

OVERVIEW

Since the start of the Russian invasion in February 2022, conflict has affected an estimated 5.7 million school-aged children in Ukraine (ages 3–18) (MESU 02/07/2022). Five million school-aged children are estimated to be in need of educational support (OCHA 12/08/2022). Part of the impact on the Ukrainian education system has been a two-week total closure of educational activities in February, followed by education resuming online in most of the country. Displacement, the damage and destruction of educational facilities, and a lack of access to technology and internet connection have seriously affected students' ability to learn and caused significant challenges to the reopening of schools (WB 28/05/2022).

The next academic year is set to start on 1 September and will last until 30 June 2023 (GOU 28/06/2022). The current conflict makes the full reopening of in-person schools unlikely, meaning the continued heavy reliance on online learning (OCHA 12/08/2022).

Specific factors that make the resumption of in-person learning in schools challenging for the September 2022 semester are a lack of human resources, financial constraints, damage to school infrastructure, and the use of educational facilities for other purposes. There is also a need to ensure the safety of school facilities against the risks associated with hostilities, such as through demining and the provision of adequate bomb shelters.

As at early August, only 30% of schools met the security requirements and were ready to start in-person lessons. Children in areas affected by active ground conflict, 1.2 million children living in rural areas, and those in areas controlled by the Russian military are likely to face additional barriers in accessing education in September (Teach for Ukraine accessed 08/08/2022).

About this report

Aim: this report aims to highlight the impact of the conflict on education within Ukraine and the main challenges the education system will face in the next school year.

Methodology: the analysis is based on the secondary data review of public and nonpublic sources and ten key informant interviews.

Scope: the report mainly focuses on the situation of school-aged children within Ukraine.

IMPACT OF CONFLICT ON THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION

School closures

After 24 February 2022, all education programmes in Ukraine completely stopped for two weeks, disrupting the school year of 5.7 million school-aged children. As at mid-March, approximately three million students in 10,000 schools resumed their activities in oblasts where the security situation allowed them to do so (Geneva Solutions 18/03/2022; WB 21/07/2022; MESU 05/04/2022; UNICEF 27/03/2022).

As at 6 June, in 14 of the 25 oblasts in the country, all education institutions operated via online learning, and three additional oblasts offered in-person, online, or blended (in-person and online) learning for the 2021–2022 school year (UCL 27/04/2022). Over 75% of students in Ukraine exclusively used online education to finish the academic year (UNICEF 16/07/2022). Some students continued learning from where they were forced to shelter, including public spaces such as metro stations (UNICEF 25/05/2022).

Active conflict completely disrupted education for the rest of the school year for a significant number of children in Chernihiv, Donetsk, Kyiv, Luhansk, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Sumy, and Zaporizhzhia oblasts. Almost 1,100 schools completely suspended their activities in oblasts with active ground conflict because of insecurity and the lack of access to electricity, mobile connection, and the internet, with 350,000 children affected in the east alone (NYT 13/04/2022; Save the Children 27/02/2022). Some online learning continued in Kherson oblast after 24 February, as educators could reach their students by phone and social media (Cedos 20/05/2022).

School exams in the first half of 2022 were cancelled and substituted with a multidisciplinary exam at the end of the school year. The Ministry of Education states that it will not prevent students in non-government-controlled areas or abroad unable to remain in contact with their school from moving on to the next grade (Geneva Solutions 18/03/2022; MESU accessed 26/07/2022).

Online learning

After the two-week closure in February, most schools restarted their activities through online education, provided through the Let's Learn without Borders project and the supplementary All-Ukrainian Online School programme that the Government of Ukraine launched for students in grades 5–11 (WB 18/05/2022; Save the Children 02/06/2022; UNICEF et al 24/06/2022; UNICEF 12/05/2022).

These platforms provided free access to learning materials for students and content for educators on various platforms, including Zoom, Viber, and Telegram (MESU 10/03/2022; MESU accessed 26/07/2022; GOU accessed 26/07/2022). The format of the online platforms, however, did not allow for enough direct online student-to-teacher interaction (Geneva Solutions 18/03/2022; WB 21/07/2022; UNICEF et al 24/06/2022).

All-Ukrainian Online School: a government programme developed in 2020 and supported by international responders, including UNICEF and Save the Children, in response to COVID-19 education disruptions. It provides free access to 18 self-paced basic learning materials for students from grades 5–11 and to content for educators (Geneva Solutions 19/05/2022; WB 21/07/2022; MESU 05/04/2022).

Let's Learn without Borders: an online project that the Ukrainian Government developed after 24 February that provides psychological support and educational material to children and their families (UIED accessed 15/08/2022).

Infrastructure damaged and destroyed

Since February 2022, heavy artillery, air strikes, and other explosive weapons have damaged or destroyed hundreds of schools across the country (UNICEF 12/05/2022; WB 18/05/2022; IPS 01/06/2022; The Guardian 08/05/2022; MESU 02/07/2022).

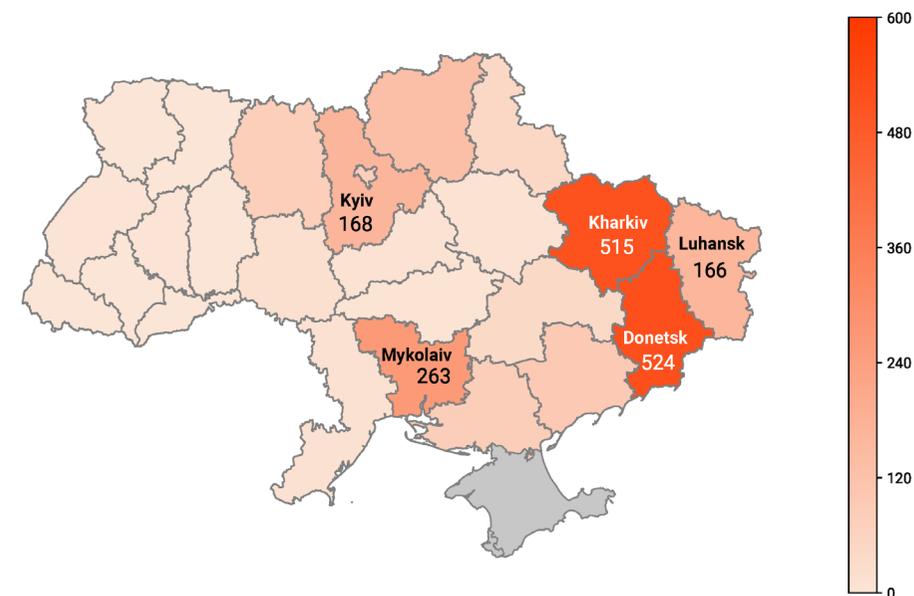
ACAPS database of damages to civilian infrastructure

Since April 2022, ACAPS has been collecting data on civilian infrastructure damages reported in Ukraine since 24 February 2022. Extracted data comes only from open sources and as such cannot be considered comprehensive.

Following ACAPS' methodology, the extent of civilian infrastructure damage is based on physical status. Destruction occurs when the damage range stands at 100% of the unit cost, with no longer any possibility of being used. Partially damaged means the destruction of assets is less than 100% of the unit cost, with some remaining possibility of usage (ACAPS accessed 17/08/2022).

As at 17 August, **conflict had damaged 1,863 educational institutions and destroyed 177 since February** (ACAPS accessed 17/08/2022).

Number of recorded events of damage or destruction of education facilities*



Source: ACAPS accessed 17/08/2022

*Note: there is no available data regarding damages for Crimea.

An average of 22 schools a day have come under attack since the beginning of the conflict. More than 57% of the attacks have taken place in eastern Ukraine, where more than 400,000 school-aged children were living before February (Save the Children 04/04/2022). As at 17 August, some of the most affected oblasts were Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kyiv, Luhansk and Mykolaiv.

Oblast	Educational institutions damaged	Educational institutions destroyed
Dnipropetrovsk	33	0
Donetsk	513	8
Kharkiv	460	54
kyiv	156	12
Luhansk	143	22
Mykolaiv	128	10
Zaporizhzhia	43	48

Source: ACAPS accessed 17/08/2022

Educational facilities represent 34% of all recorded damages in ACAPS' dataset. The following reasons likely explain the **prevalence of education facilities in ACAPS' dataset**:

- **Prevailing in numbers in terms of infrastructure:** before February 2022, there were over 31,000 educational institutions for preschool- and school-aged children (MESU 02/07/2022). There are relatively more education facilities in Ukraine than other types of infrastructure.
- **Information availability:** the Ministry of Education in Ukraine has been effective in capturing information on targeted educational facilities and making it available and easily accessible (MESU accessed 16/08/2022).
- **Security reasons:** other types of civilian infrastructure, such as railroads, highways, and power plants, are considered strategic, so the Government is not making information about their damage public.

Use of schools for other purposes

Aside from physical damage to infrastructure, education premises are also being used for other purposes, including as information centres, shelters for IDPs, and supply hubs (UNICEF 04/05/2022 and 12/05/2022; UNICEF et al. 24/06/2022).

Reports suggest that in some areas, particularly in Donbas region, armed forces are also using schools as their bases, placing heavy military equipment in the vicinity of learning facilities (OHCHR 10/05/2022; AI 04/08/2022). Using schools for military purposes puts them at increased risk of being targeted or affected by conflict, endangering children's lives and damaging educational infrastructure. Schools previously used by fighters remain unsafe for education purposes as there is a high risk of the presence of mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) (UCL 27/04/2022; UNICEF 04/05/2022 and 12/05/2022; UNICEF et al. 24/06/2022). The use of education facilities for other purposes will also affect the accessibility of education facilities in the coming months.

Displacement away from schools

Data from a survey conducted between 6 May and 6 June suggests that conflict has displaced around 164,000 school-aged children within Ukraine. Most of them are currently in Ivano-Frankivsk, Khmelnytskyi, Kyiv, Lviv, Vinnytsia, and Zhytomyr oblasts, where they enrolled in school after February (UNICEF et al. 04/07/2022; WB 18/05/2022). This figure only represents officially registered children and does not capture further movements and secondary displacement, meaning the actual number of children IDPs is likely much higher. School-aged IDPs have continued their education programmes through online learning or in person in their areas of displacement. The influx of new students has likely strained the educational system in hosting regions, leading schools to reach their capacity in some cases. As a result, some parents have reported administrative challenges in enrolling their children (KII 03/08/2022 b).

Additionally, around 665,000 school-aged children (16% of total number of enrolled students for the Ukrainian 2021-22 school year) are now refugees in neighbouring countries (MESU 24/06/2022; World Bank 21/07/2022). School-aged refugees also had the option to access online lessons. In many host countries, school attendance is mandatory so parents may be forced to move back to Ukraine before September if they want their children to continue with their Ukrainian education. Alternatively they can enrol their children in the school system of their host country, which can also present challenges such as: different language, children being held in previous years to catch up with the content or level of the host country, or lack of inclusion (MoES accessed 26/07/2022; Gov. of Ukraine accessed 26/07/2022). The All-Ukrainian online programme is also accessible for school-aged refugees. However, it is a supplementary program and does not offer official education certificates (MoES accessed 26/07/2022).

The International Ukrainian School: opened in 2007 in response to requests by Ukrainians living abroad permanently or temporarily who wanted to enrol their children in the Ukrainian education system and receive graduation certificates from Ukraine's Ministry of Education. This in-person international network of schools is present in Czech Republic, France, Spain, and Turkey. The schools cover education for children in grades 3-10 (MESU accessed 26/07/2022; UIS accessed 26/07/2022). Ukrainian refugees can also enrol depending on the school's capacity (KII 03/08/2022 b).

Estimations suggest that **around 200,000 children have been forcefully displaced to Russia.** Very limited information is available regarding their situation, but they will highly likely need to enrol in Russian schools before the start of the next school year (NBC 02/06/2022; RFE/RL 20/07/2022).

Reduced access for children with disabilities

Over 163,000 school-aged children in Ukraine were reported to have different forms of disabilities in 2019 (DFS 25/04/2022; UNICEF 03/12/2021; BBC 26/07/2022; BBC 12/08/2022). The education system in Ukraine even before the conflict lacked the necessary conditions to ensure an inclusive education for children with disabilities, such as having individualised learning methodologies, flexible curricula, and assistive devices, as well as the physical accessibility of schools (UNICEF 23/06/2022; Shevchuk et al. 10/05/2020). As a result, before February 2022, more than 45,000 children with disabilities were in specialised educational care institutions or specialised boarding schools, as parents and host communities had limited resources and capacities to ensure proper care (Child Protection Sub-Cluster 23/03/2022; UNICEF 10/06/2022).

Conflict has damaged 36 and destroyed 5 of the 310 such institutions in Ukraine (GOU accessed 03/08/2022; MESU 04/07/2022). As at 23 March, over 30,000 children living in these institutions had had to relocate and were reunited with their parents or legal guardians (SCU 24/03/2022). Children with disabilities who have had to leave specialised institutions likely face a lack of the necessary conditions to continue their schooling. Children with disabilities still living in these institutions are at a heightened risk of abandonment, given that staff themselves have had to evacuate with their families (Protection Cluster 03/03/2022; PI 21/07/2022; DFS 20/04/2022).

Urgent need for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)

80% of hromadas surveyed in the June education needs assessment stated that it would be useful to provide MHPSS to students and teachers, especially as more than 50% believed that children's mental health and ability to study have deteriorated since the start of the Russian invasion (MESU 04/07/2022; Save the Children 02/06/2022). There is an urgent need for MHPSS for both students and teachers. Without it, some students may suffer from the long-term consequences of the mental health impact of the conflict, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression (Al Jazeera 31/03/2022; Geneva Solutions 18/03/2022).

The conflict has aggravated an already challenging situation for teachers in Donbas region (Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts). Almost 60% of schools located near the contact line in government-controlled areas reported that by 2021, the conflict had affected school staff's wellbeing and ability to work effectively. They also reported a lack of teaching staff properly trained in psychosocial support in the region (Save the Children 04/04/2022; OCHA 11/02/2022).

Impact on learning outcomes

COVID-19 closed or disrupted schools in Ukraine for eight months during the 2020–2021 school year, while conflict led to closures and disruptions for another five months in the 2021–2022 school year. These months amount to over a year of learning losses. Studies show that three months of missed education could reduce children's average testing scores by up to 11% (OECD 01/07/2020). Before the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, education performance in Ukraine was similar to its regional neighbours in eastern Europe, even outpacing some in terms of students' learning resilience. Recent estimations of learning losses, however, suggest that as at July 2022, Ukraine was one of the lowest-performing countries in Europe in terms of learning outcomes (WB 18/05/2022).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the quality of online education in Ukraine varied depending on the school, access to the internet, and technology. It is likely to significantly drop because of the wide-ranging impact of the conflict (KII 03/08/2022 b). The disruption of education services has been shown to have long-term and persistent negative effects on children's development and learning, particularly for younger children. School disruptions affect the

time children spend learning, the quality of their education, and the content covered during classes. Even though online learning can offer a temporary solution, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown the importance of children learning in person in schools (WVI 20/05/2022; WB 18/05/2022; UNICEF 12/05/2022).

CHALLENGES FOR THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR

The next school year is going to bring different challenges across Ukraine, where the situation is quite diverse among different oblasts and depends heavily on the presence of active ground conflict. In the west, schools in oblasts hosting high numbers of IDPs are likely to face overcrowding given the influx of new students, the use of schools as IDP centres, and a lack of human resources and funds. That said, oblasts in the south and east of the country are likely to face the most severe challenges. Aside from receiving the highest amount of damage to educational institutions, they are also still facing insecurity and experiencing a significant displacement of people, leading to a shortage of teachers and students (KII 01/08/2022 b; KII 06/08/2022; KII 05/08/2022 b).

Some oblasts (mainly in the west) might be able to hold in-person lessons in September depending highly on the security situation and on schools meeting all safety demands. Assessments are still underway, and local authorities will have the final decision (KII 01/08/2022 a; KII 01/08/2022 b; KII 08/08/2022 b).

Many schools will have no option but to start the new academic year online. The Ukrainian Government and society prefer in-person education over online education (UNICEF 12/05/2022). Because of active ground conflict, school damages, the inability to comply with government-mandated school safety measures, and the use of schools as IDP shelters, online classes will be the only option in many regions, particularly in the central, southern, and eastern oblasts (KII 03/08/2022 b; KII 04/08/2022 b; KII 01/08/2022 a; KII 06/08/2022).

Internet access, network connection quality, and the availability of devices will remain some of the main challenges for the next school year in oblasts holding mainly online lessons (KII 01/08/2022 a).

Parents' perception of safety may influence their children's attendance. Parents concerned about their children's safety may prefer online learning or homeschooling even if in-person lessons resume in their region (KII 03/08/2022 b; KII 01/08/2022 a). It is hard to anticipate and estimate parents' responses, and the situation is likely to differ between urban and rural settings and between the east and west of the country. In the west and in big cities such as Kyiv, officials estimate that most parents would want their children to start with in-person education. In areas of the country with active ground conflict, this willingness is likely to be significantly lower for safety reasons (KII 01/08/2022 a; KII 01/08/2022 b).

Reparation of damages

Repairing schools will require significant time and resources (IPS 01/06/2022; UNICEF 12/05/2022). Schools that have suffered heavy infrastructural damage will not be able to reopen for in-person lessons in September 2022, leaving online education as their only option to resume the school year.

School repairs are not happening evenly in the country and depend on the available funds of each region. In Kyiv city, most schools not heavily damaged have already gone through repairs (KII 01/08/2022 a; KII 01/08/2022 b). In oblasts that have experienced more damage to infrastructure, such as Zaporizhzhia, only certain schools have been repaired where damages were affordable and easy to fix (KII 05/08/2022 b). Schools that have been completely destroyed may be able to continue part of their activities in the next school year online, although their numbers are likely to be very limited, and some teachers and students will have to enrol in other institutions (KII 03/08/2022 b).

Educational facilities as collective centres

As at June 2022, **1.1 million IDPs were hosted in 5,670 collective centres across the country, of which more than 60% (at least 3,515) were educational facilities.** The situation poses challenges for the reopening of in-person learning in schools (Protection Cluster 05/07/2022; REACH 05/07/2022). This issue is particularly a concern in Dnipropetrovsk, Kirovohrad, Lviv, Rivne, and Ternopil oblasts, where people are using a higher concentration of educational institutions as shelters (MESU 02/07/2022).

If the IDPs hosted in schools are not relocated, these educational facilities may be inaccessible to learners in the coming academic year. The provision of alternative housing options is critical in the event of relocation from schools, as many IDPs are unable to return to their place of origin. Relocation to other collective centres may prove particularly challenging, as many require renovation and refurbishment that would not allow increased occupation in the short term (Protection Cluster 05/07/2022; KII 03/08/2022 b).

Challenges of online learning

In areas close to active ground conflict, the new academic year will continue completely online (Visit Ukraine 28/06/2022; GOU 24/06/2022) Although the COVID-19 situation had provided some background experience, online education was still relatively new in Ukraine by early 2022.

A lack of access to high-speed internet and technological devices are the main obstacles to online education and are likely to particularly affect the 1.2 million children living in rural areas more (KII 01/08/2022 a; MESU 02/07/2022; Teach for Ukraine accessed 08/08/2022). Only 44% of

rural households in Ukraine have internet access, compared to 80% of households in cities, leaving a large number of school-aged children with limited access to online learning (Rubryka 01/09/2021). The availability of technical devices is also low in rural areas. There is a need for an additional 203,000 tablets and 165,000 computers for teachers and learners to access online education (MESU 02/07/2022).

The quality of online education will vary across different oblasts and schools. While some schools will be able to provide good quality online education thanks to various software and platforms that allow for interactive engagement between teachers and students, other schools will have to rely on less interactive and engaging social platforms (KII 03/08/2022 b). The teaching staff is also unevenly trained to develop and implement online education across the country (KII 01/08/2022 b).

Internet interruptions in areas in and near active ground conflict may reduce access to online education (KII 03/08/2022 b). After February, televised educational programmes for all school grades (1–11) were launched in response to internet access disruptions in conflict-affected areas (Geneva Solutions 18/03/2022; Erasmus+ 08/06/2022; WB 18/05/2022). This platform, however, does not provide a quality interactive online learning experience between students and teachers and might prove challenging for households with multiple students and a limited number of TVs.

Online education adds more burden on working parents, particularly with younger children who require more guidance and attention (KII 03/08/2022 b; KII 04/08/2022 b).

Access to online learning for children in areas where the Russian military is present remains unclear (KII 03/08/2022 b).

Lack of human resources

The limited number of teachers could become a challenge in certain areas of the country during the next school year, particularly in the east and south (KII 01/08/2022 a). As at June, conflict had internally displaced an estimated 43,000 teachers, mainly from Kharkiv, Kyiv, and Zaporizhzhia oblasts, and over 25,000 had become refugees (WB 18/05/2022; MESU 04/07/2022). Shortages of teachers were already reported in Donbas region before February 2022 (KII 03/08/2022 b; Save the Children 02/04/2022; OCHA 11/02/2022).

Teacher salaries are declining because of fewer working hours and local resources (WB 18/05/2022). Many newly trained teachers may decide to find a better-paying job instead of joining the education workforce to make ends meet, which would affect the number of available educators (KII 03/08/2022 b; KII 01/08/2022 a).

To address staff shortages in the short term, many teachers may choose not to retire this year to cover the gap in the new academic year (2022–2023). Some oblasts expecting to face teacher shortages are planning to combine classes or schools depending on the number of students, allowing them to carry out the lessons with a smaller number of teachers (KII 05/08/2022 b). Although this solution will likely help in the short term, it is unclear how it will affect the quality of education in the long term.

Financial constraints

Around 30% of hromadas surveyed between 6 May and 6 June reported financial constraints affecting their ability to pay teachers (MESU 02/07/2022). Schools in Ukraine are financed through the budgets of the hromadas and there has already been a significant cut in state funding of the education budget.

Parents affected by the conflict and its impact on the economy will likely see diminished household purchasing power, in which case textbooks and school materials might not be their main purchase priority (RFE/RL 08/08/2022; KII 03/08/2022 b).

Ensuring safety in schools

The country continues to endure active conflict, which presents several associated threats to the safety and security of the population, including air strikes and ERW. A number of preventative measures have been identified to enhance the safety and security of students and teachers within schools, including risk education, the accessibility of bomb shelters, and mine decontamination. Educational facilities that do not meet the security requirements will not begin in-person learning on 1 September (DSNS 19/08/2022 and 15/07/2022).

As at 20 July, only 23% of educational institutions were able to meet the criteria listed below (DSNS 07/20/2022).

Risk education: school-aged children and teachers are required to undergo risk education before the start of the school year. Risk education includes the planned adaptation of mine countermeasures in the educational programme for grades 6–11 (DSNS 19/07/2022).

Bomb shelters: accessible bomb shelters for students and teachers, either within schools or via clear evacuation routes, are a requirement before the start of the school year. As at 20 July, only 11% of educational facilities across the country had their own protective structures (DSNS 20/07/2022). Classroom attendance in schools close to active ground conflict has been limited to 20 pupils for safety purposes and to ensure quick access to a bomb shelter (VisitUkraine.Today 28/06/2022).

Explosive remnants of war: in areas previously or currently affected by conflict, there is a risk of ERW. Before the Russian invasion, eastern Ukraine was one of the most mine-contaminated areas of the world, including in areas around schools, which posed particular risks to children (UNICEF 21/12/2017). The inspection of educational facilities and surrounding areas by specialists for the presence of explosive objects is part of the mandatory safety measures for the reopening of schools (DSNS 15/07/2022).

Early warning alarm systems that alert people to the threat of air strikes connected to schools, another main requirement for their reopening, are not sufficient. The lack is likely to delay or prevent physical attendance for the new academic year (2022–2023) (OCHA 20/07/2022).

Schools in areas with supply disruptions to gas and electricity may not have the heating capacity to reopen during winter (KII 03/08/2022 b).

Continued displacement

An estimated 500,000 additional people are expected to become displaced from eastern regions before winter because of conflict and supply disruptions to gas and electricity (OCHA 20/07/2022). Further displacement is expected during the new academic year, likely interrupting education for affected students (KII 03/08/2022 b).

Children forcefully displaced into Russia, particularly orphans, are difficult to track. It will require effort and negotiations to retrieve and reunite them with their family in Ukraine (CNN 28/04/2022; UN 15/06/2022; UNHCR accessed 10/08/2022; US Gov't 13/07/2022).

Education in occupied areas

Recent reports suggest that the Russian Government might be preparing to enforce a Russian curriculum in occupied areas in the next school year (Time 22/02/2022). There is little information available regarding access to online education in those areas and options for parents and teachers who refuse the Russian curriculum (Cedos 02/05/2022; NYT 13/04/2022; CNN 16/05/2022).