselves to be more or less efficient. However, we cannot overlook the fact that the response to this crisis has been, at times, dysfunctional. We cannot overlook the fact that hundreds of thousands of refugee children are still not part of formal education and that they lack access to basic health and social services. We cannot overlook the [discrimination that BIPOC school students](#) and young people face in their attempt to flee and seek asylum. We cannot overlook injustice.

Considering the three work strands (sharing and pooling of digital educational content, , ensure pupils' wellbeing at school and support teachers and using the experience gained during the health crisis in terms of remote learning) discussed during the informal meeting of education ministers on the 16th of

March, referring to the support offered by the Member States for the Ukrainian school students, we underline the **absolute importance** of their proper integration in our educational systems. This goal cannot be achieved without **proper funding in translation services and/or dedicated educational facilities** for refugees, which can appropriately cater to their educational needs. Moreover, we are calling on you to take the necessary steps in order to ensure that school students have access to mental health services in schools, meant to alleviate the traumatic consequences of the armed conflict which they have fled. We must not forget that school communities do not only play the role of providing school students with information, but also help them socialise, develop and overcome challenges.

As ministers of education, you have the opportunity to show real leadership and to contribute to the one goal towards which all of us, educational actors, strive - access to quality, inclusive education for all, especially those in vulnerable situations. The fates of millions of children lie on your shoulders.

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