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## PRESENT AND FUTURE OF THE UKRAINIAN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND UKRAINIAN STUDIES IN EUROPE

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Daria Orobchuk*

### **Introduction**

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 dramatically not only changed the demographic and socioeconomic situation within the country but also transformed processes of cultural and language identification of Ukrainians in Ukraine and abroad. Forced displacement within the country and mass migration abroad transformed both the dynamics of the language situation in different regions of Ukraine and enhanced the presence of the Ukrainian language and culture abroad, especially in Europe. In this article, we highlight these changes that influence educational processes and institutions. In the first part of the article, we provide an overview of changes within Ukraine, and further we focus on various initiatives that emerged since 2022 in the countries of the European continent, in particular in the EU, Great Britain, and Switzerland. Highlighting the present situation enables us also to map further perspectives as reflecting on the future is especially important during times of uncertainty:

Scenarios – and other foresight methods – help to initiate discussions and make the future palpable. They make the future more realistic and visualize the challenges we have to face – whether we want to or not. Scenarios can help us to be aware of future threats, and to initiate preparations – we should use this chance.

(Sharan 2018: 14)

There are several reasons why teaching and learning Ukrainian gained popularity and have increased, especially since 2022. Firstly, Ukrainian is the official language of Ukraine and, in the course of the EU accession negotiations that began in December 2023, the academic study of the Ukrainian language as the future official language and working language of the European Union is gaining importance. Secondly, it is a recognized minority language in Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, and Slovakia (Council of Europe 2024 (status as of 28.02.2024)); for teaching Ukrainian as a regional or minority language in primary

and general secondary education (2021/2022) see European Commission 2023: 59–60). Thirdly, Ukrainian is the native language of many migrants who fled to European countries due to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and currently represent one of the largest migrant groups. For these reasons, our depicted developments will concentrate on the domains of Ukrainian as a heritage language, Ukrainian as a foreign language, and the inclusion of Ukrainian in academic programs.

The political dimension of recognizing the Ukrainian language is crucial, a fact that becomes evident when one considers the following situation. Statements concerning the Ukrainian language are not made solely by linguists but also by political figures. In 2022, in Oslo, during the Nobel Prize ceremony, Ukrainian human rights activist Olexandra Matvijchuk, who received the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the Centre for Civil Liberties, delivered her speech in Ukrainian, stating in particular:

We are proud of having the Ukrainian language heard during the official ceremony for the first time in history (...) We, Ukrainian citizens of all nationalities, should not discuss our right to a sovereign and independent Ukrainian state and the development of the Ukrainian language and culture.

(The Nobel Lecture 2022)

Taras Kremin, Commissioner on State Language Protection of Ukraine, emphasized that a future EU membership will bring enormous new possibilities for the Ukrainian language:

EU enlargement opens great opportunities for Ukraine in the new realities. Future membership also means prospects for the development and promotion of the Ukrainian language. By becoming the 25th EU language, Ukrainian will receive additional support in the world. This will include the opening of Ukrainian philology and Ukrainian studies departments at leading universities; real conditions for the development of Ukrainian translation; a surge in the book publishing sector, etc. In addition, accession to the EU will significantly increase the number of people willing to learn the Ukrainian language, and therefore state support, relevant programmes and real investments are essential.

(Kremin 2023)

In 2023, receiving the prestigious Charlemagne Prize in Aachen, Germany, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyi in his speech, which was initiated by directly addressing the political and emblematic importance of the Ukrainian language, underscored:

Since millions of people will not fit in this hall, let our language, which represents all our people, be spoken here today. The Ukrainian language has not been spoken within these walls [...]. And now, as Ukraine is returning to its native European home, I believe that the Ukrainian language will be spoken here on many occasions.

(Watch again 2023: 1:44:36 – 1:45:15)

This proclamation not only forecasts but also expresses a hopeful vision for the future presence and utilization of the Ukrainian language within European institutions. The connection drawn between the Ukrainian people and their language is a vivid testimony to language functioning as an embodiment of national identity. With the influx of approximately 4.2 million Ukrainian

refugees granted temporary protection in Europe, the Ukrainian language has inevitably journeyed alongside them into the European sphere. This observation signifies the inaugural steps of the Ukrainian language carving out its path and establishing a presence within European culture and discourse.

### **Language Shift from Russian to Ukrainian in Ukraine – the Full-Scale Invasion as a Trigger of Sociolinguistic Changes**

In accordance with the Russian imperialist narrative, the Ukrainian language was systematically relegated to a status associated with rural environments and the less educated populace (see Hush 2020; *Ukraïner* 2021). This deliberate characterization served to devalue the Ukrainian language, consigning it to the periphery, while simultaneously asserting the dominance of the Russian language. This depiction extends to viewing it as an ideological instrument of linguistic violence, as defined by the norms and values attributed to diverse languages and their respective speakers (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson 1996: 668). Nevertheless, contemporary dynamics have witnessed a transformative shift, positioning the Ukrainian language as a burgeoning force in the realm of business and culture. After Euromaidan 2013–4 which is also known as the Revolution of Dignity (a protest in Ukraine that fought against Viktor Yanukovich's regime and whose main values were freedom, dignity, and desire to join the EU), sociolinguists and cultural anthropologists noticed a situation of “linguistic conversion”, fuelled by language activists groups (Bilaniuk 2020) or “choosing your mother tongue” (Seals 2019), when for the younger generation of Ukrainians the notion of native language became more flexible and a matter of a personal choice. In other words, even if they were born in families speaking the dominant Russian language, later they switched to Ukrainian and defined it as a native language. The main motivations for using more Ukrainian are both symbolic and pragmatic, meaning that Ukrainian is an identity marker as well as a means of communication (Kudriavtseva 2023). As Krouglov (2023) underscored:

The war and the fight against Russian aggression constitute macro-societal perspective of switching from the language of enemy to using more Ukrainian. The willingness of speakers to identify themselves as Ukrainians and different from their invaders, to show their belonging to Ukraine and adherence to key values of democracy, freedom, and independence.

Simultaneously, the Russian language, once considered a vehicle for both business and culture (Kulyk 2023), has undergone a profound re-evaluation. No longer perceived as a conduit for commerce and cultural expression, it has now assumed the ominous roles of a language associated with occupation and aggression. Prognosticating the outcomes of this language shift now is quite a challenging task since it can have different dynamics in future: “The rate and speed of the shift process will vary from community to community. In some cases, the process is relatively swift, within one or two generations, and in other contexts, it will take much longer” (Pauwels 2016: 19). Only after the war is over can sociolinguists fully measure and evaluate the results of the language shift and its influence on the language situation (Besters-Dilger 2023). In this section of the chapter, we highlight the current situation of the language shift in Ukraine, its development in particular areas, and its influence on teaching and learning Ukrainian in Europe.

The seismic change in perspective towards the Ukrainian language is underscored by a notable shift within Ukrainian businesses and among prominent business figures. This change in attitude gained momentum following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. CEOs and business owners, in a strategic pivot, have embraced the Ukrainian language as more than a mere means

of communication. It is now viewed as a potent tool for creating distance from Russia and its ideological influences. The language has taken on multifaceted roles, serving as a weapon, an identity marker, a determinant of the people's and nation's existence, a unifying symbol, and a protective fortification (Pidkuimukha 2024). This profound re-evaluation of the language's significance underscores its pivotal role in shaping not just business practices but also national identity in the face of geopolitical challenges.

Since the onset of the Russian offensive war, there has been a significant increase in Ukrainian language content on YouTube (Nanovs'ka 2022) and other social media networks (Kulyk 2022: 243). Moreover, the language use on Twitter became a visible indicator of sociolinguistic changes:

We find a gradual but substantial language shift already pre-war, which drastically accelerates with the start of the Russian aggression in November 2021 and the subsequent outbreak of the war. In the span of a few months, Ukrainian tweet probability rises from 47% to a remarkable 76%.

(Racek 2023: 12)

Prominent public figures in Ukraine with large audiences have shifted their content from Russian to Ukrainian, reflecting on language attitudes and practices in various media formats. This public engagement signifies different types, emphasizing language ideologies: unity in emotions through language, language and cultural identity, aesthetics of language, languages in security, and language in personal and public spaces. Such discussions in social media are crucial as they transcend time and place and offer a high participatory potential. This discourse includes the outreach to refugees, encouraging them to maintain their Ukrainian identity by speaking the language abroad. Additionally, concerts and performances by Ukrainian artists in Europe have helped popularize the Ukrainian language among both refugees and residents.

The rise in Ukrainian-language content from 2022 onwards responds to various motivators, including solidarity, audience expansion, preservation of cultural identity, and educational awareness of linguistic and cultural aspects (Orobchuk forthcoming). This shift in language preference by influencers can provide insights for those involved in Ukrainian language education and policy-making in Europe. It underscores the importance of creating language programs that cater to communication skills, cultural understanding, and identity, which is vital for Ukraine's integration into the European Union and the support of Ukrainian refugees and migrants in their new multilingual environments. The online pivot to Ukrainian highlights the interconnectedness of linguistic choice with social, cultural, and political factors, offering guiding principles for fostering a supportive linguistic atmosphere in tune with the aspirations of European-based Ukrainian communities.

In general, the language shift from Russian to Ukrainian is considered also as

the transition – now in its early stage – from the post-colonial situation of the public predominance of the former colonial language to the nation-state pattern of the prevalence of the main indigenous language, with other languages largely limited to the private domain.

(Kulyk 2024: 14)

Similar opinion is expressed in the research on Ukrainian refugees' language behaviour in Austria and Germany, which is qualified as *postcolonial bilingualism, transferred to diasporas* (Warditz

and Meir 2024: 3). Another postcolonial term could be applied to describe the situation and reasons of language shift, namely *abrogation* which is defined in *Ukrainian Decolonial Glossary* as

1) In a narrower sense, abrogation means a refusal to recognise and support the privileged status of the coloniser's language, usually standardised and normalised, as well as resistance to its influence; 2) in a broader sense – disagreement with the dominant colonial or imperial discourse, a discourse which was created in large part because of the language of the coloniser

(Kiss et al. 2024)

These sociolinguistic and ideological changes in Ukraine were highlighted in many Ukrainian and Western media, such as *The Guardian*, *Kyiv Post*, *The Euromaidan Press*, *New Eastern Europe*, *Los Angeles Time* (see Cherchatyi 2022, Walker 2022, Ben 2023, Harding 2023, Maxwell 2023). Such media attention also has largely influenced the gain in Ukrainian language learning popularity both among individual users and on the institutional level. These developments will be highlighted in the next section of our chapter.

### **Ukrainian in the Linguistic and Educational Landscape of Europe – New Appearance or Reinforcement?**

Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine led to forced mass migration, comparable with the situation of World War II. For instance, Filippo Grandi, the UNHCR High Commissioner for Refugees, stated that this is "the largest refugee crisis since World War II – 4 million in just a month" (as cited in NPR 2022, see also Figure 1.1 for a number of refugees in different countries of the EU, the situation is dynamic and numbers are changing). This has influenced the language situation of the receiving countries in numerous ways. The presence of the Ukrainian language and symbols in public spaces of the European countries immediately increased, marking solidarity with newcomers, and easing communication between local residents, officials, social workers and refugees (for research on the presence of Ukrainian in the public space of Poland see Levchuk 2023, in Hungary – Eröss 2022). Newcomers also have created cultural and educational networks with the representatives of Ukrainian diasporic communities in Europe (for research on this issue in Poland see Trzeszczyńska et al. 2023).

According to Duolingo's 2022 report, the Ukrainian language saw an unprecedented rise in learners globally, a trend largely attributed to the solidarity following the military conflict initiated by Russia (Blanco 2022). In a remarkable response, over 1.3 million individuals worldwide embarked on learning Ukrainian, with motivation particularly intensifying after the onset of the war, as seen in the spike of interest persisting through the remainder of the year. Significantly, this wave of enthusiasm led to a year-over-year increase in the number of learners by over 1600% in countries like Germany, Poland, and Czechia, which welcomed numerous Ukrainian refugees (Ibidem). Duolingo's subsequent 2023 report revealed a sustained engagement with the Ukrainian language, underpinned by a sense of camaraderie with 37% of new learners globally seeking to connect with the Ukrainian community, a notably higher percentage compared to other languages (Ibidem).

The interest in the *Ukrainian lessons podcasts* (initiative, established by Ukrainian Anna Ohoiko, who now lives in Sweden) increased by 4 times since the outbreak of the full-scale war (Pearce 2023). The Polish platform for the learning Ukrainian language, *Ukraiński.online*, reported growth of users by 13 times after the full-scale invasion (Kremin 2023). This increase

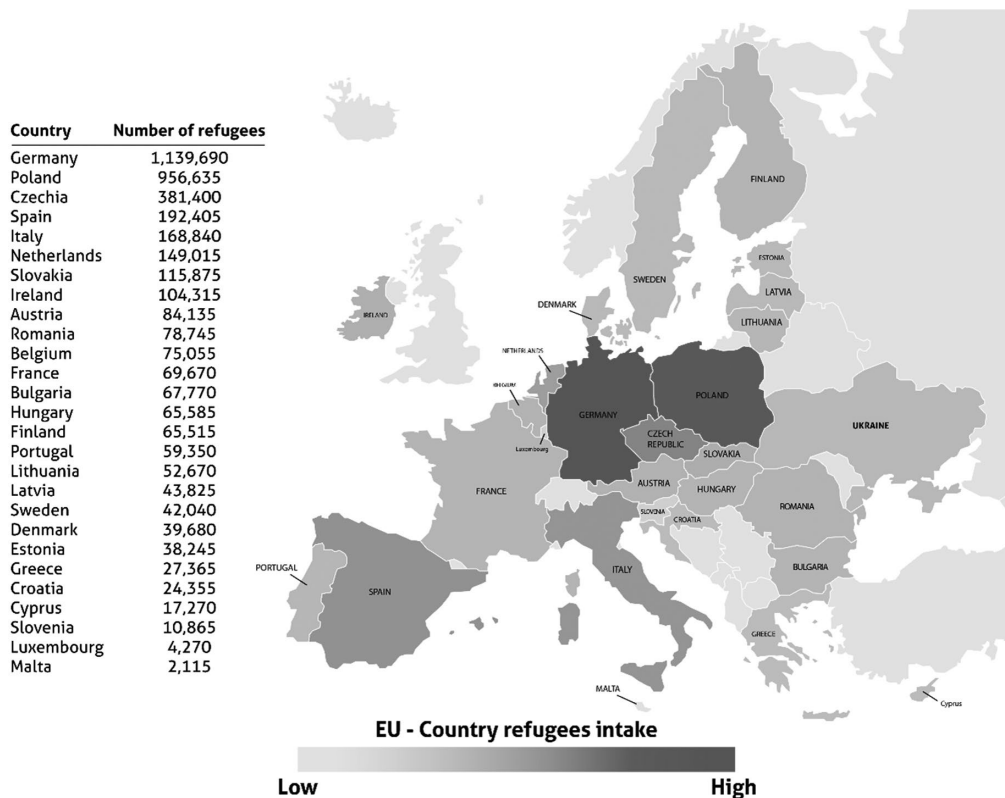


Figure 1.1 The number of refugees from Ukraine in the EU countries, data according to Statista, as of March 2024.<sup>1</sup>

in language learning was also symmetrically mirrored by Ukrainians starting to learn new foreign languages, which could be explained by the processes of the forced mass migration: “The Romania-based language-learning company *Mondly*, which has seen a 900% increase in users trying to learn Ukrainian on its services, has also seen a corresponding ‘huge increase’ in the number of Ukrainian-speaking users trying to learn other languages” (Pearce 2023). Based on the comparative diachronic survey (2003–2023) with adult students of Ukrainian as a foreign language in private schools in Lviv and Kyiv, new motivations that appeared after the full-scale invasion are traced: “Often Ukrainian learners substantiate their choice to learn this language with solidarity, help, political position, ‘right thing’, identification with the heroes, marker of friends/allies, reconstruction of Ukraine etc.” (Buk 2023).

The war situation and forced migration also enhanced diasporic Ukrainian communities that became active not only in gathering humanitarian help for Ukrainians, lobbying military support via waves of protests, but also developing networks of cultural initiatives:

The efforts of new Ukrainian institutions also led the older diasporic Ukrainian organizations to find new voice and mission in stimulating public awareness of the richness of Ukrainian culture past and present, indispensable for developing and maintaining broad and lasting

public support for Ukraine assistance efforts. Among the most impressive examples of such reinvigoration are the Ukrainian Institute London and the Shevchenko Scientific Society in the US.

(Vitaly Chernetsky 2024)

To add to this, the Ukrainian Institute also opened its representative offices in Germany and France. With the outbreak of Russia's war of aggression against the whole of Ukraine, the large gaps in knowledge about Ukraine, which exist in society, media, and politics in Europe, suddenly became apparent (Worschech 2023: 12, see also Gawrich, Haslinger and Wingender 2024). Moreover, not only academic knowledge is needed, but also language skills, knowledge of the country, and, to a surprisingly large extent, knowledge about everyday life (Worschech 2023: 13). Therefore, the learning and teaching of the Ukrainian language are connected with other areas of knowledge that reveal the gaps in understanding of the country and, at the same time, show the need for more information.

At the political as well as the grassroots levels some steps were made towards cultural and lingual integration of Ukraine into the European space. In March 2022, the General Assembly of the European Federation of National Institutions for Language (EFNIL) accepted Ukraine to the European language space. EFNIL brings together the national language institutions of the EU member states. Its main tasks include monitoring compliance with language legislation, protecting state languages, collecting materials on language policy in the EU, and encouraging the study of official European languages to promote linguistic and cultural diversity in the EU. It also opened another window of opportunities. According to the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine,

the inclusion of the Ukrainian language in the EU translation system is a crucial strategic step for Ukraine, as it is not only international recognition but also a real tool that accelerates the process of European integration and contributes to the effectiveness of negotiations on EU membership.

(Visit Ukraine today 2023)

In June 2022, the ESCO (European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations) dictionary for the labour market, that is the European Commission project, introduced a Ukrainian version. Moreover, there are also initiatives from grassroots organizations which understand the importance of the Ukrainian language and culture in Europe, the examples are requests for registration of a European citizens' initiative called *Preservation and development of Ukrainian culture, education, language, and traditions in EU states* that was submitted to the European Commission on 17 July 2023, and *EU Citizens' Initiative on granting special status to the Ukrainian language in the European Union*, which was submitted on 26 April 2023 (see European Website of Integration 2023). These initiatives refer to the preservation of culture, language, traditions and heritage of Ukrainian refugees and the formulation of a legislative strategy to protect the Ukrainian language as a future language of the EU.

Before 2022, the Ukrainian language was a blind spot on the linguistic map for the European public. This has changed in the last two years as Ukrainian culture has been increasingly integrated into the European linguistic landscape – initially out of solidarity, and over time – through the development of contacts and because Ukrainian culture has a lot to offer. For example, the Ukrainian animated film *Mavka* was screened in cinemas of numerous European countries, including in Ukrainian with the subtitles in the language of the country where it was screened. In Germany, several transnational cultural projects were launched, such as a

German-language podcast on Ukrainian literature *Planet Wermut* (Weissenböck and Kratochvil 2024), online magazines in German and Ukrainian languages *Gelbblau* and *Ja Krajina*. There is an increasing number of performances of pieces by Ukrainian (contemporary) authors on stage, such as Serhij Zhadan's *Internat* at the Münster Theater, Neda Nezhdana's and Natalya Vorozhbyt's plays about the war and refugees in theatres of Wiesbaden and Mainz, including in the Ukrainian language.

Language issue is defined as one of the most important for the refugees from Ukraine in different countries (see Brücker et al. 2022; Parmigiani et al. 2023, Barker et al. 2024: 11–13). Researchers also underscored the importance of understanding language issues and postcolonial language situation in Ukraine, for instance, by representatives of international humanitarian organizations:

Research participants highlighted how language was important not only for understanding and access to support in a new country but also for their sense of safety and well-being. Several Ukrainians described being heartened by signs of welcome and solidarity in Ukrainian at the border and even on the sides of buses. Some described their relief at hearing their own language spoken when they first crossed the border after a long and difficult journey.

(Fricke et al. 2023: 43)

Refugees expressed their concern not only about language barriers and difficulties in learning new languages but also their wish that representatives of the host country, especially in the system of social help, education, and medicine could communicate in their native Ukrainian language. In the following section, we zoom in on the presence of Ukrainian in the schooling system of different European countries, with a special focus on changes after the full-scale invasion.

### **Ukrainian in the System of European Schooling – Adapting to New Realities**

In the recent multilingualism scholarship, the attention of policymakers is drawn to the necessity of introducing native languages into the schooling systems. For instance, the lack of teaching and learning languages of origin is considered a negative influence on identity construction: “Denying languages of origin also means denying the contribution of knowledge from other cultures and encouraging children to renounce the construction of flexible and multiple identities” (Alcántara et al. 2023: 152). In addition, Wittmaier (2022: 39) underscored the role of native language in the processes of refugees’ cultural emplacement in the host countries:

Many refugees face difficulties when it comes to learning the language of the country they enter. For instance, it is expected that they speak the primary language and if they do not, they are often treated with frustration. There is a real danger that language learning, provided in a subtractive sense, will create a culture that makes their first language seem, at best, unimportant. This presents a significant problem for many refugees, as their language is often one of the few things that connects them back to their culture. Though the primary language must be taught, refugees’ L1 must also be supported through that teaching.

This is even more notable in case of Ukraine, “as Ukrainians have undergone a lot of different stages of suffering and confusion throughout their language’s history” (Ibidem 40). Therefore, in this sub-section, we will focus on the initiatives concerning including the Ukrainian language in various formal and informal settings in European schools.

Responding to the situation of the war and forced mass migration, in June 2022, the European Commission published recommendations *Supporting the inclusion of displaced children from Ukraine in education* (European Website of Integration 2022). Among other aspects, the issue of native language and culture maintenance was highlighted: “While the priority is to include children in the schools of the host country quickly and smoothly, it is also necessary to run activities that enable children to keep in touch with their home, the Ukrainian culture and language” (Ibidem: 2). The document also encourages online learning of Ukrainian and mentions initiatives in different European countries, such as *The New Ukrainian School Hub43*, co-funded by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the European Commission, special online classrooms in Cyprus, educational schemes that allow pupils to participate in online Ukrainian schooling in Poland and Austria, the access to children e-books in Ukrainian by Sweden’s national library. Following these recommendations, in Lithuania, since 2022 Ukrainian teachers have been employed even without knowledge of the state Lithuanian language to assist in the classes with Ukrainian pupils and to teach Ukrainian language and culture as a result of a pilot legislative initiative, for a period of two years (Jakavonyte-Staškuvien 2023). In Estonia, Ukrainian teachers were involved in the education system thanks to a cooperation between local NGO *Mondo* and UN Refugee Agency (Sköld 2023). Such educational policies enable the presence of Ukrainian in schooling systems in informal situations of communication between teachers and pupils and make education processes more comfortable.

In Germany, Ukrainian teachers are also employed as assistants in integration classes, where the majority of pupils are from Ukraine. In addition, in the State of Hesse, lessons of Ukrainian language and culture were introduced in the schools for the refugee children with teachers who also fled from Ukraine. Moreover, in May 2024, the Hesse land became the first one to introduce Ukrainian as a foreign language into the schools. The Minister for Federal Government, Europe, International Affairs and Debureaucratisation in Hesse, Manfred Pentz, underscored:

We knew from the outset that the fight for freedom in Ukraine would be a long one. That’s why it makes sense to offer Ukrainian pupils the opportunity to learn their mother tongue at school along with German. It is a sign of solidarity with Ukraine. But it is also a contribution to preserving the identity and culture of Ukraine. Because we don’t want to uproot the Ukrainian refugees, we don’t want to cut them off from their homeland, but rather build a bridge for them to return to Ukraine.

(as cited in Alshelm 2024)

In July 2022, the Ukrainian language alongside its rich literature was incorporated into the French educational curriculum. A welcomed stride, this initiative ensures the continued study of the mother tongue for displaced Ukrainian children and introduces the language to French pupils (Chechel 2022). A cooperative effort between the Embassy of Ukraine in France and the Académie de Paris made this possible, providing free Ukrainian language education to children from pre-school to high school within the Parisian education system. In Italy, teachers have developed many educational strategies of inclusion for schooling Ukrainian children, such as following a multilingual teaching approach, in particular, the use of bilingual (Ukrainian-Italian and English-Italian) books, digital translators during the first weeks of study, and continuous involvement of mediators, for instance, relatives who have lived in Italy longer and can translate between Italian and Ukrainian during the lessons (Parmigiani et al. 2023). In Greece, educators use bilingual dictionaries, online translators and Ukrainian students as interpreters, since “refugee students’ native language should be regularly activated through targeted activities, promoting personal

expression in more than one language” (Bouchagier et al. 2023: 75). In Spain, the practice of hiring Ukrainian-speaking language assistants in schools became crucial for providing education for refugees (Cerna 2023). In Denmark, teaching of Ukrainian children who fled from the war situation was allowed in Ukrainian and English, in Norway teachers use materials in Ukrainian as a teaching aid.

In the field of education, the most visible changes were introduced in the countries where Ukrainian communities were strong before the full-scale war and where the huge number of refugees was accepted. For instance, in Poland, the Ukrainian language, recognized as a national minority language, has been integrated into the compulsory examination subjects for the secondary school leaving examination for many years. This requirement applies to graduates of schools or departments specializing in the teaching of the Ukrainian language. Additionally, from the 2025/2026 academic year on, Ukrainian will be introduced as a modern foreign language in the secondary school leaving examination. Previously, pupils had the option to select English, French, Spanish, German, Italian, and Russian languages for the school leaving examination (Rozporządzenie Ministra 2023). In the school education system, certain Ukrainian-language schools, and institutions with Polish as the primary language of instruction had already offered Ukrainian language learning opportunities for children from Ukraine even before 2022 (Levchuk 2023: 2). However, following the full-scale invasion of Russia into Ukraine, this situation experienced further reinforcement. The government sanctioned the employment of teachers from Ukraine and the hiring of intercultural assistants, who played a crucial role in adapting educational requirements. Moreover, Polish schools, particularly those with a significant number of Ukrainian pupils, began implementing bilingual signage to indicate various areas within the school premises. Additionally, the Ukrainian language was integrated into school electronic registers, facilitating smoother communication between teachers and parents (Ibidem). The researcher also underscores the pivotal role of diplomatic representatives of Ukraine in Poland, such as the Embassy of Ukraine in Warsaw and the Consulates General, in disseminating knowledge about the Ukrainian language and culture abroad. He stresses that these representatives “must organize the teaching of the Ukrainian language in Polish educational institutions,” (Levchuk 2023-a: 71) given the substantial number of Ukrainian children and the presence of cultural assistants. This endeavour will facilitate the preservation and promotion of the native language within local communities.

The influx of Ukrainian refugees into Poland following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine has prompted new demands, including the need for Poles to acquire proficiency in Ukrainian and for Ukrainians to gain proficiency in Polish. Moreover, at the school level, five educational institutions in Przemysl, Bartoszyce, Biały Bór, Warsaw, and Górowo Iławeckie offer instruction in Ukrainian (Syvakivskyj 2023). As of the summer of 2023, Poland hosts four Ukrainian schools adhering to the curriculum outlined by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Ukraine (Halimon 2023). In March 2022, the First Ukrainian School was founded through the initiative of the *Unbreakable Ukraine* foundation. The primary objective of the project is to establish schools catering to Ukrainian children in Poland and to orchestrate a comprehensive educational program. Presently, such institutions are operational in Wrocław, Warsaw, and Krakow (<https://nezlamna.org/uk/pro-nas/>). Additionally, numerous schools included Ukrainian language courses.

Numerous educational initiatives concerning the Ukrainian language also appeared in Romania, where Ukrainian minorities have already lived for a long time. Prior to the full-scale invasion, the sole Ukrainian-language secondary school in Romania was the Taras Shevchenko Ukrainian Lyceum, which had ceased operations in 1960 and was later reinstated in Sighetul Marmăției (Zhukovsky 2011). As of the end of 2021, the educational requirements of Ukrainian high school

students were addressed by 19 educational establishments where Ukrainian is integrated into the curriculum (Fedorchuk 2021). However, the landscape shifted in 2022 due to the influx of Ukrainian refugees into Romania. The inaugural classes for Ukrainian students commenced at the *Mihai Viteazul* National College in Bucharest. Additionally, a group of Ukrainian educators has established four primary-level classes at another Bucharest institution, *Ienăchiță Văcărescu* School. Another notable initiative is the *UA Child Education Hub* ([www.uahub.net/about-us](http://www.uahub.net/about-us)). Textbooks have been provided to the school by the Ukrainian government, ensuring that pupils have access to study materials aligned with the Ukrainian curriculum, a similar education hub was founded in Sibiu. Additionally, SEK Bucharest International School hosts over 70 Ukrainian students who follow the Ukrainian school program under the guidance of Ukrainian educators (Embassy of Ukraine in Romania 2023). As of mid-August 2022, roughly 3,000 children in Romania have already registered for enrolment in Ukrainian schools. Ukrainian-language education has been established in at least 20 settlements, with an even greater number of schools offering these services in larger urban centres (Gaifer 2022). While there is only one educational institution in Romania with Ukrainian as the language of instruction, there are 60 schools across the country where Ukrainian language is taught as part of the curriculum.

A similar situation can be observed in Slovakia, another country with a Ukrainian minority which has a long history before the full-scale war. According to information from the Embassy of Ukraine in Slovakia, the country currently hosts three Ukrainian schools. Two of these schools, situated in the villages of Oryabina and Udol, operate as small institutions with integrated kindergartens. In addition, there is a comprehensive school in the city of Presov. In late 2021, before the full-scale invasion, Slovakia boasted 5 Ukrainian-language kindergartens, 5 primary schools, and one secondary school where instruction was conducted in Ukrainian (Hojs 2021). Additionally, there existed one secondary vocational school and 3 primary schools offering a curriculum that integrates both Slovak and Ukrainian languages. Rohovyk (2018) highlights that in Slovakia there remains a contingent of individuals who recognize the importance of acquiring proficiency in the language of their neighbouring country. This sentiment is evident in their organization of festivals, publication of newspapers, and conceptualization of Ukraine within a European framework. Moreover, for some, proficiency in the Ukrainian language represents not only cultural enrichment but also a pathway to lucrative employment opportunities. In 2018, the Institute of Ukrainian Studies boasted an enrolment of 120 students. Apart from these formal educational establishments, several Ukrainian language groups operate within Slovakia, notably in the cities of Košice and Svidnyk. Following February 2022, a Ukrainian school in evacuation emerged as part of the initiative *Creation of Ukrainian community centres to promote education, integration, and protection of Ukrainians who received temporary shelter in Slovakia* (<https://smespolu.org/en/ukrainian-school-in-evacuation/>). This project, spearheaded by SME SPOLU in collaboration with UNICEF and supported by the Cambridge International School Bratislava, aims to provide essential services. Hence, in countries like Poland, Romania, and Slovakia, where Ukrainian minorities reside, Ukrainian schools had already been established even before the full-scale invasion. However, following February 2022, there has been a noticeable surge in Ukrainian initiatives, educational centres, and individuals expressing interest in studying the Ukrainian language and culture.

### **Ukrainian as a Heritage Language: State of the Art in Europe**

The issue of teaching and learning Ukrainian as a heritage language was highlighted in scholarship at the example of schooling in North America (see Seals 2017, Pikhmanets 2022), hence

it is only beginning to be described in the context of Europe. In this section, we depict the situation with Ukrainian as a heritage language in different educational institutions in Germany, Great Britain, France and other European countries. As a result of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and the high number of children and young people who have fled Ukraine and been admitted to German schools, the demand for teaching Ukrainian as a heritage language has risen sharply (Bergmann and Turkevych 2024, Skintey and Turkevych 2024). The study looked at the perspectives of parents of Ukrainian refugee children in Berlin on the future situation of Ukrainian lessons in their new environment (UKRIM project at the Humboldt University of Berlin). 94.2% of the parents surveyed expressed the wish for their child to (continue to) learn Ukrainian in Berlin schools, even if the children from Ukraine were not only Ukrainian-speaking but also bilingual (Ukrainian- and Russian-speaking) and Russian-speaking (this was defined for various areas: at home, at school, in society). As can be seen from the answers to the question about the purpose, parents associate their children's learning of Ukrainian with preserving their Ukrainian identity (87.2%), continuing their education in Ukraine, where Ukrainian is the language of the education system (47.9%), and maintaining contact with Ukraine (47.3%).

Ukrainian has been taught as a heritage language at the Sunday school in Munich since 1956 (Ibidem), many other Saturday/Sunday schools also operate in Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, Mainz, Darmstadt, Dusseldorf, Heidelberg, Augsburg, Freiburg, Karlsruhe, and after the full-scale invasion, new Sunday schools are opening also in small towns, responding to the demands of newcomers. Since there were also no official statistics on Ukrainian-speaking migrants in Germany, it could be stated that Ukrainian in Germany – apart from a few universities with Ukrainian language courses – was used almost exclusively in family, private language use and in the organizations of the Ukrainian diaspora and met with little interest or recognition outside these circles (Worschech 2023: 5). Against this background, it is hardly surprising that state and private teaching programmes in Ukrainian as a heritage language have never been documented (Bergmann and Kratochvil 2017: 19). As part of an initial survey on state and non-state-organized heritage language classes in Germany, it was found that after the full-scale invasion both the number of pupils and teachers in Ukrainian heritage language classes has increased: (Skintey and Turkevych 2024). Out of a total of 140,000 pupils who attended state-organized heritage language lessons in the 2021/2022 school year, 88 pupils attended Ukrainian classes (*Mediendienst Integration* 2022: 3). The number of pupils attending Ukrainian Saturday and Sunday schools was not recorded. In the 2022/2023 school year (as of 1 January 2023) 3,896 pupils were registered in state heritage Ukrainian lessons (Skintey and Turkevych 2024).

In general, the number of pupils and teachers in non-state Ukrainian heritage language classes increased in various countries since the full-scale war in various countries. For instance, in regions with substantial Ukrainian populations in Britain, heritage language education has received a boost, particularly from Ukrainian community associations and local educational bodies joining forces to provide language instruction to both heritage speakers and newcomers. The Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain ([www.augb.co.uk/](http://www.augb.co.uk/)) has played a pivotal role in supporting Ukrainian heritage language schools across numerous cities, including Bradford, Coventry, London, Luton, Manchester, Nottingham, Reading, Rochdale, and Waltham Cross. These community schools host Saturday classes catering to a range of ages and sometimes cooperate with churches. The Ukrainian Language School at the Ukrainian Culture Centre in Nottingham ([www.nottingham.ukrainianculturalcentre.co.uk/school](http://www.nottingham.ukrainianculturalcentre.co.uk/school)), operational for over 60 years, is an important player too, offering tailored programs and small class sizes, the school deeply embeds students in Ukrainian language and cultural experiences.

The onset of the full-scale invasion by Russia into Ukraine has altered the dynamics within the Ukrainian diaspora in France, giving rise to Ukrainian weekend schools as centres of unity and adaptation. These institutions not only provide an educational framework for the Ukrainian language and culture but also host an array of activities including master classes for children, and French language courses. There are 13 notable locations in France where Ukrainian Saturday and Sunday schools have been established, in particular in Paris, Strasbourg, Metz, Nice, Lille, Cannes, Dijon, Marseille, Lyon, and Bordeaux.

Concerning other European countries, there is a long tradition of teaching Ukrainian as a heritage language in Serbia, starting from the 1980s, hence there have been different challenges, such as lack of financial and institutional support (see Vasilijević 2017). At the same time, Ukrainian Saturday/Sunday schools have witnessed a surge in popularity within the Netherlands that can be attributed to the influx of Ukrainian refugees into the country. Besides, the Ukrainian language is recognized as trendy. Dan Van Gorden, a content writer specializing in language learning and personal development, highlighted in his article *How to learn Ukrainian in 2023* that Ukraine is increasingly integrating within Europe and the Ukrainian language is on an upward trend: “I think that Ukraine becoming more influential in the future is a great reason to learn it” (Gorden 2023). In our view, it is imperative for Ukrainian diplomatic institutions, alongside public organizations such as the *Ukrainian Institute* (<https://ui.org.ua/en/>), to bolster efforts in supporting the burgeoning interest in studying the Ukrainian language, particularly against the background of the Russian-Ukrainian war. The *International Institute for Relations with Diaspora* (based in Lviv) created and launched an interactive map of Saturday and Sunday schools (<https://vsesvit.miok.lviv.ua/schools>) and regularly organizes the world forum for their representatives. The Saturday/Sunday Ukrainian schools met new challenges, such as teaching pupils who were born in the diaspora and those who fled from Ukraine with different cultural and educational backgrounds in the same classes, lack of rooms and teachers for new-coming pupils. Overcoming these challenges, they grow in number of students and boost educational possibilities, in such a way becoming important bridges between Ukrainian and local communities.

### **Ukrainian Studies in Europe: Decolonization and Language as a Key Component**

According to the *Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar studies in the world* study (see Koval et al. 2022), Ukrainian studies conducted abroad primarily focus on the exploration of culture, language, literature, and history, with less attention given to political issues. The importance of Ukrainian studies development in Europe has been mentioned in several works over the last decade (see Portnov 2015; Finnin 2015). In this section of our chapter, we will focus on recent developments in Ukrainian studies in Europe with a focus on the Ukrainian language as a fundamental component of curricula and academic communication.

Shkandrij (2024) underscored that the situation of the full-scale war and West’s solidarity with Ukraine had shifted Russian hegemony at the institutional and conceptual levels:

The war has provided a reminder of Ukraine’s geopolitical importance, but also of its role in European history. It immediately revealed how few Western scholars had expertise in Ukraine’s language and culture or were integrating the country into their research and

teaching. For decades, departments and think tanks had focused on Russia, even when ostensibly dealing with the multi-national region they called the Russian Empire, Soviet Union, post-Soviet space, or Eurasia. From 2022, study of contemporary Ukraine accelerated, as the appearance of books and conferences indicates.

Even so, resistance towards changes in academia still exist, we can observe some visible transformations. For instance, *The Centre for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies (CERES)* in Toronto has been recently renamed to *The Centre for European and Eurasian Studies* and it has become “shift we conduct research about, teach about, and learn about Europe and Eurasia” (Schatz 2024).

In addition to the boost of Ukrainian studies centres (Figure 1.2, see also interactive map on the website), numerous networks of Ukrainian scholars and researchers focusing on Ukraine appeared after the full-scale invasion, uniting representatives of Ukrainian scientific diaspora with newcomers Ukrainian scientists displaced because of the war and forced migration. As pointed by Gusejnova et al. (2024: 4): “...it is noteworthy that the academic solidarity networks that have emerged in the face of the war in Ukraine are unprecedented in the history of international responses to war”.

For instance, in Germany the following new networks have been established: *Network for Ukrainian Studies Jena* (<https://ukr.uni-jena.de/>), *Vision Ukraine: Education, Language, Migration* (the authors of this article are co-founders of this research network, <https://vision-ukraine.de/>). In Scandic and Baltic countries, Ukrainian scholars and researchers focused on Ukraine united in the network *Hromada* (the word means community in Ukrainian, <https://hromada.network/>), aiming at rebuilding the country from different perspectives, in Norway they united into the network *Ukrainett* (<https://uni.oslomet.no/ukrainett/>). Furthermore, several sustainable institutions have started to operate, such as *Virtual Ukraine Institute for Advanced Studies* at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin (<https://vuias.org/>), and *Ukraine in a Changing Europe* at the Charles University in Prague (<https://ims.fsv.cuni.cz/en/research/research-centres/ukraine-changing-europe>). In January 2024, the German Service of Academic Exchange financed the opening of two research centres in Ukrainian studies at the University of Viadrina in Frankfurt/Oder and at the University of Regensburg. The president of the exchange service, Prof. Joybrato Mukherjee, underscored the further role of this centre in international cooperation and knowledge production:

Russia’s war in Ukraine has shown that we in Germany need more expertise on Eastern Europe and Ukraine in particular. Rebuilding the country and bringing Ukraine closer to the European Union also requires in-depth knowledge of Ukraine’s history, politics, economy, culture and society.

(DAAD 2024)

Within these networks and institutions, the Ukrainian language also plays an important role as a key element and fundament for Ukrainian studies abroad, as a working language for communication between participants, for online lectures, and so on. Since the full-scale invasion, numerous events were conducted on the situation in Ukraine and its different aspects, including culture and language (to mention a few: thematic week *War in Ukraine – Scholarly Perspectives* (Hanover, February 2023, supported by Volkswagen Foundation), conference *The War and its Effects* (Stockholm, November 2023), regular academic events at *Café Kyiv* in Berlin). During many scientific events, especially in Baltic States and in Poland, as well as at the joint online conferences between Ukrainian and German institutions, Ukrainian is used as a working language,



Figure 1.2 The map of institutions and departments specialized in Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar studies in Europe. Screenshot from <https://ui.org.ua/en/ukrainian-and-crimean-tatar-studies-2/>

and organizers emphasized that in such a way they decolonize knowledge production. For instance, announcing a call for papers for an international conference *Wartime occupations in Europe (20th-21st centuries). Socio-historical perspectives* (Paris, November 2024), organizers stated that submissions could be made in English and other European languages, including Ukrainian.

Traditionally, Ukrainian has been taught at the universities of the countries neighbouring with Ukraine, which also have a long history of cultural and socioeconomic relations with Ukraine. In Poland, the Ukrainian language has been made available for foreign language learning by various academic institutions. These include the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Centre for Eastern European Studies at the University of Warsaw, and the University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszów. The latter has a longstanding tradition of offering Polish language courses for foreigners and has expanded its offerings to include Ukrainian language courses since 2022. Additionally, three Romanian universities offer Ukrainian philology programs within their respective faculties, located in Bucharest, Suceava, and Cluj-Napoca. Furthermore, in Slovakia, the *University of Presov* hosts an Institute of Ukrainian Studies, offering specialized educational tracks such as *Ukrainian Language and Culture*, and *Ukrainian Language and Literature*. In Croatia, where Ukrainians form the traditional diaspora, ever since 1964 Ukrainian language was taught at the University of Zagreb, and the programme in *Ukrainian Language and Literature* has been presented at the same university since 1997.

In German-speaking countries, teaching Ukrainian at universities also has a long tradition, enforced after the full-scale invasion. Ukrainian was already being taught as a foreign language at some German universities in the early 1930s. As Lazarenko (2023: 73) pointed out, Ukrainian studies have been a part of the curriculum for many years, in such universities as Free University in Munich (Ukrainian university in exile), University of Giessen, Greifswald University, University of Munich (with regular conferences on Ukrainian issues), University of Munster, University of Regensburg, and Viadrina University in Frankfurt/Oder. However, the presence of research on Ukraine at German universities does not always mean including teaching Ukrainian in programs (Ibidem). As a language of origin, Ukrainian – like many other migrant languages – was and is primarily passed on within the family context. The tendencies that appeared now at the German universities are that 1) learning Ukrainian is becoming mandatory for the students at the departments of Slavic studies (before the full-scale war the Russian language was mandatory, while Ukrainian was a matter of free choice as a second or third Slavic language for the students); 2) teaching Ukrainian goes beyond the departments and centres of Slavic studies and is initiated at some universities in the frame of language centres (for instance, in Berlin, Frankfurt/Main, Frankfurt/Oder, Heidelberg), which are responsible for teaching various languages (in such a way not only students from the Slavic studies or Eastern European studies departments can be enrolled, but also students from other faculties). The second tendency is remarkably important for the postwar rebuilding of Ukraine, when specialists from different fields will need language competencies to cooperate with Ukrainian companies. Saykovska (2024: 320) emphasized that the educational landscape in Slavic studies in Germany is still dominated by the Russian language, hence since the full-scale invasion the presence of Ukrainian significantly increased:

27,4 % (116 out of 423) of German Universities provide the possibility of learning Slavic languages in Language centers. However, 95.7% of those 116 universities offer Russian language courses, while 36.2% – Polish, 17,2 % – Czech, 8,6% – Bosnian/Croatian/

(Montenegrin)/Serbian, 5,1% – Bulgarian. Before the full-scale invasion Ukrainian language courses were nearly absent from the list (as well as Slovak and Slovenian, both at 1.7%), but after February 2022, German universities responded to educational market demands, and the figure took off up to 12% with a constant upward trend.

In Switzerland, as Kovtun (2023) designated, research on Ukraine is mostly a part of bigger projects, hence there are several research initiatives, such as *Ukrainian regionalism* (since 2012) at the University of St. Gallen, *Ukrainian Research in Switzerland* (URIS, since 2014) at the University of Basel with funding guest lecturers in Ukrainian studies and recent initiative *Ukrainian Society at the University of Bern* (UA-UniBE) – platform for support of scholars from Ukraine that was launched in February 2022. The first Ukrainian language course started in 2017 in Basel, as of 2023 there are such courses also in Bern, Lausanne and Zurich. In Austria, as Donska (2023) portrayed, Ukrainian traditionally was taught at the University of Vienna with the possibility for students to have Ukrainian studies as bachelor's and master's degrees, there is also a noticeable increase in Ukrainian language courses enrolment after the beginning of the full-scale war. Concerning other universities, since February 2022 Ukrainian has started to be taught in Innsbruck and Graz, and there are changes in curriculum, for instance, in Innsbruck Ukrainian together with Polish is taught as a second Slavic language, in Graz additionally to an already existing Ukrainian language course a new certificate programme is developed: *Ukraine – Language, Culture, Law* – students can gain it since the winter term 2023. It consists of language courses and classes in literature, culture, and law. Besides, research projects concerning Ukrainian issues are developed in Vienna, Graz, and Klagenfurt.

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia resulted in a notable uptick in global interest in Ukrainian studies. In September 2022, Western universities observed a considerable rise in the enrolment of first-year students opting for Ukrainian or Polish studies, at the same time a decrease in interest towards Russian studies has been observed:

And in North American and European countries, the war in Ukraine has resulted in fewer students studying Russian (Lem, 2022). This surge contrasted starkly with a significant decline in interest in Russian studies compared to the previous year, with figures dropping from 30 to 50% (Ibidem), resulting in a shift in foreign language student enrolment at the tertiary level.

(De Costa and Van Gorp 2023: 554)

Furthermore, the discourse regarding the emergence of Ukrainian studies from the shadow of the Russian ones intensified. Before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russian studies held predominant sway in various Western European countries, notably the Netherlands. This statement was corroborated by Prof. Egbert Fortuin, an authority in Russian Language and Linguistics, during the *Future Prospects for German-speaking Slavic Studies* scoping workshop held in Hannover, Germany, on July 19–21, 2023. He pointed out that in Leiden, the *East European Studies and Slavic Languages and Cultures* programs were amalgamated, focusing solely on Russia as the subject of study. This resulted in the creation of the *BA Russische Studies* (in Dutch) and the *MA Russian and Eurasian Studies* (in English). The study of Russia encompasses various disciplines including linguistics, culture, history, politics, and economy, thereby reflecting Leiden's distinctive area studies orientation. Conversely, in Amsterdam, the traditional approach of language and culture studies for multiple languages was retained. The program continues to offer Russian, Polish, Czech, and other Slavic languages integrated within a single curriculum under the official

Table 1.1 The number of students in the following programs

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
BA Russische Studies (Leiden)	17	21	21	24	28	31	22	25	24	32	27
BA Slavische Talen en Culturen (UvA)	11	20	8	14	9	10	13	10	20	6	15
MA Russian and Eurasian Studies (Leiden)	13	25	28	12	15	20	19	21	17	22	12

Source: Data are taken from Fortuin (2023).

title: *BA Russian and Slavic Languages and Cultures*. Notably, the situation shifted slightly in 2022, with fewer students enrolling in both BA and MA programs in Russian studies compared to the previous year, 2021 (Table 1.1). Simultaneously, there was a trend of students opting for the BA Program of Slavic Languages and Cultures at the University of Amsterdam, which does not primarily focus on Russian studies (Table 1.1).

According to Fortuin (2023), the outbreak of war has prompted a re-evaluation of whether there has been an overemphasis on Russia within academic programs. In his view, this shift represents a positive development for the study of Slavic languages other than Russian, and certainly underscores the necessity for greater understanding of Ukraine and the Ukrainian language. Moreover, university professors in the Netherlands have begun to integrate a Ukrainian perspective into their academic programs.

In May 2022, in Leiden, there was a significant uptick in interest in the study of the Ukrainian language, with 100 individuals expressing their desire to learn Ukrainian. However, the situation notably changed in 2023, with only 25 individuals expressing interest in learning the Ukrainian language (Fortuin 2023). Russian studies dominated in the various research centres in the Netherlands. However, the situation has been changing slightly starting from February 2022. The *Russia and Eastern Europe Knowledge Alliance (REKA)* aims “to connect experts on Russia and Eastern Europe with policy-makers and with each other”, thereby encompassing Ukrainian studies within its ambit. Notably, *The Clingendael – the Netherlands Institute of International Relations* ([www.clingendael.org/](http://www.clingendael.org/)), espousing the goal of fostering “a secure, sustainable, and just world”, regularly publishes the *Clingendael Spectator*, a monthly magazine on international politics. Report *Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar studies in the world* stated that “more and more of its current publications have been devoted to Ukrainian issues” (Koval et al. 2023). Against the backdrop of Russia’s full-scale war on Ukraine, Ukrainian-centric themes have undergone extensive discourse via a series of online lectures and discussion forums, aimed at providing accurate coverage of the Ukrainian situation while also disseminating knowledge about Ukrainian culture and history. Additionally, the emergence of Ukrainian language studies in centres and departments where they were previously absent underscores the growing recognition and interest in Ukrainian affairs.

In Great Britain, the research on Ukraine was mostly limited to thematic areas of politics and economics. Finnin (2015: 19) emphasized that language competencies and understanding of cultural background should be at the core of areas studies:

In one sense, the study of Ukrainian culture stands at the intersection of general crises in the humanities and in Slavic Studies. Its relative neglect should not come as a great surprise, but it is quizzical all the same. Political Ukraine owes its very existence to culture – to Cossack dumsy, to folk music, to popular ethnography, to Romantic poetry in the Ukrainian vernacular that invited, seduced, and cajoled readers into the national project. This fact is precisely what makes the study of the Ukrainian language *a sine qua non* for any student and scholar of the country. It is a matter of simple professional competence. Without a knowledge of Ukrainian, one cannot speak or understand the language of the modern Ukrainian national idea.

The profound impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 drastically escalated interest in the Ukrainian language and culture. Solidarity movements across the nation heightened demands for Ukrainian language instruction, driven by British citizens' desire to assist and connect with Ukrainian refugees. Moreover, the invasion led to increased media coverage of Ukraine, which in turn sparked a desire among the British public to learn the language to access Ukrainian news sources directly. At the forefront, the Ukrainian Institute London (<https://ukrainianinstitute.org.uk/>), established in 1979, has played an instrumental part in promoting Ukrainian culture within the UK and globally. By offering Ukrainian language instruction for over three decades, the Institute has established itself as a vital bridge connecting the two nations. Their unique curriculum delivers more than language skills – it immerses learners in Ukraine's societal, cultural, and traditional ethos, aiming to cultivate a profound understanding amongst its diverse clientele. The landscape of language education adapted swiftly following the conflict, with various academic institutions and language schools recording notable spikes in enrolments for Ukrainian classes. The Open University's WELS School of Languages developed the *Introduction to Ukrainian Language and Culture* course, targeting individuals aiding Ukrainian refugees.

Several British universities have diversified their Ukrainian studies portfolio. Cambridge University offers an integrated program in Ukrainian language, literature, and culture, backed by the Cambridge Ukrainian Studies initiative. The Oxford University Slavonic Studies program includes Ukrainian for postgraduates. UCL's School of Slavonic and East European Studies (SSEES) provides a broad sweep of Ukrainian studies, with new undergraduate courses evidencing a long-term educational commitment. Likewise, the University of Exeter, Cardiff University, and the University of Sheffield have initiated courses aimed at various learners. Cardiff focuses on adult learners, while Sheffield addresses a skills gap in Eastern European languages. Edinburgh University, King's College London, York University, the University of Birmingham, and South Staffordshire College have all contributed to this trend through their educational offerings, including pioneering language classes, summer schools, and free community programs. These initiatives manifest a recognition of cultural exchange being integral to academia and a sense of responsibility towards the global community. The introduction of Ukrainian language courses, such as those at Sheffield and Cardiff, denotes a significant shift within British academia, enabling a broadened spectrum of cultural and linguistic studies. In Ireland, the only Slavonic studies programme traditionally has been represented in Trinity College in Dublin, since 2023 Ukrainian is being taught there on a regular basis (Konecniak and Pasko-Konecniak 2023). The increase in interest towards learning Ukrainian has been noticed in Sweden, especially at the Gothenburg University. New positions for Ukrainian studies are open at the University of Lund, numerous cultural events on Ukrainian issues are held in Stockholm, and there is a growth in translations of Ukrainian literature to Swedish (in particular of the texts by modern Ukrainian classics, such as

Yuri Andrukhovych and Oksana Zabuzhko). In Norway, Ukrainian is taught at the University of Oslo. In Finland, students can learn the Ukrainian language as a part of the module in Ukrainian studies at the Aleksanteri Institute at the University of Helsinki.

In France, at the forefront of Ukrainian cultural promotion is the Ukrainian Institute, which debuted its Representative Office in France in November 2023. Upholding cultural diplomacy, it strives to integrate Ukrainian culture into the European fabric and to facilitate France's support for Ukraine's cultural heritage. First Lady of Ukraine Olena Zelenska emphasized the importance of cultural awareness, especially amidst the challenging backdrop of the Russian attack:

If you ask many Europeans what they know about Ukraine not from the news, but from the sphere of culture, from books, which of our classical artists, writers, it is likely to be a difficult question. It is sad that the world is starting to learn more about Ukrainian culture and our contribution to the world only because of the Russian attack. But it is good that the process of discovery is happening. Because our culture proves: we exist, we have always been and will be. No matter how much the empire wanted, and still wants, to appropriate us again.

(as cited in *Institut Ukrainien* 2023)

In a significant step for language learners, the publishing house Pocket, in collaboration with the University of Lyon, has issued the first-ever Ukrainian language self-study textbook for French speakers (Dubyak and Dubyak 2023). The French higher education system, despite its wealth of offerings, has limited options for Ukrainian studies. The National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations (INALCO, [www.inalco.fr/en](http://www.inalco.fr/en)) remains a unique hub offering comprehensive Ukrainian studies, from undergraduate to doctoral levels, appealing to students of Ukrainian descent and to those new to Ukrainian culture.

Such changes in high educational policies reflect not only growth in interest towards Ukraine, its culture and language but also the sociopolitical agenda and inclusion of a growing influx of refugees from Ukraine, among them a considerable number of students. In such a way we can observe "an urgency to reach consensus and promote determined public policies and educational practices that are respectful of linguistic diversity" (Alcántara et. al 2023: 162). Moreover, as Wittmaier (2022: 42) underscored, Ukrainian is becoming a global language both for the people of Ukraine and representatives of other countries:

Thus, many Ukrainian learners and immigrants will continue to grip to their language and use it whenever they can. Even as they learn new languages, there is a strong sense of maintaining Ukrainian as an important form of communication. And, as Ukrainian continues to grow as the language of an independent state, there will most likely be more places where Ukrainian use will be prevalent enough to impact the culture and infrastructure.

## **Conclusions and Discussion**

As a result of the forced migration, the presence of the Ukrainian language in the schooling system of different European countries has increased. This growth is visible not only in formal settings, such as teaching in Ukrainian or teaching Ukrainian language and culture as a separate school subject, but also in informal surroundings, such as the involvement of translators, teachers from Ukraine and parents in conducting the lessons. The paper has demonstrated that a multitude of actors are engaged in promoting the learning and teaching of Ukrainian across Europe, with each country experiencing its distinct set of circumstances and implementations. Based on tragic events, the current situation

reveals that the language and interest in embracing it are not isolated from other facets. Therefore, moving forward, integration efforts should include Ukrainian language learning and teaching, alongside its culture, literature, history, and politics. The future scenarios of the development of Ukrainian teaching in European schools depend on the dynamics of the war situation and forced migration – the transmigration of refugees from Ukraine between different European countries, and the returning of the forced migrants back to Ukraine, as well as on the outcomes of the war: “Ukraine’s victory in the war may produce further impetus for language shift and expansion of Ukrainian in all spheres of life” (Krouglov 2023). On the other hand, the Ukrainian language slowly is becoming also a part of general curricula, at least in the countries with the greatest number of refugees, in such a way in a recent future we can expect more and more initiatives when Ukrainian will be included as one of the heritage or foreign languages into the school programmes in Europe.

At the level of higher education in Europe, there is a continuous and growing understanding that teaching Ukrainian should be a part of different educational programmes, not only within the faculties of Slavonic studies or Eastern European history and politics but also in the frame of language centres and other educational institutions. In a positive scenario, there is hope that more and more sustainable structures will be developed in Europe with a focus on Ukrainian studies, including research, teaching and knowledge transfer between scholars and the public. In a more negative scenario, the wave of interest towards Ukraine will be over and Slavonic studies will remain Russocentric, while offering the narratives of the colonizer in the European academia.

There is still a need to deconstruct stereotypical images and myths about Ukraine, its language and culture, that are found in Western academic discourse and media – albeit less frequently than before 2022. This refers to deterritorialization (Ukrainian is only spoken in the West and the centre of Ukraine), de-ethnonationalization (Ukrainian is only spoken by ethnic Ukrainians to mark ethnic affiliation for nation-building), and depoliticization (Ukrainian is only spoken by supporters of certain parties). New parameters/cornerstones for switching to Ukrainian in Ukraine and learning Ukrainian in Europe are justice, solidarity, and interest towards the country and culture, and willingness to help its people.

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### **Note**

- 1 See for more details and further dynamics: [www.statista.com/statistics/1312584/ukrainian-refugees-by-country/](https://www.statista.com/statistics/1312584/ukrainian-refugees-by-country/)

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