

**ADOPTED TO THE WAR.
EXPLORING SAFETY,
LEARNING, AND SOCIAL
ENGAGEMENT IN YOUTH
CENTRES AND YOUTH
ORGANIZATIONS
IN UKRAINE**

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

Youth organisations and youth centres provide an essential space for young people's development, self-expression, and social activity. With the Russian Federation of Ukraine's invasion, safety, training, and a positive social environment have become even more critical for youth work and the non-formal education sector. If in 2022, youth organisations and youth centres were more focused on meeting ad hoc needs, such as humanitarian aid or military volunteering, then in 2023, new contexts emerged, primarily related to adaptation to a constantly uncertain and changing situation.

In 2023, a group of youth organisations, members of the National Ukrainian Youth Association, resumed their activities as actors of youth work and non-formal education. As part of the project "Supporting Safe Environments for Youth Development in Ukraine", they have elaborated their annual training programs and strategies for engaging young people in educational activities. Each organisation implemented its curriculum corresponding to its priorities, culture, history, social realities, qualifications, and the needs of children and youth. The study shows the overall picture of the interests and needs of children and young people participating in these activities. Within the framework of the project, for example, thematic camps and courses in school subjects, English-speaking clubs and first aid training, painting workshops and technology circles took place. The task of this study is to systematise the needs and aspirations of children and youth and develop general principles for building educational activities in wartime and then in post-war developments.

The study is aimed to determine the changes that took place in youth work during the war, to identify the needs of target groups or how they changed, and, accordingly, how youth centres or youth organisations should design their future educational activities. The methodology consisted of a contextual analysis of educational programs and organisational culture, an online survey of participants, group interviews with youth workers and participants of educational activities, and joint elaboration of recommendations. The study's results cover the issues of socialisation and the environment of children and young people, understanding the safety of the environment, acquired competencies, requests for the future and ideas about necessary skills.

The study examines the topics of safety, socialisation, and learning. The first chapter illustrates the profile of the respondents. We asked participants

about their age, gender, occupation, war-related displacement, and integration into the activities of an organisation or youth centre. The second chapter reveals the understanding of safety and adaptation to danger, the features of socialisation during and through educational activities. The third chapter is devoted to the issues of learning and competencies. The fourth chapter outlines a vision of the future, sentiments about what has been lost, and reflections on the necessary skills outside of participating in educational events. In the fifth chapter, we give a general overview of organisations and centres' activities, priorities, and best practices.

Thirty branches of all Ukrainian youth organisations took part in the project "Supporting Safe Environments for Youth Development in Ukraine":

- Five regional youth centres,
- Three scouting youth centres,
- Fifteen local youth centres (municipal institutions or non-governmental organisations),
- Seven branches of national youth organisations.

During the first half of 2023, these organisations organised educational events for more than three thousand visitors.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

	Full name	Abbreviated name	Acronym
Youth organisations and youth centres participated in the project			
1.	All-Ukrainian organisation “CLASS”	“Class”	-
2.	Extracurricular communal educational institution “Donetsk Regional Children and Youth Centre”	Donetsk regional youth centre	-
3.	Communal institution “Zaporizhzhia regional centre of youth”	Zaporizhzhia regional youth centre	-
4.	Charitable organization “SHELTER PLUS”	“Shelter Plus”	-
5.	Communal institution of the Lviv Regional Council “Lviv Regional Youth Center”	-	-
6.	Communal institution of the Lviv Regional Council “Lviv Regional Plast Center”	Plast centre, Lviv	-
7.	Luhansk regional centre for support of youth initiatives and social research	Luhansk regional youth centre	-
8.	All-Ukrainian Youth Public Organization “MNK”	MNK	MNK
9.	Youth space “MoloDizhka”	“MoloDizhka”	-
10.	Public Organization “Youth Hub ‘RedHub’”.	“RedHub”	-
11.	Youth Volunteer Center of the Berdychiv City Territorial Community “M-Formatsiya”	“M-Formatsiya”	-
12.	Youth centre “HUB_IDEY” (Founded by Public Organization “Development Together”)	“HUB_IDEY”	-
13.	Youth centre for citizenship education		YCCE

	Full name	Abbreviated name	Acronym
14.	Public Organization “Youth centre “YC New Orbits””	“New Orbits”	-
15.	Public Organization “Youth centre “Paragraph”	“Paragraph”	-
16.	Public Organization “Kremenchuk Information and Educational Center ‘European Club’”	“Space of Ideas”	-
17.	Communal Institution “Youth centre “Smart”	“Smart”	-
18.	Pervomaisk Youth centre “HUB [KOMORA]”	“HUB [KOMORA]”	-
19.	Public Organization “All-Ukrainian Youth Movement ‘National Alliance’”	NA	NA
20.	Communal Institution of the Kyiv Regional Council “Plast Training Center”	Plast centre, Bucha	-
21.	Public Organization “WE WORLD”	“WE WORLD”	-
22.	Communal Institution “Children and Youth Plast Center of the City of Rivne” of the Rivne City Council	Plast centre, Rivne	-
23.	Public Organization “Sloviansk Cultural Center ‘Zadzerkallia’”	Sloviansk cultural centre “Zadzerkallia”	-
24.	Public Organization Ukrainian Youth Union	-	CYM
25.	Communal Institution “Terniv City Youth Center”	“InTern”	-
26.	Public Organization “Ukrainian Association of Students”	-	UAS
27.	Communal Institution of the Chernihiv Regional Council “Chernihiv regional youth centre”	-	-

	Full name	Abbreviated name	Acronym
Other organisations			
	Association of Youth Centres of Ukraine	-	AYCU
	National Ukrainian Youth Association	-	NUMO
Other acronyms			
	Charitable Foundation		CF
	Internally Displaced Persons		IDPs
	Non-governmental organisation		NGO
	Governmental Institution		GI
	Municipal Institution		MI
	Youth centre		YC
	National Multy-Test		NMT
	Focus-group interview	Focus-groups	FGI

METHODOLOGY

The survey contains quantitative and qualitative parts. The main methods of collecting information were:

- Content analysis,
- Online surveys,
- Focus group interviews,
- Expert discussions.

Content analysis was used to study curricula and meaningful activity reports. Publications in social media, evaluation questionnaires, databases of participants, calendar plans, etc., were also analysed. The content analysis results served to develop an online questionnaire and understanding of the general context in which the educational activities took place. Educational programmes analysis is also essential for understanding respondents' answers to their learning outcomes.

The online survey was utilized to collect data from participants. The questionnaire comprised closed-ended and open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions covered demographic data, affiliation with the organization and youth center, and evaluation of events. Open-ended questions included descriptions of socialization, skills acquisition, expectations for the next activity, nostalgia for past activities, and awareness of the skills necessary during the war. The survey was conducted through Jotform's online platform. Educational advisors sent out invitations to participate in the study through group chats, announcements, and redirects to links during meetings. Additionally, advisors made phone calls, sent emails, and provided individual reminders. When questioning the youngest participants (6–12 years old), assistance from adults was allowed. The survey took place from July 26 to August 15, 2023. Out of 3083 unique visitors, the questionnaire was received from 837 people, of which 779 were analyzed.

Focus group interviews were employed to gain an understanding of safety, environmental change, and socialization issues. There were two focus groups with educational advisors and six with participants in educational events. Participants were randomized from the general list based on age, gender, and region. Focus groups with participants were organized by age.

Expert discussions were conducted to obtain professional opinions on interpreting the results. Two meetings took place — one with educational advisors and another with leaders of NUMO member organizations.

Limitations of the study

This study illustrates the trends in the activities of youth centres and youth organisations regarding the organisation of educational activities as of the first half of 2023:

- The study shows trends across a wide range of age groups. The project's target groups were young people aged 13–17 (younger target group) and 18–25 (young adults target group). Additionally, quantitatively smaller groups were children aged 6–12 years (the youngest target group) and young people aged 26–35 years (the oldest target group). There was a single questionnaire for all target groups. The questions were formulated so that they were relevant for each age. Such comprehensive coverage gives a vision of the future and correlates with the typical age groups with which the organisations and centres work.
- This study does not show the trends and attitudes of young people who do not have contact or information about non-formal educational opportunities or who need more motivation or resources to attend non-formal education activities.
- This study also shows trends among young people who have trust in organisations and institutions that implement non-formal education activities.

Thus, the study's results demonstrate trends in educational activities and the mood of young people who attend or want to attend “third places” and reveal the practices and tools under which such youth participation becomes possible. On the other hand, the study shows how it is possible to attract a diverse audience to participate in youth organisations and youth centres and, therefore, how youth work and non-formal education institutions can attract visitors and achieve positive effects of their activities.

1. PARTICIPANTS PROFILE

1.1. Demographic data

Age of participants

In the first half of 2023, all organisations and youth centres that participated in the project were visited by 3,027 unique visitors who consented to the processing of personal data.

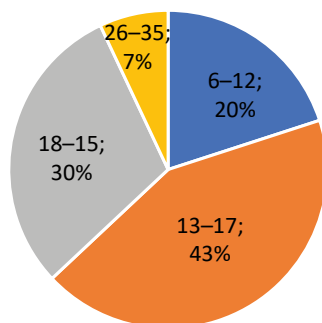


Figure 1.1. Participants' age

Of these:

- 611 aged 6–12 years, 20%
- 1375 aged 13–17 years, 43%
- 937 aged 18–25, 30%
- 204 aged 16–35 years, 7%

The main target groups by age were young people aged 13–17 years (younger age group) and 18–25 (young adults age group), in addition, some of the activities included children from 6 to 12 years old (the youngest age group) and 26–35 years old (the oldest age group). In some cases, people over the age of 35 also participated, but this is not considered in this study.

Of the 779 questionnaires analysed, the age of the participants was distributed as follows:

- 123 aged 6–12 years, 16%
- 320 aged 13–17 years, 41%
- 281 aged 18–25, 36%
- 55 aged 16–35 years, 7%

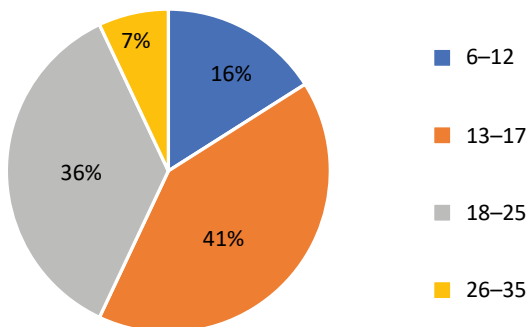


Figure 1.2. Respondents' age groups

Gender

60% of women and 38% of men took part in the online survey. 2% did not indicate gender (among the total number of participants in educational activities, 62% were women and 38% were men).

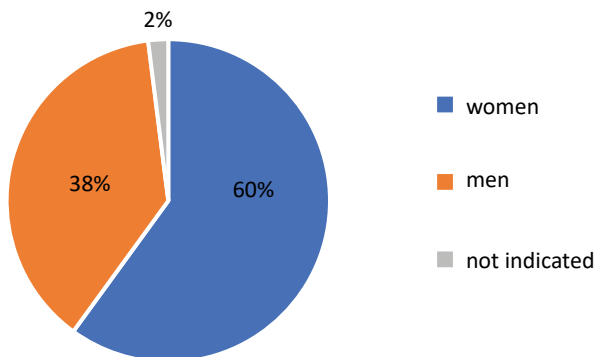


Figure 1.3. Gender of the respondents

Employment and education

In the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to answer the question “What are you doing now?”. The answer options included: “I work”, “I study”, “I study and work”, “I do not study, and I do not work”, “other”. Most respondents (59%) confirmed they would study in secondary or higher education institutions. The second large group is those who study and work (24%). 13% answered that they were working, and 3% were not employed or answered “other” option (“I am on maternity leave”, “I am self-developing”, “I am looking for a job”).

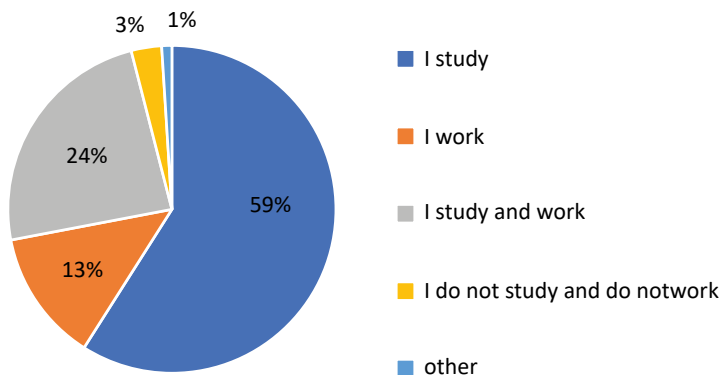


Figure 1.4. Employment and education

Of the youngest age group (6–12 years old), 95% said they were studying, and 5% said they were studying and working. Since the survey was conducted in the summer, some of the respondents clarified that they were currently on vacation. Among the younger age group (13–17 years old), 81% of respondents answered that they are studying, 14% are studying and working, 4% are not studying or working. Among young adults (18–25 years old) respondents are mostly working or studying and working (46% and 38%, respectively). Another 10% answered that they work, 5% do not study and do not work. Among the oldest age group: 84% of respondents work, 11% study and work, 2% are on maternity leave and 3% are unemployed.

In general, youth centres and organisations are visited by active young people who study and work; this applies to those who have changed their residence due to war and those who have remained live in their areas.

1.2. War-related displacement

Today, there is no exact data on the number of those who have moved within the country since February 24, 2022. According to the [Institute of Demography and Social Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine](#), at the beginning of 2023, 28 and 34 million people in Ukraine were within the country as of January 1, 2022. There are about 4.9 million registered IDPs in the country; however, [the Ministry of Reintegration](#) emphasizes that, in addition to the official data, there are a total of 7 million residents who have moved to another place due to the war. So, one in five living in Ukraine has changed residence due to the war. It should also be borne in mind that about 9 million Ukrainians are currently abroad; most of them are women and children under 18 years old.

Among the survey participants, 79% said they did not move, and 21% changed their residence due to the war, reflecting the country's general situation.

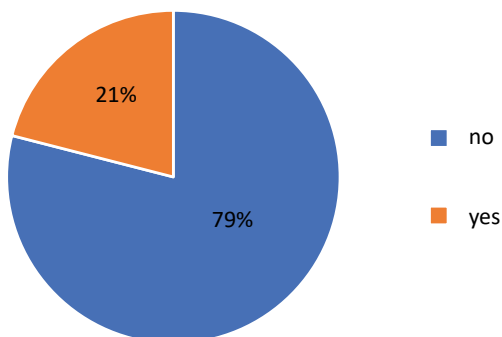


Figure. 1.5. War-related displacement

Among those who have not changed their residence, the most (78%) believe that their area is safe. 13% left and returned, 2% experienced the

occupation, and 4% witnessed hostile activities. Among other things, the participants named: “I was in the village with my grandmother”, “there was nowhere to go”, “parents do not want to leave Ukraine”, and “I am used to it”.

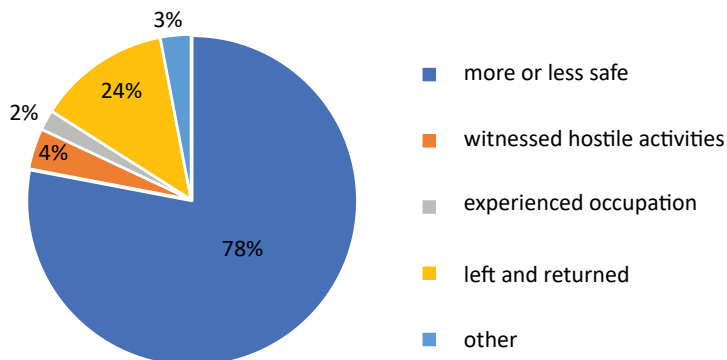


Figure 1.6. Conditions of those who have not changed their place of residence

78% of respondents believe their area is “more or less safe”, which can be considered as one of the signs of adaptation to war. For example, the survey was conducted when the situation regarding the threat of a disaster at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant was critical. Still, participants from the region calmly perceived both the atomic threat and artillery shelling, which often do not have a warning. The trend in this region was such that the population did not want to leave even under critical conditions, and those who moved from the occupied areas to the regional centre lived in anticipation of return.

13% of those who returned from where they evacuated due to the full-scale war now live in their regions, and their departure concerned the first months of the war. For example, residents of Chernihiv consider their city safe after the end of hostilities; eight out of thirty returned when the massive shelling stopped, and residents of Bucha returned immediately after the occupation. Departure in the first months of the full-scale invasion mostly concerned children: 63% of those who left and returned were the youngest participants, 6–17. Most who left and returned live in Bucha, Kyiv, Ternopil and Chernihiv. Among those who experienced the occupation (16 people) were participants from Kherson, Bucha, and Chernihiv regions, and hostilities (25 people) were from Chernihiv, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, and Kharkiv regions.

Some participants from the western region also noted that fighting had taken place in their cities, apparently referring to air attacks.

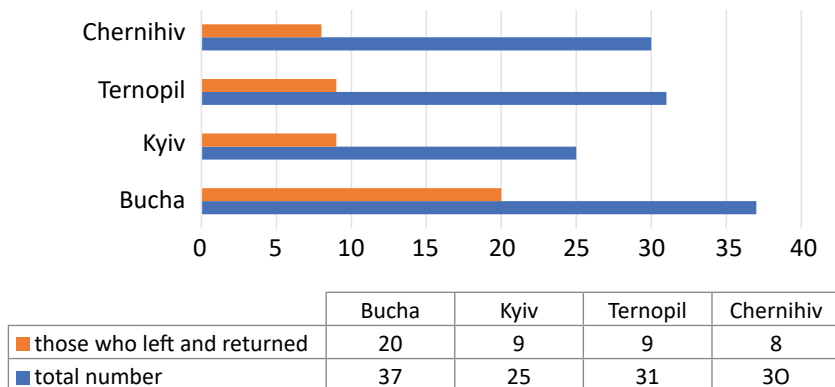


Figure 1.6. Those who left and returned in Bucha, Kyiv, Ternopil and Chernihiv

“Because of the war, I went to France with my uncle. There was a new life there. Three months later, we went back. There were problems, then there was no light, then the car broke down. But we definitely wanted to come back.” (8 years old, male, Western region).

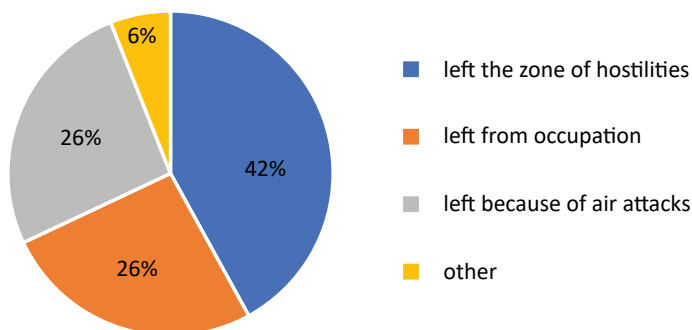


Figure 1.8. Those who changed their residence due to the war

21% of respondents (177) changed residence due to the war. Most said they had left the war zone and occupation (42% and 26%, respectively). 26% stated they went to places where there were fewer air raids.

1.3. Integration within the organisations and youth centres

All youth organisations and youth centres that participated in the project worked with new participants. 39% of respondents visited the institutions before the war, and 56% said that they came to the organisation or centre for the first time since the full-scale invasion.

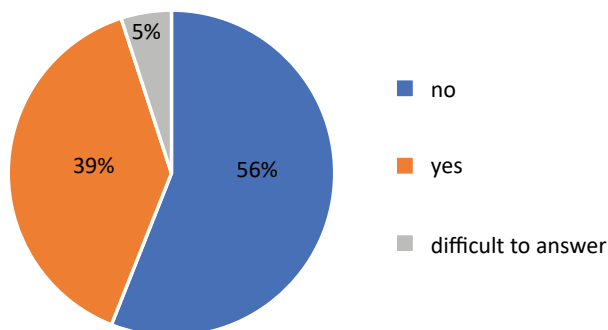


Figure 1.9. Have you visited this organisation before the war?

In general, according to the affiliation with the organisation or centre, the following groups can be distinguished:

- Relocated youth centres that worked with new audiences, except when someone “found” an organisation during resettlement, such as four respondents from the Luhansk Regional Youth Centre or two from “Zadzerkallia”.
- Membership-based youth organisations have concentrated on maintaining the structure and gradually expanding membership to have a more stable audience.
- Organisations and centres that had an outflow of visitors during the pandemic, as they depended on the situation in the field of education, such as UAS or “Paragraph” YC, began to work with new audiences.

- Youth centres that have received many new audiences are associated with targeted work with IDPs or increased demand among the local population, such as the Lviv Regional Youth Centre or the “Space of Ideas” from Kremenchuk.

Among those respondents who visited the organisation or centre before the war, more than half belong to the branches of CYM, MNK, Plast and the NA and are regular visitors to the youth centres “New Orbits” (Lviv), “Red-Hub” (Krasnohrad), M-Formatsiya (Berdychiv). The relocated “Class” and the Donetsk Regional Youth Centre are working with new target audiences. Those organisations and centres that had stable members or visitors and did not relocate focused on maintaining membership and gradually attracting new groups, and the level of this involvement mainly depended on institutional capacity and the situation in the region.

As for the attendance of an organisation or centre by age, the largest share of those who started attending after the start of the full-scale invasion is the younger age group. This number refers to the general age of socialisation and the fact that they had fewer opportunities while growing up during the pandemic.

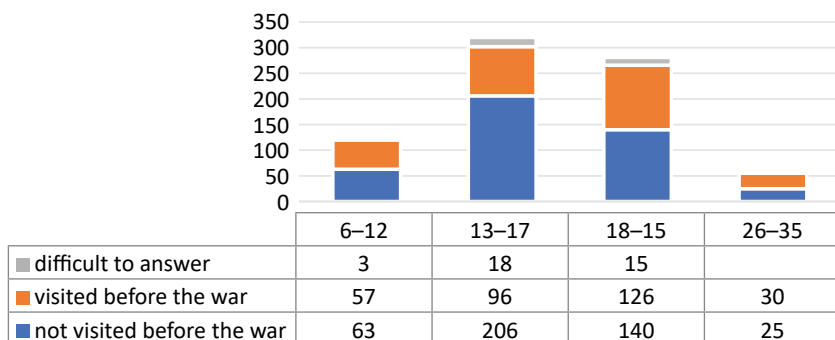


Figure 1.10. Visitors of the organisations and centres before the war according to the age groups

Young people regularly visit organisations and centres; more than half of the respondents said that they visited activities more than six times in 2023. There is little to no age or movement aspect in this indicator, and the regularity of visits is likely to depend on the nature of the activities and the opportunities available.

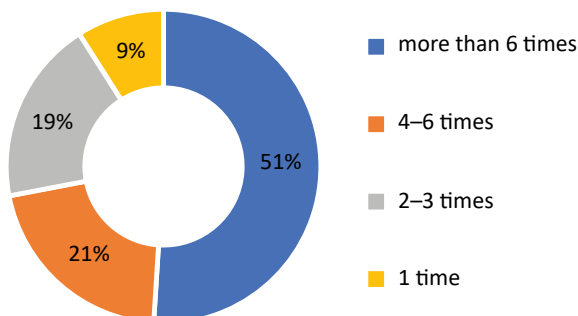


Figure 1.11. How many times have you visited this organisation this year?

1.4. Integration of the IDPs

The frequency of visits does not depend on the nature of the displacement, while among those who changed their place of residence due to the full-scale war, 74% (versus 51% among all respondents) did not visit a certain organisation or centre before.

Most IDPs are involved in the activities in Bucha, Vinnytsia, Dnipro, Kryvyi Rih and Kropyvnytskyi. Each of the organisations operating in these cities worked in a specific context. Thus, the events of the National Plast Training Centre in Bucha are attended by IDPs who moved from Donetsk and Luhansk regions. At the same time, those who returned to their hometown after its de-occupation also came here. The Donetsk Regional Youth Centre, which has been relocated to Vinnytsia, unites IDPs from the Donetsk region, and the Luhansk Regional Youth Centre in Dnipro works a lot with IDPs living in temporary shelters, Shelter Plus administers its own shelter, and Zadzerkallia in Kropyvnytskyi attracts IDPs and provide target activities.

“We are a small town. With the beginning of a full-scale war, many internally displaced persons appeared. After that, various clubs began to open, for example, aerial gymnastics for children, acrobatics, etc.”
(35 years old, female, Central region)

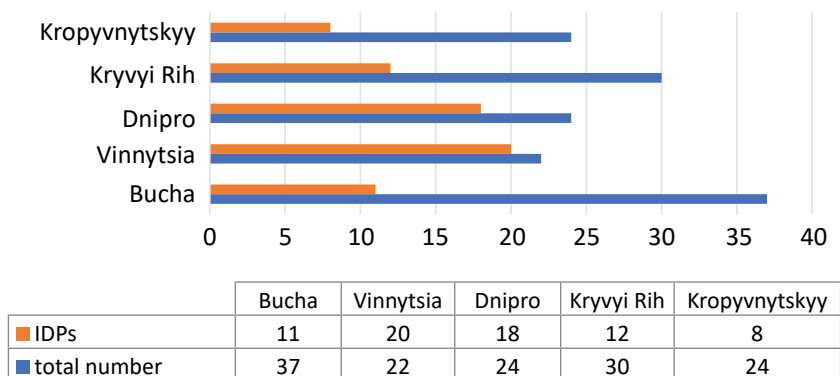


Figure. 1.12. Number of IDPs in Bucha, Vinnytsia, Dnipro, Kryvyi Rih and Kropyvnytsky

The integration of IDPs into an organisation occurs easily if it is a relocated organisation and works purposefully for people from their region or an organisation that administers or visits shelters for IDPs, provides humanitarian aid and informs about opportunities to participate in educational events. According to surveys of educational advisors and participants, the following forms of interaction can be identified:

1. Managing the shelter and assisting with basic needs in the early stages of displacement. If humanitarian activities take place in the same premises where the youth centre operates, then receivers of humanitarian aid can be directed to participate in other activities. Examples of this are Shelter Plus, RedHUB, New Orbits, and the Zaporizhzhia Regional Youth Centre.

“I came with my parents to get humanitarian aid, and we were offered to come to various events. It was scary, but I dared. I have never seen such places and people, it was wonderful. I met a lot of cool people. I have new friends, but I miss my old ones very much. Although, thanks to the centre, sometimes it is possible to forget about all the bad things.” (16 years old, female, Southern region).

2. SAFETY, SOCIALISATION AND ENVIRONMENT

2.1. Reflections on safety

In general, the surveyed participants of educational events give a high assessment of the atmosphere in organisations and youth centres according to the parameters of “safe”, “friendly”, and “interesting”. Security has the lowest score (80%), but it can be considered very high under the current conditions. Young people are primarily looking for a friendly atmosphere, a place where they can feel comfortable.

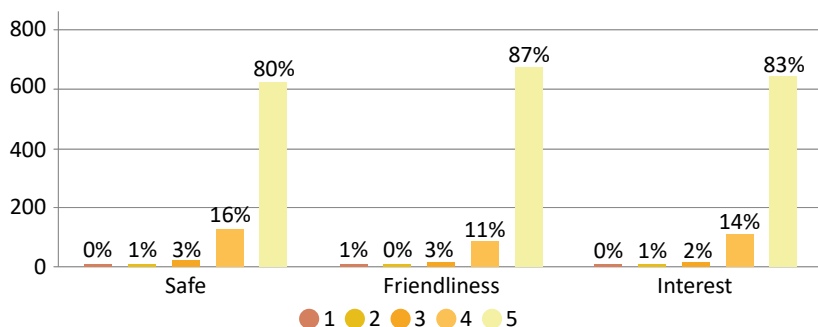


Figure. 2.1. Rate the atmosphere in this organization/youth center on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 — very poor, 2 — poor, 3 — okay, 4 — good, 5 — excellent)

Safety during educational activities in peacetime can include many aspects, some of which are actualized, and some are minimized in wartime. In this study, we looked at physical and social safety.

Only the youngest focus group participants discussed safety as personal comfort and a friendly atmosphere. Older participants and educational advisers acknowledge that all other safety aspects tend to disappear, leaving only those related to the war. It is also worth noting that conflict situations that may threaten social space are practically removed due to high psychological mobilization and increased awareness that physical security is the highest priority.

The central aspect of safety is sheltering availability and the ability to move to a safe space during air raids. In this regard, the basement has become an exceptional value for youth centres and organisations. Therefore, those organisations whose spaces are in basements have a significant advantage in organizing safe events. Although basements were premises for which, for example, it was difficult to get donor funds for repairs before the war, they have benefited in the war context.

Another element of safety is safe conditions during camps and other outdoor activities. The organizers should additionally coordinate their actions with local authorities or landlords to ensure that the area is not mined and that military facilities are not located there.

“Recently, there have always been a lot of mined forests, there is an agreement with the territorial community: whether there are no military there, for example, stationed in these territories, whether they have mined, whether everything is safe there...” (20 years old, female, youth organisation activist, participant of summer camps, Western region)

Among other safety aspects, the threat of sabotage and the importance of protection measures were mentioned. Sometimes, young people realize that “something could happen” during an event and that minimal control is required at the entrance.

From online questionnaires and conversations with participants and educational consultants, there is a need for a positive psychological atmosphere. There were such requests even before the war, and respondents agree that requests for mental health have become relevant. Mental health is more of a concern for youth workers, who feel the need for additional skills that would help strengthen the participants’ sense of safety in a situation where the traumatic factors are external.

“The interest in activities related to mental health has increased. It’s about the ability to calm yourself and others in emergencies. When the children began to explain to me why they needed it, there was a feeling that they needed a psychologist. But we can also do minimal activities on this.” (educational advisor)

2.2. Safety levels based on activity location and age

Physical safety has different dimensions in various regions. In relatively safe areas, adaptation to air raids is notable. Despite the official requirement to seek shelter, people must pay close attention to this factor, and shelters are often unavailable. However, organizations and centres generally adhere to safety requirements, moving to shelters during alarms, and following other preventive measures. According to educational advisors, event attendance is often influenced less by air raids than by weather or transportation.

In cities where shelling and missile attacks are frequent, young people, and especially parents of the youngest, worry about being away from home. But there are also cases when staying in a safe room of a youth centre is better for mental well-being than in an unprotected high-rise building.

Those spaces that are not located in basements must have maps of the nearest shelters. The perception of air attacks is different — if there is anxiety in Kyiv, then in de-occupied Kherson, shelling is no longer so frightening for the locals.

There are several types of attitudes towards safety in youth centres or spaces of youth organisations, depending on the geographical location:

1. Locations where there is artillery shelling, and often without warning sirens. Such cases are typical for Kherson and Zaporizhzhia. Maximum security measures are observed here, but there is an awareness that the threat may be unexpected.

• *“There was a story that the house where we are located was hit. But everyone survived because we were in the basement. We were worried about whether people would be afraid to come here again. However, the participants perceive it simply as a good reference point: “it doesn’t hit twice in the same funnel.” (educational advisor)*
• *“We are a front-line city, and more often, there are explosions without an alarm, so well, alarm after the blast, whoever wants to go to the shelter like this.” (15 years old, male, visitor to the youth centre, Southern region)*

2. Cities where air attacks with warning sirens periodically occur. It is essential to have shelter or a clear plan of action where to go in danger.

It is crucial for Kyiv, the Kyiv region, and the Dnipro and Dnipropetrovsk regions.

"In the spring, we faced a lot of shelling in residential areas. Therefore, parents preferred the children not to attend the activities. Among 25 registered participants, we could have 15. But for those participants who attend the activities, we always have a map of shelters in case of an air raid." (educational advisor)

3. Areas where warning sirens are rare, and there is the least destruction and hits. These are the Western and Central regions, where the rules of behaviour in times of danger apply, but there are the most comfortable conditions for holding events.

"In places closer to the front, people are not afraid of what would scare those further from the front line. And vice versa. But we are not lowering the standards. We made the room as autonomous as possible; we bought an EcoFlow. And, by the way, after that, they began to turn off the electricity there." (educational advisor)

4. Areas that border Belarus, where there is little danger from the air, but due to the danger of invasion, it is forbidden to hold camps and other outdoor activities. This applies to Volyn and Rivne regions. Local organisations hold camps in the Carpathians.

"Martial law practically does not affect the activities and implementation of our educational programs. The only thing that affects them is the organisation of Plast camps. It is forbidden to hold them in the Rivne region, because we are a border region, so we do camps in the Carpathians." (educational advisor)

Regardless of the situation in the region, with the beginning of a full-scale war, those who organize educational events have a special responsibility for minors. Internal regulations oblige mentors to organize the departure of all minors to the shelter and stay there until the end of the alarm. Adults have a personal obligation for their own safety.

“We have mentors, these are adults, they are responsible for us. They make sure that everything is fine with us, and we don’t do anything stupid. That is, at all camps and at the meetings, they are responsible for us.” (8 years old, male, member of the organisation, Northern region).

2.3. Socialisation in the educational activities of youth organisations and centres

Non-formal education is always a place of socialisation and the establishment of long-lasting personal connections, especially evident for organisations with a long history. The expression “we went to Plast together” is the same as “we went to school together”. No matter what exciting events are held, people can also come there because there is a friendly environment. We learned how participants find friends based on data analysis from open-ended questionnaire questions.

87% of respondents answered that they found or have friends or good acquaintances in the organisation/centre, and 13% responded that they did not. 11% answered yes (“yes”, “yes, found”, “found”, etc.), and 76% described situations, cases, or context.

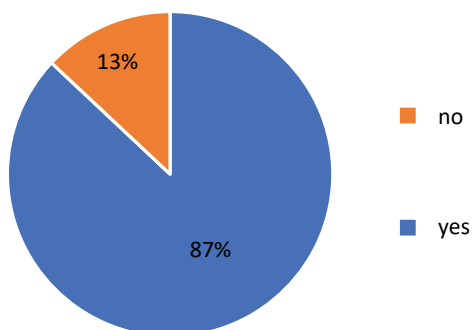


Figure 2.2. Did you find friends while attending activities in a youth organisation/youth centre?

Most respondents (36%) named a specific event or episode of an event as a condition under which a friendship was established. Almost half (44%)

mentioned a particular event and its name or topic. One in four explains that the friendship was formed as part of a joint activity, interaction, or task within a specific activity. 14% of those who named a particular event focused on informal discussions and communication after the event or during breaks, over tea/coffee, while moving or living together. The younger the participants, the more descriptions of specific episodes they have.

When asked about friends, 33% of respondents paid more attention to the values of the environment or organisation. Of these, more than half (57%) spoke about the organisation/youth centre as an environment with horizontal connections, and 43% discussed the value of the organisation/youth centre as a structure in which friendly relations are built.

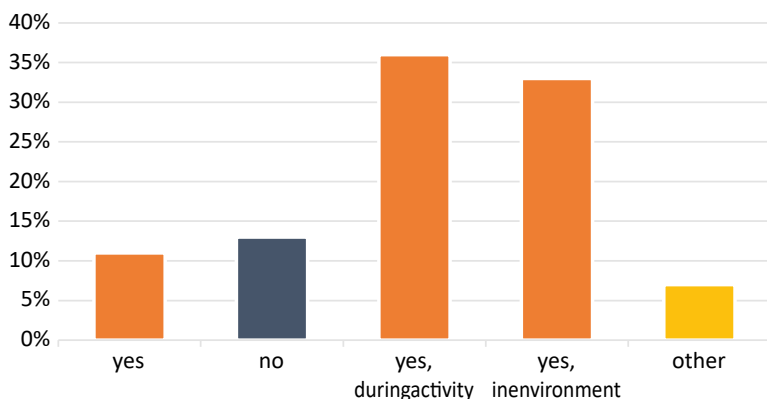


Figure 2.3. Did you find friends while attending activities in a youth organisation/ youth centre? If so, describe how it happened

Highlighting events or episodes

When participants describe the context in which the friendship was formed, they write about the topic, a specific element, or additional points contributing to socialisation. There are cases when young people are involved in the life of the organisation and the centre, coming to one event on one topic and then being involved in another activity. So, for example, it can be a thematic training where they learn about other options and start attending a new event.

“I came to a media literacy event and found my new friends there. And now I go with them, attend English” (23 years old, male, southern region)

New acquaintances and friendships arise when performing some tasks or routines. It is essential for those IDPs for whom joint activities have both a therapeutic effect and allow them to find new social contacts. Younger participants especially recall these moments in detail, which indicates the importance of their first social contact in a new place.

The event’s structure, which involves interaction and communication, is a vital element of non-formal education and has a particular impact in a situation where formal school occurs online or in a hybrid format. The formal educational process often excludes the possibility of integration into a new environment when being online; new students practically need the opportunity to meet or communicate in a school setting, and non-formal education fills these gaps. It is also essential for young people to live together in camps, have a snack and drink tea during breaks, including the development of some of their own rules and rituals. For example, during focus groups, they talked about the rules in the “kitchen corner” and the joint organisation of tea meetings, inviting those who came for the first time to join the conversations and get to know each other better.

“In the first activity, we all got to know each other. These were not only names, but we also talked about our interests and hobbies. That’s how I met my friends.” (11 years old, male, Southern region)

“We talked a lot during coffee breaks. I met a new friend there” (15 years old, male, Southern region).

“Yes, I found it! We were in the same tent, and that’s where we met. We’re still in touch;”) (13 years old, female, Western region)

“Yes, I made a lot of friends when I visited the camp. Now, when I come to the playground, I always meet someone I know” (9 years old, female, left the war zone, southern region)

“So, when I came up to drink tea, two people a little older than me wanted to speak to me. We communicate well now.” (11 years old, male, central region)

Highlighting the value of the organisation or environment

The organisation's value is inherent primarily in the branches of all Ukrainian organisations with a long history. There are specific unified rules, traditions, and attributes. An important fact is that these are membership-based organisations; even the youngest have a connection with a wide range of people, realizing that people in different regions do something similar.

"Plast" and CYM members express the most sentiments towards the organisation itself (the number of direct mentions is 13 and 10, respectively), and members of the NA and the MNK talk more about the ideological connection, which makes it easier for them to find like-minded people and communicate with each other.

Generally, the branches of national youth organisations that participated in the project involved experienced or new members in their activities. The socialisation effect contributes to the organisation's integration in the current context.

"I am a Plast member, so I have many friends." (12 years old, male)

"The whole organisation means friends. It doesn't matter which branch" (18 years old, female)

"I have all my friends here because I have been in CYM since I was born." (13 years old, male))

"You always make new friends at different events, and you are united by common interests, and later friendship is strengthened in joint activities." (24 years old, male)

"I found many like-minded people. These are mega-cool positive people. I still communicate with many of them." (16 years old, female)

"In fact, it was unexpected. Anyway, it is not very easy for me to communicate with new people. But the atmosphere was so positive that it was easy and to communicate." (13 years old, female)

"The atmosphere didn't allow me not to find friends. Everyone felt the space of safety and easily expressed their thoughts, and friendship with like-minded people who stand up for each other is the best." (21 years old, male)

Concerning youth centres, excluding Plast, participants prioritize horizontal connections and the overall atmosphere. No youth centre follows a membership format; most operate within communities lacking membership-based

youth organisations. Consequently, these centres are perceived more as leisure and free time spaces. Since many youth centres also function as humanitarian hubs, their educational events are accessible to displaced individuals, locals, and new visitors.

- *“Probably, the coolest thing about the Hub is the people who visit it. Everyone is so open, sociable, interesting, smart, confident, ready to learn something new.” (15 years old, female)*
- *“Thanks to this organisation, I now have friends in a new city.” (12 years old, male)*
- *“Because it’s a great organisation and cool events.” (18 years old, male)*

Both youth centres and youth organisations serve as spaces to bridge gaps in social connections. For young individuals, the nature of the activities and the chance to establish new social contacts hold significance.

2.4. Social environment in relation to the war context

Youth organisations and youth centres that participated in the project created and elaborated their educational programs based on their capabilities. However, their task was also to create a space where young people would feel comfortable and safe. From the point of view of adaptation to the war context and the implementation of typical youth work, the following types of activities can be distinguished.

1. Youth centres that have new visitors.
2. Youth centres that experienced new challenges related to de-occupation or hostilities.
3. Youth organisations and centres in which the systematic activities that existed before the war were resumed.
4. Youth centres, which have changed their geography due to the relocation and have begun working with new visitors.

Youth centres that have new visitors. Some centres received displaced persons and administered shelters (“New Orbits “ in Lviv, “Shelter Plus” in Kryvyi Rih, and the Zaporizhzhia Regional Youth Centre) or visited other shelters and invited young people and children to events (“Space of Ideas”

from Kremenchuk and “M-Formatsiya” from Berdychiv). The activities involved those who have visited the centres before and those from the war zone or occupation. The involvement of IDPs took place after adaptation, and the participants recalled receiving the invitation when the organizers informed them directly. In the Dnipropetrovsk region, the Smart Youth Centre from Slobozhanske and the Ternivka InTern Youth Centre work with different groups, including IDPs. InTern also has a close relationship with the military and veterans, supplying them with volunteer assistance. In the Kharkiv region, three youth centres (Hub[Komora] from Pervomaiske, RedHub from Krasnohrad and HUB_Idey from Zmiiv”), as well as the Youth Centre for Civic Education from Kyiv, were engaged in humanitarian activities at the beginning of the war, helped in the relocation of centres that were under occupation.

“We visited a shelter and told people who have children that their children can join our educational activities. We emphasized that if they like it, they can always attend, if not, they can skip. After events, these children stayed, told some stories about what they had experienced, what was happening to their apartments now, how they left their families and other personal things.” (educational advisor)

The Lviv Regional Youth Centre continued its activities. According to the organisers, requests and the number of visitors have increased. The number of young people who have moved has increased in the city, and many Lviv residents also require socialisation. Participants from relatively safe regions often talk about the loss of social connections, as many friends have left or are in the army. The Paragraph Youth Centre from Ivano-Frankivsk, located at the university, practically did not operate during the pandemic, but it recovered during the war and received new visitors. In Znamianka, the WeWorld youth centre opened during the full-scale war and has become its “own place” for young people in the city and from neighbouring villages.

“Because of the war, many of my friends, left the city and the country in general. And before that, I didn’t know about the youth centre. When I found out about it, I went there, there was an event, and now I have many new friends, a lot of new things.” (15 years old, female)

Youth centres that experienced new challenges related to de-occupation or hostilities. Most youth centres that participated in the project resumed their work in the new conditions. Among them were those who worked after the hostilities, such as the Chernihiv Regional Youth Centre, the “MoloDizhka” from Kherson, and the National Plast Training Centre in Bucha. The centre’s premises were destroyed in Chernihiv, and there was significant damage in Bucha. The visitors to these centres represent both groups — newcomers and experienced. Chernihiv’s participant noted, “After the pandemic, shelling, and constant online activity, it was nice to see people again and start doing something together.” There is a particular optimism here, a feeling of returning to something familiar before the war.

“It’s especially nice to come and do non-formal education, which is much better than formal education, in a pleasant circle of friends and like-minded people, after distance learning, which we were all forced to meet.” (18 years old, male)

In Kherson, the “MoloDizhka” youth space team is resuming activities that began shortly before the start of the full-scale invasion. During the occupation of the city, they held events for city residents in different places and online. As one of the participants noted, this allowed her to maintain her identification with the city, not to feel lonely.

“With safety, more or less, everything is fine. It is worth considering that during the occupation, events were held online. I was sitting at home, I didn’t go anywhere, I felt quite safe. This made it possible not to lose contact. Now, if there is an air raid, most of the participants go down to the shelter.” (26 years old, female)

Youth organisations and centres in which the systematic activities that existed before the war were resumed. This type of organisation includes branches of the Ukrainian Youth Union and the Youth National Congress, the Ukrainian Students’ Union, the NA, and Plast Training Centres (10 organisations participating in the project). They worked in relatively safe areas. The exception is the National Plast Training Centre in Bucha, which resumed its activities after de-occupation. It should be noted that youth organisations usually expand their network of members and supporters through public events,

including presentations in educational institutions and summer camps. This activity has been suspended since 2020 due to the pandemic, which interrupted communication and regular meetings. At the beginning of the war, youth organisations focused on restoring communications and helping the army. Heads of organisations and branches note that there has been a significant outflow of men to the military. It led to a situation where more women and junior members began to deal with managerial issues, and some directly noted that “everything had to start from the beginning.” Here, war is present in the lives of young people, as some are fighting in their inner circle. They are more likely to face losses and worry about loved ones and are more focused on the issue of protecting the country. They grow up faster, become independent and want to join social activities. Therefore, the organisation is most valued here as a structure and environment that creates the feeling of belonging to something bigger, allows self-identification in society and determines one’s priorities. Physical safety is formal for them, as they know of a much greater danger elsewhere. The organisation is also a place of psychological safety, where you can distract yourself and do the same things as in peacetime.

“We did not stop our activities; we have always been in touch; we have been in contact since the beginning of the full-scale invasion and were involved in volunteering, and in the summer of 2022, we have already resumed our summer camps and meetings at schools” (21 years old, female)

Youth centres, which have changed their geography due to the relocation and have begun working with new visitors. Four relocated youth centres participated in the project:

- Luhansk regional youth centre relocated to Dnipro,
- Donetsk regional youth centre relocated to Vinnytsia,
- «Class» NGO from Severodonetsk relocated to Pyriatyn,
- «Zadzerkallia» cultural centre from Sloviansk, relocated to Kro-pyvnytskyi.

These four organisations have two models of operation. Two regional youth centres focused on working with internally displaced youth from their regions. The Donetsk centre carried out focused work, creating community

and confidence among visitors. The main activities here were filling gaps in school education and working with mental well-being. The Luhansk centre started working with displaced people from the Luhansk region, and there were also cases when former visitors found “their” centre in Dnipro. Gradually, other IDPs began to visit the centre and then local youth. The integration atmosphere is facilitated by a joint location with other public initiatives, clear safety rules and the inclusion of young people in other projects.

Before the full-scale war, “Class” and “Zadzerkallia” had infrastructure and well-established work in their cities. They moved to regions where youth work was less developed. Their task was to see their new audience and gain recognition in the community. Such activities still need to be discovered for most local young people attending educational events. These organisations fill gaps in the regions with a weak youth infrastructure, so their needs are more fundamental than those with whom they worked in Severodonetsk or Sloviansk. Unlike the Luhansk Youth Centre, which, according to the employees themselves, learns a lot from youth work in Dnipro, in Pyriatyn and Kropyvnytskyi, we have a situation where displaced institutions create a competitive field for local youth policy, offering young people and a new quality of non-formal education.

3. EDUCATIONAL FOCUS OF YOUTH: ACQUIRED AND ASPIRED COMPETENCIES

3.1. Skills acquired by participants of educational activities

The project involved diverse organisations and youth centres with varying learning styles, audiences, geographical locations, types of membership, and organisational structures. Despite these differences, they shared a common objective of supporting young people affected by war by addressing educational gaps, identifying future career paths, and fostering autonomy.

To assess their learning outcomes, young people were asked an open-ended question: “What did you learn while attending educational events at the organisation/centre?” The responses were organized into five categories for analysis.

1. **Communication, leadership, and activism.** This cluster encompasses skills associated with communication within the community and with the environment, teamwork, accountability, active engagement in public life, a sense of identity with the organisation/youth centre as a public entity, and the development of personal initiatives, including volunteering. Engaging in educational activities allowed young individuals to implement their projects, receive support for their initiatives, and enhance their interpersonal skills.

⋮ *“We learn how to interact, how to help out. For example, at our performances, it happens that someone has forgotten their props, so the others help and assist with the scenery. And we also learn how to work in pairs with another person.” (11 years old, female)*

2. **Personal development and autonomy.** This category encompasses competencies associated with self-assertion as an individual, with three distinct groups identified:
 - a. psychological stability, recovery, adaptability to change, stress resistance, the ability to derive pleasure from activities, and the capacity to build personal relationships with others.

These are the ability to provide first aid, tactical medicine, mine danger, behaviour in emergency situations, practical survival in difficult situations.

“I went through about 10 first aid trainings, learned a lot of nodes, learned time management, learned project management, improved my leadership skills, improved my cartography skills, learned to journey, and other interesting and useful things.” (17 years old, male)

The following chart illustrates the answers in the questionnaires about the acquired competencies, without considering the answers “nothing” (2.76%) and answers without meaning — “difficult to answer”, “everything that was”, “everything cannot be listed”, etc. (9.78%). That is, the answers of 84.85% of respondents (661 responses) were considered.

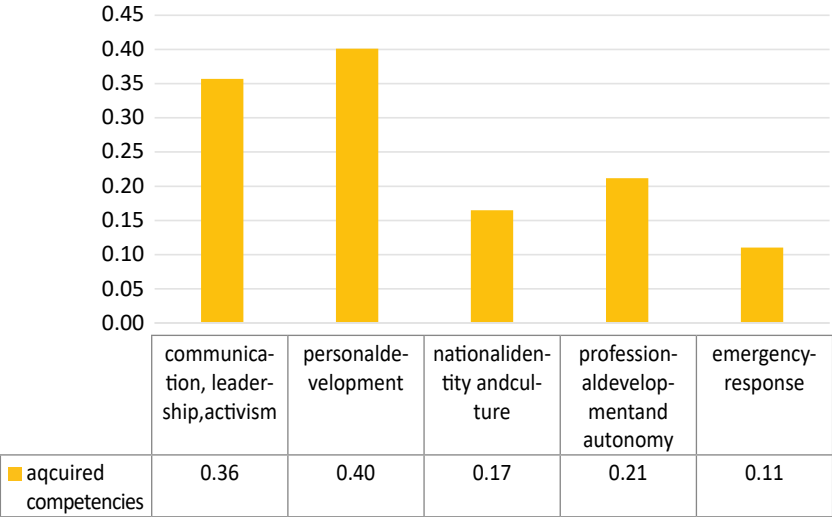


Figure 3.1. Acquired competencies

Specifics of age groups. Each set of competencies is tailored to specific age ranges within various programs. Younger participants focus on developing essential skills of autonomy and self-identification, while older participants delve into understanding their capabilities and social processes. Professional development for the younger age group revolves around mastering school

subjects, whereas for the older group, it involves acquiring additional skills to enter a profession.

Additionally, we observe the impact of psychological maturation on the youngest and younger age groups, leading to changes in their learning demands.

• *“At one of the meetings, a 6-year-old boy asked how he could buy a drone. Later, he clarified that it was for the military. Previously, children at the age of 6 thought about how to buy a toy. This also applies to the issue of financial literacy.” (educational advisor)*
“I noticed that during war, children became more self-confident. Previously, they were mostly waiting to be told what they would do, but now they initiate, self-organize, and offer activities” (educational advisor)

- The youngest participants concentrate on their personal growth. They primarily focus on acquiring practical skills or knowledge that stimulates their learning during events. They display a keen interest in culture, traditions, and national crafts and interpret the political landscape in their unique perspective. Additionally, they express an interest in safeguarding the country and contributing to assisting adults, or at the very least, avoiding distracting them with their concerns.

• *“At the beginning of each activity, we sing the national anthem, it is very uniting and inspiring.” (12 years old, female)*

- Professional development is paramount for the younger age group as they seek to acquire skills that foster autonomy and enable them to earn income. The aspect of income generation can intertwine with a desire to contribute to military volunteers or achieve financial independence, thereby enhancing their personal development.

• *“I enhanced my proficiency in English, overcame the fear of speaking the language, and experienced a noticeable improvement in my communication skills. Additionally, working within a team provided me with the opportunity to develop and strengthen my leadership skills.” (17 years old, female)*

- The adults (18–25, 26–35) receive the most skills of leadership and activism, communication with others. For young people in these age groups, personal development is just as important. Regardless of the content of the programs, they receive the in-demand competencies through the very fact of being in an environment and atmosphere that allows them to do so.



“I have a teenage child. When I come to events with her, it brings us closer together. We find common ground, and that’s good.” (30 years old, female)

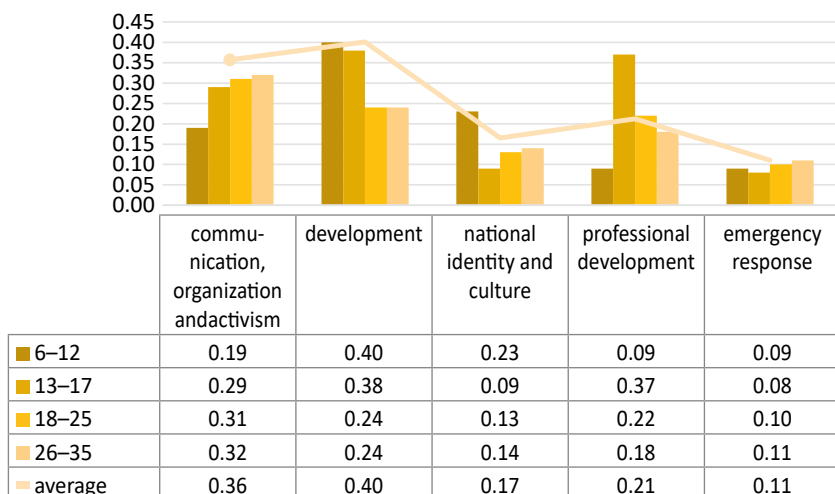


Figure 3.2. Aquired skills accross age groups

3.2. Aspirations for future skill development

The following chart illustrates the correlation between the prevalence of topics in educational programs, competencies acquired by participants, and desired competencies.

- Program topics: Responses from educational advisors using a closed-ended question (“Indicate the topics of key competencies in your programmes”) in the questionnaire.

- Acquired competencies: Competencies self-declared by respondents in response to the open-ended question (“What did you learn by attending educational events in the organisation/youth centre?”) in the questionnaire.
- Desired Competencies: Competencies were self-declared by participants in response to the open-ended question (“If you are offered to attend an activity again, what should it be?”) in the questionnaire.

Analytical Overview:

- Educational advisors’ declared competency groups are categorized into 5 of 10 available categories.
- Responses in the questionnaires regarding acquired competencies exclude responses of “nothing” (2.76%) and those lacking meaningful content, such as “difficult to answer,” “everything that happened,” “everything cannot be listed,” etc. (9.78%). Therefore, 84.85% of respondents (661 answers) are considered 100%.
- Responses in the questionnaires about desired activities exclude answers solely specifying the type of activities (types of activities are analyzed separately) — 33.63%.

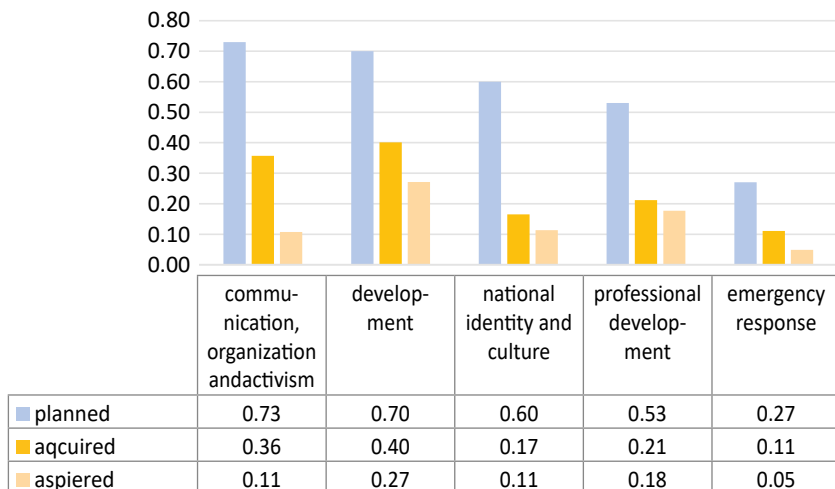


Figure 3.3. Planned, acquired and aspired competencies

- The responses of 12.58% of respondents who expressed willingness to participate in everything offered are considered, along with 6.93% who answered “do not know” or provided another uncertain response. In total, 46.86% of respondents (627) answered 100%.

The data analysis reveals that organisations primarily emphasized competencies related to leadership, communication, organisation, activism, personal development, and autonomy in their programs. For this set of competencies, there is a negative disparity between the competencies acquired and those aspired. It may indicate that the task has been achieved, participants are content with the outcomes of their activities, and they expect to gain other, more specific skills.

• “I learned that when you unite for a common goal, you can do anything. It’s inspiring 😊.” (16 years old, female)
 • “I learned to be a friend, to communicate, to be useful (we painted a fence in the school)” (15 years old, male)

The request regarding personal development and autonomy is fulfilled but remains relatively high. In the “identity and culture” category, there is a notable gap between the declared activities and the competencies acquired, along with a high demand for the future. The difference between the acquired competencies and the desired professional development activities remains nearly equal, as does the demand for developing skills in emergencies.

• “In fact, I was not very interested in historical events before, but after the activity I realized how powerful and strong our people are, you need to know their history so as not to make mistakes in the future. I also learned that there are many people with similar outlooks on life.” (17 years old, female)
 • “This is, in fact, my first job — organizing and holding events, working with documentation.” (19 years old, male)

The chart below depicts the correlation between competencies’ reachability and retention rate. Reachability is defined as the ratio between acquired and planned competencies, while the retention rate is the ratio between acquired and aspired competencies. It is evident that activities focused on

professional development are highly reached, and the programs have the potential for further development. A similar situation is observed in the connection between demands and potential within the “identity and culture” category.

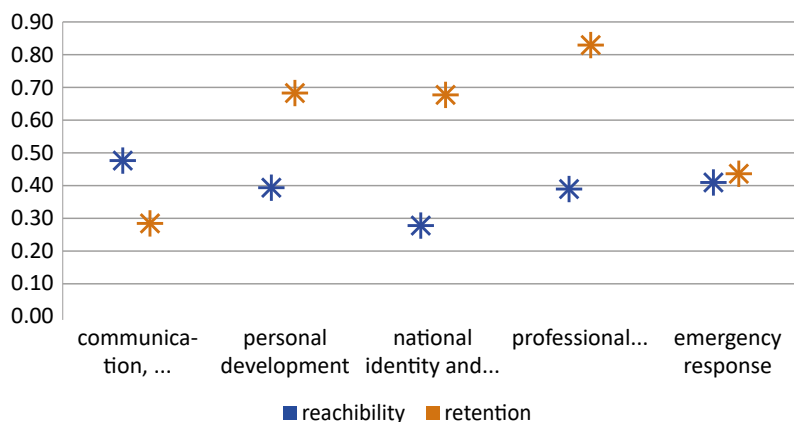


Figure 3.4. Reachability and retention rate

Expectations across age groups.

When examining the age-related characteristics of requests, several aspects stand out.

1. The youngest age group still emphasizes personal development. However, they also show interest in professional aspects, including a desire to engage in school subjects, programming, technology, English, and mastering skills such as playing musical instruments and handcrafting.
2. The younger age group expresses interest in personal development (especially activities with therapeutic effects or consultations with psychologists) and professional development. However, identity is frequently mentioned, particularly the desire to enhance proficiency in the Ukrainian language and history, including local history.

3. The older age group is more inclined to mention the component of national identity, expressing interest in engaging in activities related to studying history, culture, and practical issues contributing to achieving victory.
4. The oldest age group requests professional skills in technology, entrepreneurship, and English, which have received less emphasis in the activities designed for this group.

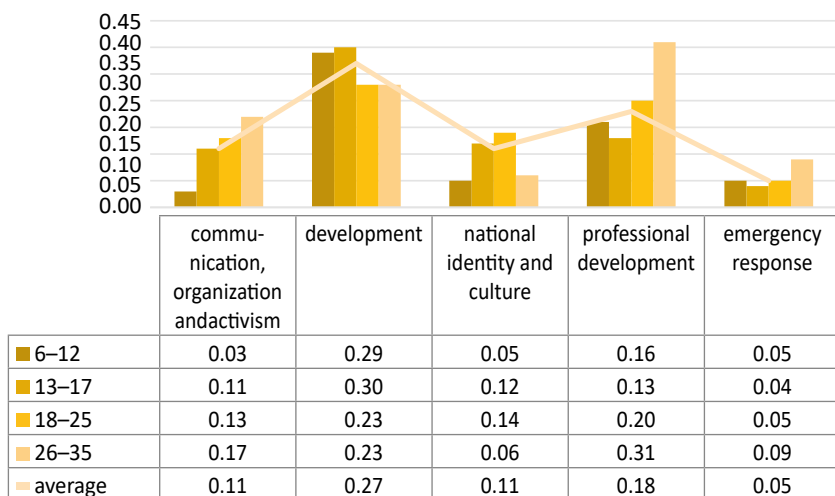


Figure 3.5. Aspired competencies across age groups

In general, the most in-demand competencies are those related to personal development, autonomy, and the acquisition of specific professional skills. However, we observe that the oldest young people would like to receive more professional skills within the framework of educational activities than they are offered. Clearly, young people of this age want more opportunities in a changing job market. The youngest participants also remember more about professional skills related to school subjects, or ideas about the profession market. For example, children are increasingly interested in technology-related sciences. This requires new approaches in career guidance for children.

The younger and older age groups share a keen interest in learning history and culture, driven by a desire to comprehend contemporary global processes. They wish for knowledge to be conveyed in an understandable and

accessible manner. Additionally, they anticipate ongoing participation in community activities and the continued development of their leadership and organisational skills.

3.3. Aspired types of activities

37% of respondents in their answers about their expectations for the future mentioned the types of events they would like to attend. Among them, the most mentioned are camps or residential trainings, game clubs (board games, “Mafia” or “Kryivka”, etc.), sports and outdoor activities.

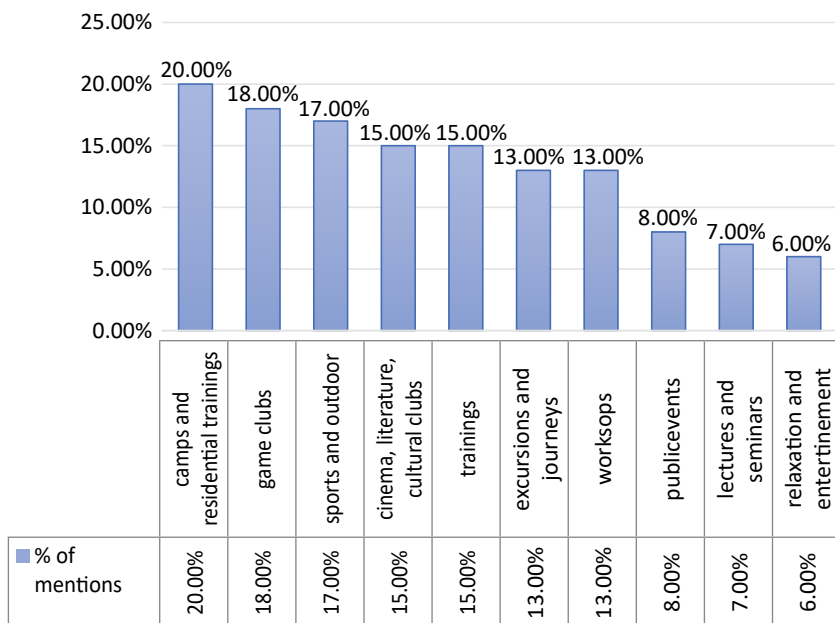


Рис. 3.6. Найбільш бажані типи заходів

When discussing types of activities, three main trends emerge:

1. Given the limitations on travel for young people during wartime, activities involving collective trips hold a particular value. These can range from

multi-day to single-day events primarily focused on socialisation. Approximately one-third of respondents who specified the event type mentioned formats such as camps, residential training, excursions, and trips. Notably, there were few camps provided by youth organisations in the first half of 2023, but state funding for summer holidays during martial law was unavailable. Travel and excursions were also minimized within the educational or extracurricular settings.

2. There is a considerable demand for youth centres or organisations where young people can gather, spend meaningful leisure time, relax, and acquire new skills. A third of the respondents mentioned different types of clubs. In games clubs, the predominant desire is to engage and socialize in an informal setting. Creative clubs, on the other hand, cover diverse cognitive interests in cultural domains such as cinema, music, literature, and language.
3. A notable demand exists for sports activities and public events, aligning closely with past engagement levels. Those interested in sports perceive fewer opportunities and look to youth organisations and centres to access such activities. Individuals accustomed to participating in or organizing large-scale events, such as forums, festivals, or fairs, desire to resume such activities.

• *"TEN-DAY CAMP" (9 years old, male)*

• *"It should be a camp in the Carpathians." (14 years old, male)*

• *"Who knows, maybe board games again. Then they will tell you something and you can play." (16 years old, male)*

• *"Just come. This is an unreal place that I love with all my heart. I would like every activity if mom let me go." (17 years old, female)*

• *"Very soon there will be a camp, and I am already packing my backpack." (19 years old, male)*

• *"Journey. It's so cool, new people, everyone tells something, a lot of activities." (19 years old, female)*

• *"Bonfire, when we discuss something from history and sing and talk to people." (21 year old, female)*

• *"I really like lectures and workshops." (23 years old, female)*

• *"I like thematic game nights because there is always something to learn." (33 years old, male)*

4. CHALLENGES AND ASPIRATIONS IN TIMES OF WAR

4.1. Skills, needed in wartime

The war has considerably impacted people's competencies, particularly within youth organisations and youth centres. Young people have linked acquired and desired competencies to program activities in various ways. However, competency changes are not limited to this specific context. We inquired with participants of educational activities about what skills they find essential today, skills that might have yet to be considered two years ago.

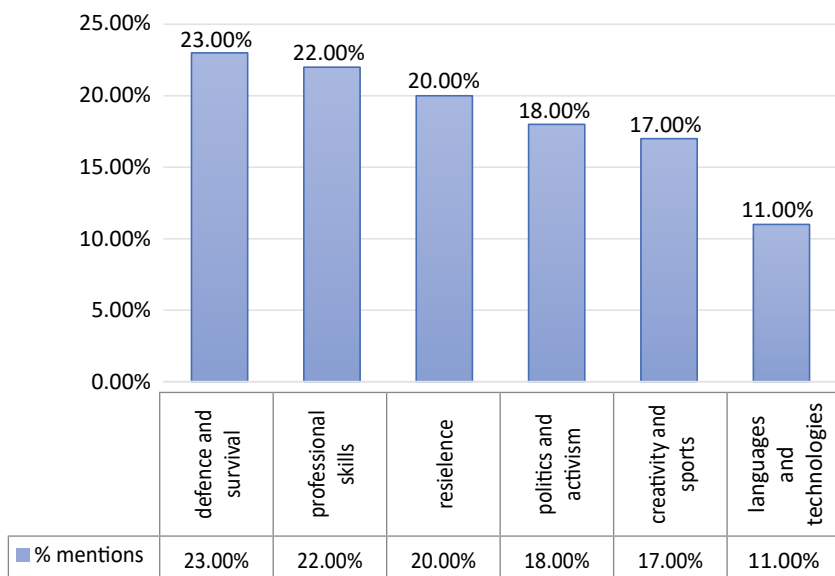


Figure 4.1. What would you like to be able to do today that you didn't think two years ago?

A majority (23%) emphasized skills related to safeguarding and survival. Participants noted that while such activities were present before, they now hold greater practical importance and encompass various aspects:

- First aid and medical knowledge: essential skills for assisting in case of injuries or emergencies.
- Self-defense, safeguarding, and security: skills enabling the implementation of measures to enhance personal safety and the security of others. This category also includes military skills aligned with the country's defense, encompassing concepts of mine safety.
- Survival skills: encompassing the ability to secure basic needs such as water, food, and shelter in critical conditions and the capacity to provide necessary assistance to others.

• • • *"I want to recognize the danger from the sky." (12 years old, female)*

Another group includes professional skills (22%), which may include the following aspects:

- The younger age group commonly expresses a readiness to acquire skills for financial independence, driven by a desire to have personal resources for autonomy but also for volunteering or community activities.
- Developing skills for economic self-sufficiency may entail a potential shift in the profession and means of earning as a response to changes in the financial system.

• • • • • *"I would like to start working and earning money at this age (before reaching the age of 18) to support charity, as well as to help my parents (and of course, to have some kind of big ocean instead of the Russian Federation, but this ...)" (15 years old, female)*
 • • • *"Managing projects correctly." (26 years old, male)*

Psychological resilience (20%) is important for:

- adapting to rapid changes and the ability to take on new challenges;
- ability to respond to stressful and traumatic situations, help oneself and others;
- the ability to function effectively in times of uncertainty.

• • • • • *"To adapt quickly to emergencies and help people in need." (18 years old, female)*

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4.2. Preferred activities currently unavailable

We asked the participants of educational events what they liked to do before the war and what is impossible today. From the answers, we can conclude that the greatest restrictions relate to activities related to travel, travel and free walks. This also correlates with the respondents' desire to participate in camps, field trainings, and other travel-related activities. Traveling and walking were mentioned by 41% of respondents. Responses include mentions of the following types of activities:

- travel abroad, the restriction is especially noticeable for adult men, whose departure is now rarely possible;
- travel with family or friends, which is currently impossible due to broken ties or due to the inaccessibility of favorite places where hostilities are taking place or they are under occupation;
- nature walks that are not possible due to mining or curfew restrictions.

• *"My parents and I went to the sea before. And now we don't go"*
(16 years old, male)
• *"I can't move around, travel, enjoy live communication with my friends, because they are now at the army, and I can't sleep peacefully."* (29 years old, female)

The second set of sentiments revolves around sports, music, and other creative activities. It is attributed mainly to the decline in extracurricular infrastructure and human resources in this field. The impact is particularly noticeable among school students who used to participate in art schools or sports clubs regularly. In numerous regions, the extracurricular education system has significantly diminished, leading to a shift in the demand for creative and sports activities towards youth centres and organisations.

• *"Probably, to swim, because before the war I went to a large swimming pool, but because of the war it was closed, because many people stopped going and there was nothing to serve the pool, now I go to the pool, which is 4 times smaller, and this is significant because this one is 6 meters, and that one was 24, there is little space."* (14 years old, male)
• *"I want to go dancing, but everyone who went with me to the club and the coach they left"* (14 years old, female)

14% of respondents answered that there are no such activities that they could not do today.

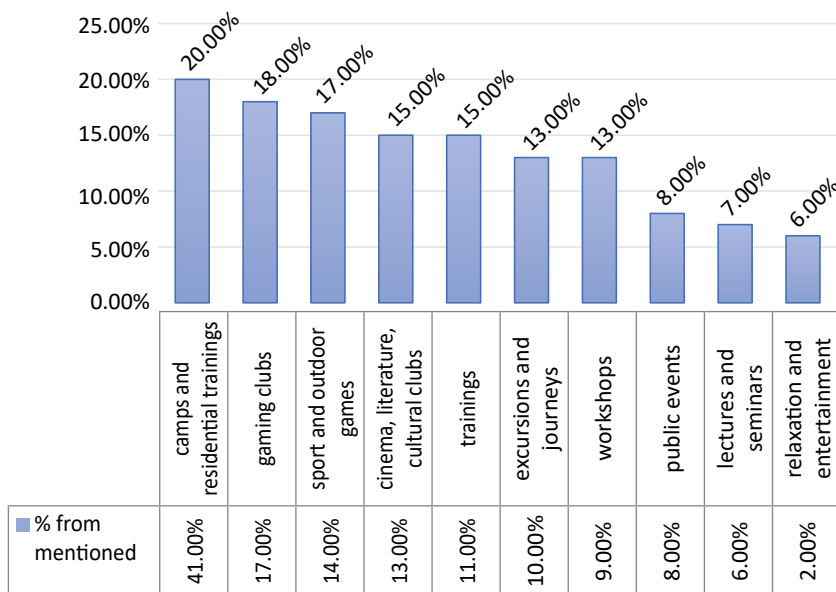


Figure 4.2. What did you like to do in peacetime that is not possible today?

Among other activities, the respondents mentioned social and cultural events (forums, concerts, festivals), going to school or their favourite work, and other entertainment. And those who moved remembered their hometowns.

- *"I liked going to school because I had a lot of friends or classmates." (15 years old, female)*
- *"I loved travelling and doing different events. Now it's as difficult as possible 😞" (16 years old, female)*
- *"In general, it is more difficult for me to sleep, I feel that when I rest, it is not the full capacity like with peace, because I know that there is a war going on" (19 years old, female)*

“My hobbies are quite “calm”, for example, embroidery. But now I’ve noticed that we hardly have any funny celebrations in the family.” (23 years old, female)

“In fact, life has changed dramatically, and you need to adapt, but I want to note that in peacetime it was easier to be kind and to love.” (25 years old, male)

“I liked to feel safe. Calmly visit cinemas, theatres, concerts, shopping centres and travel” (33 years old, male)

“Studying at my home school, travelling, sleeping in my bed.” (14 years old, female)

4.3. Sentiment analysis

Sentiment analysis reveals a neutral emotional tone with a prevalence of positive language. Among the responses, those from seven youth centres stand out as more sentimental, containing 30–48% positive words, with an average of 23%. Notably, five of these centres were relocated or restored following hostilities and occupation, while the remaining two managed shelters for IDPs.

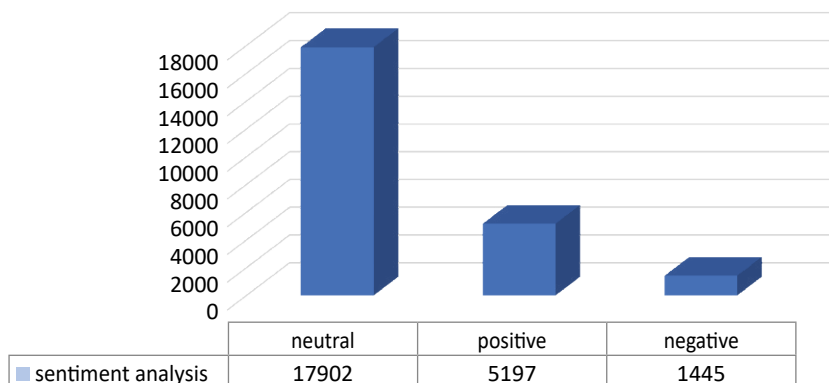


Figure 4.3. Sentiment analysis

5. ORGANISATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES

5.1. Organisations

30 youth centres and branches of youth organisations participated in the project.

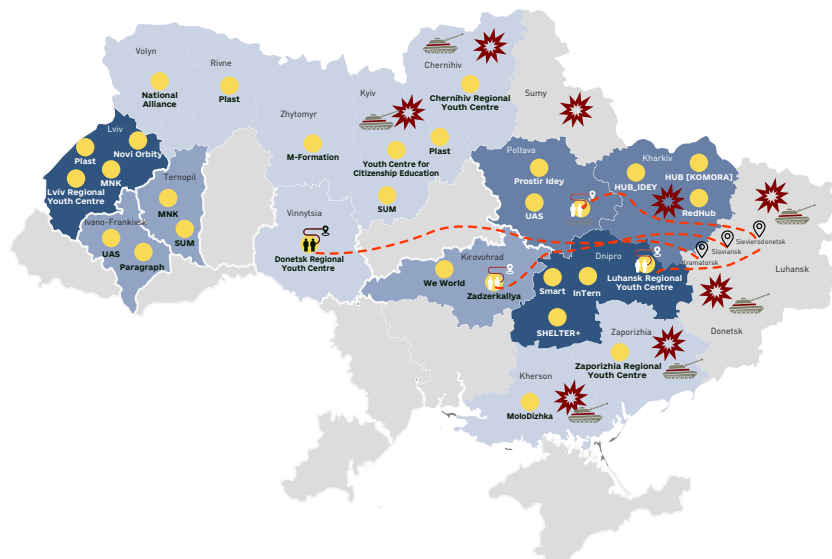


Figure 5.1. Regional coverage

Dnipro region

1. Charitable organization "SHELTER PLUS", Kryvyi Rih
2. Luhansk regional centre for support of youth initiatives and social research, Dnipro
3. Communal Institution "Youth centre "Smart", Slobozhanske
4. Communal Institution "Terniv City Youth Center", Ternivka

Lviv region

1. Communal institution of the Lviv Regional Council “Lviv Regional Youth Centre”, Lviv
2. Communal institution of the Lviv Regional Council “Lviv Regional Plast Center”, Lviv
3. MNK, Lviv
4. Youth centre “YC New Orbits”/ Cultural Youth Center “Suputnyk”, Lviv

Poltava region

1. All-Ukrainian organisation “CLASS”, Pyriatyn
2. Public Organization “Kremenchuk Information and Educational Center ‘European Club’”, Kremenchuk
3. Public Organization “Ukrainian Association of Students”, Poltava

Kharkiv region

1. Youth centre “HUB_IDEY”, Zmiiv
2. Youth centre “HUB [KOMORA]”, Pervomaiske
3. Youth Hub “RedHub”, Krasnohrad

Ivano-Frankivsk

1. Youth centre “Paragraph”, Ivano-Frankivsk
2. Ukrainian Association of Students, Ivano-Frankivsk

Kyiv

1. Youth centre for citizenship education, Kyiv
2. Public Organization Ukrainian Youth Union “CYM”, Kyiv

Kropyvnytskyi region

1. The first youth space “PROSTIR” (“SPACE”), “WE WORLD,” Znamianka.
2. Public Organization “Sloviansk Cultural Center ‘Zadzerkallia’”, Kropyvnytskyi

Ternopil region

1. MNK, Ternopil
2. Public Organization Ukrainian Youth Union “CYM”, Ternopil

Vinnitsia region: Donetsk Regional Children and Youth Centre, Vinnitsia

Volyn region: NA, Lutsk

Zhytomyr: Youth centre “M-Formatsiya”, Berdychiv

Zaporizhzhia region: Zaporizhzhia Regional Youth Centre, Zaporizhzhia

Kyiv region: Plast Training Center, Bucha

Rivne region: Plast centre, Rivne

Kherson region: Youth centre “MoloDizhka”, Kherson

Chernihiv region: Chernihiv Regional Youth Centre, Chernihiv

In February 2022, pandemic-related restrictions persisted, leading to two years in which youth activities were limited and replaced by online tools. Organisations relying on public events or summer camps as the primary tool for recruiting new members faced many challenges in engagement. Further developments impacted social ties, and the work of organisations and spaces began to recover as a response to the humanitarian crisis and military mobilization. Following the invasion, youth centres transformed into shelters of humanitarian aid points, offering both refuge and spaces for youth activities. The initial post-invasion months were a humanitarian response phase, during which youth structures effectively provided essential services. Organisations and youth centres encountered various challenges, including:

- **Evacuation from the front line.** Several organisations decided to evacuate teams to the safest place and needed support to rebuild their lives in a new location. It took a lot of effort and time to physically move people and teams, find resources in a new place, and position yourself among a new audience. Four relocated organisations participated in the project: Donetsk Regional Youth Centre, Luhansk Regional Youth Centre, “Class” and and Zadzerkallia. They moved, respectively, to Vinnitsia, Dnipro, Pyriatyn and Kropyvnytskyi.
- **Shifts in gender roles** have occurred within numerous member organisations, with men enlisting in the army, resulting in a substantial loss of human resources for the leadership. Women have stepped in to fill these roles, managing the organisation and supporting those engaged in military structures. It caused the feminization of leadership emerging from one aspect and the militarization of organisations from

another. Notably, the NA, the MNK, and the Plast Training Centre in Bucha witnessed pronounced instances of this transformation.

- **Communication with people under occupation.** Following the liberation of northern Ukraine and the regions surrounding the capital (Kyiv), the aftermath included the initial encounter with devastated infrastructure. Numerous young people who have experienced occupation or hostilities find themselves in need of support. The challenges were particularly pronounced during the periods of occupation, notably in the Kharkiv region and later in Kherson. In the former case, more communication was needed with specific youth hubs that were part of the Kharkiv branch of the Association of Youth Centres.
- **Transformation of infrastructure in safe regions** into shelters and humanitarian response points. Where the infrastructure of youth centres was developed, it was possible to receive IDPs there. In addition to the above-mentioned Zaporizhzhia Regional Youth Centre, people lived in the cultural centre “Suputnyk”, based on which the youth centre “New Orbits” operates, “Shelter Plus” opened its shelter, and the Plast training centre in Bucha was a living place for employees of services that restored critical infrastructure.

The first steps in the spring of 2022 were to resume communication with the understanding that the only thing organisations and youth centres can do is respond quickly to needs, support each other, and give a sign that no one is alone. Evacuation, loss of communication, shelter, support of military volunteers with equipment, and exchange of experience in chats were the most appropriate actions. In May 2022, organisations began considering reconstructing youth work and finding new tools to view the new circumstances. At this time, youth workers began to learn new tools in practice. Some managed to get people out of the shelter with the help of sports exercises, there were initiatives to integrate IDPs into local communities, and some structures resumed regular educational and leisure activities.

In the summer of 2022, the idea of resuming summer youth camps appeared. Usually, these measures should be supported by national and local budgets or private funds. At that time, the organisations needed more funds for such events. In addition, the equipment used for summer camps was mainly sent to the front. Thanks to foreign sponsors, youth organisations managed to provide several summer camps and an opportunity for young people to spend

time in the safest areas of the western part of Ukraine. Wintertime, with bombing, shelling, and lack of electricity, again directed efforts to humanitarian response. The task of NUMO was to provide youth spaces with generators and other critical devices. As a result, the youth spaces were filled with young people again because sometimes there was only one warm place with electricity.

The events of 2023 have brought organisations closer to regular youth work again. Within the framework of the project “Supporting Safe Environments for Youth Development in Ukraine”, educational advisors are responsible for the resumption of regular youth work in organisations, including youth camps, leisure, and educational activities.

Out of all 30 organisations participating in the project, 17 have the status of NGOs, 1 has the status of a charity foundation, and 13 are municipal/governmental institutions (youth centres and spaces that are members of the Association of Youth Centers of Ukraine). Of the 13 municipal youth centres, 3 are scouting centres.

A third of the project organisations work in small towns and villages with a population of 5–40 thousand people. These are municipal institutions (9) and one relocated organisation. The next three organisations operate in mid-sized cities (50–250 thousand) — one regional municipal institution and two non-governmental organisations; eight — in large cities (250–500 thousand) and 9 — in largest cities and cities with a population of over one million.



Figure 5.2. Communities and organisations

In 2023, organisations and youth centres changed the focus of their work towards the resumption of regular activities. In 2023, the organisation of leisure, the number of trainings, clubs, and master classes increased, the number of relocation activities, support to the army and humanitarian aid, and the management of shelters for IDPs decreased. This is due to the stabilization of the situation in the country, the elaboration of state structures and adaptation to the war.

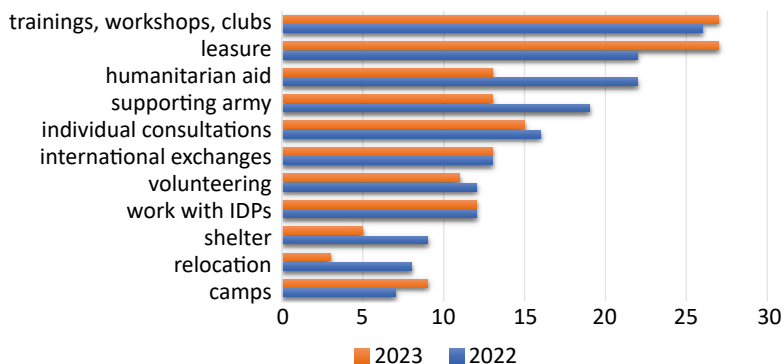


Figure 5.3. Main activities of participated organisations and youth centres

Regarding organisational management, 17 organisations reported minimal changes, while 6 mentioned a notable shift due to a substantial number of active members, primarily men, joining the army. Consequently, women assumed leadership roles within these organisations. Five organisations highlighted many members who moved to another place because of war, while another five had to start the management “from zero”. Remarkably, one organisation was established during the war.

The impact of men joining the army is evident in the youth organisations participating in the project, specifically Plast, CYM, MNK, and the NA. These organisations, known for their sustainable structures and leadership bodies, experienced a noticeable “feminization” of management as a direct outcome of this trend.

5.2. Best practices

During 2023, organisations changed their programs in response to the needs of young people. The outlined best practices were formed according to the following criteria:

- Learning outcomes and skills development.
- Participation of young people in decision-making.
- Integration of IDPs.

Learning outcomes and skills development

The reflections of participants engaged in educational activities revealed that young people can effectively engage in learning and skill development even amid the pressures and uncertainties of wartime.

Communication, leadership and activism

Cultivating such competencies is better achieved not merely through educational activities but is deeply rooted in an organisation's history and internal culture. In this context, youth organisations, particularly Plast or CYM, offer a specific pathway for early leadership or activist skills development. The primary mechanism in such practices is that a child or young person gains a sense of belonging from the initial connection with the organisation, obtaining formal or informal membership. This affiliation provides opportunities to engage in public and volunteer activities organised by the entire organisation, fostering a sense of involvement in something substantial and expansive.

In contrast, in youth centres, young people often function as visitors. Their identification with the organisation as a structured entity may be less pronounced, but they can independently organise their projects within the space.

Personal development and autonomy

In this set of competencies, successful practices encompass those that facilitate mental well-being, self-sufficiency, and autonomy. A crucial aspect is the request for basic knowledge of psychology, particularly significant for adults. For instance, the Lviv Regional Youth Centre, as part of its educational activities, introduced topics such as "Family Relationships," "Coping with Stress," "Assertiveness Skills," "Self-Reflection as a Tool for Learning," and "Overcoming Self-Doubt." These tailored topics directly addressed the

specific needs of young people, proving more effective than generic mental health training. Additionally, it's worth noting that the appropriate format of these activities fosters socialisation and communication, a point emphasized by participants in the events.

National identity and culture

Like leadership, the development of competencies in this domain is intricately linked to organisations' and youth centres' history and internal culture. Youth organisations like Plast, CYM, MNK, or the NA typically incorporate themes of history and culture. However, youth centres are also increasingly focusing on these subjects. Notable best practices include "HUB_Ideas," "New Orbits," and "MoloDizhka," which have integrated topics related to local history and identity into their programs. Another effective practice involves nurturing specific traditions within youth centres, such as displaying a flag, performing the anthem, organising meetings with veterans and combatants, celebrating essential dates, and fostering the Ukrainian language.

Professional development

In this area, exemplary practices manifest in two dimensions — providing support for younger students in studying school subjects and facilitating the acquisition of professional skills for older ones. For instance, the Donetsk Regional Youth Centre undertook activities to prepare displaced schoolchildren for the NMT. At the same time, the Chernihiv Regional Youth Centre initiated an internship program for young people within self-governance and community management. Other youth centres also conducted career guidance events, with instances where such initiatives assisted participants in securing employment opportunities.

Emergency response

Many programs aim to cultivate emergency response skills, often involving professional instructors in conducting training. Nevertheless, camps organized by youth organisations undeniably prove successful when it comes to survival in extreme conditions.

Participation of young people in decision making

In both organisations and youth centres, the active involvement of young people in shaping educational activities is most noticeable during the needs assessment stage. For instance, in the latter part of the year, the Luhansk Regional Youth Centre opted to concentrate on the theme of national identity and history, a decision reached after discussing potential topics with adult participants and parents of children. Changes in programs were also influenced by participants of events at the Lviv Regional Youth Centre, expressing a desire for continued psychological training.

A more tangible aspect of youth participation in decision-making is observed at the organisational level. Young people can propose and implement their projects utilizing the resources of the centre and the organisation. Such projects may involve organizing volunteer actions, charity events, or club activities. Such pathways for increased participation are becoming a norm in organisations and centres.

Integration of IDPs

The project's experience underscores that the most effective approach to engaging IDPs residing in shelters is through systematic visits, holding meetings, and providing information to motivate their participation in events. For instance, the Luhansk Regional Youth Centre spent several months visiting shelters until residents started attending events in other locations. It's crucial to consider that IDPs often find themselves in a different social environment, transitioning from smaller towns to larger ones. For many, experiences in public spaces and non-formal education may be entirely new. When a relocated institution conducts such visits, it establishes the foundation for greater trust.

Another effective method to attract IDPs involves informing and motivating recipients of humanitarian aid to participate in events. For instance, the RedHUB youth centre in the library had its point of humanitarian assistance. The same applied to Shelter Plus. These practices prove more successful than passive information dissemination. Reflecting on the Luhansk Regional Youth Centre's experience, the institution's localization and connections with other organisations are noteworthy. Being in the same space as local youth organisations helps prevent social exclusion practices against IDPs, encourages the involvement of diverse groups, and fosters further integration. Consequently, in the latter half of 2023, the Luhansk Regional Youth Centre welcomed local youth and IDPs from other regions.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2023, youth centres and organisations adapted to wartime challenges and implemented systematic educational activities. Project findings reveal the emergence of new audiences, shifting expectations, and identifying specific needs within the local context. Youth initiatives were characterised by their responsiveness to humanitarian needs, engagement in social work, and efforts to address educational gaps.

The concept of safety gained importance for both young audiences and the management of organisations and centres. Existing infrastructure transformed into shelters, fostering a secure environment while adhering to established safety protocols.

Within this safe atmosphere, youth centres and organisations played an essential role as socialisation spaces for young people who experienced disruptions in their social connections due to displacements or changed environments. Key elements of these spaces included interactive learning methods, effective communication, rule-setting, and opportunities for diverse forms of participation in activities.

Participants in educational activities deeply reflected their learning outcomes. Amid wartime challenges, youth centres and organisations continued to serve as spaces for developing civic engagement, leadership, and volunteering. Notably, in wartime conditions, these skills are honed through practical experiences, diminishing the demand for theoretical training.

The primary focus of interest of young people lies in personal development and autonomy, particularly regarding psychological resilience. Practising emergency response has also become vital, especially in frontline areas. Organisations and centres have addressed these needs. However, covering professional development and national identity demands more skills and knowledge from the site of educational advisors. Nevertheless, in the latter part of 2023, these aspects garnered increased attention in the programs.

In wartime, young people have had significant restrictions in the usual forms of leisure and socialisation. For school-age children and youth, learning recovery encompasses a variety of approaches, including traditional methods, hybrid forms, and online education. Youth centres take on a new significance, serving as a “third space” and a crucial environment for active social interaction among young people.

Due to limited opportunities for non-formal education, the infrastructure of youth centres often fulfils functions that sports clubs or art schools previously undertook. For the older age group, restrictions on independent travel, participation in public events, and engagement in sports or art have had an impact. It has increased interest in organising movie clubs, literary readings, concerts, and sports competitions.

The existing restrictions also affect the absence of summer camps, with youth organisations becoming the main organisers of such initiatives. There is a substantial demand for camps and other outdoor activities.

Based on the analysis of questionnaires, focus group results, and program content, the following recommendations are proposed for consideration in future activities:

1. Enhance collaboration among project-participating organisations and youth centres by intensifying networking and experience exchange to implement best practices. Ensure effective communication between educational advisors and young people, incorporating online meetings and offline activities that actively involve young people, not solely advisors.
2. Identify thematic aspects to enhance the socialisation of young people and implement youth exchange practices between different youth centres. Promote joint activities based on defining common thematic areas and organising youth exchanges.
3. Increase young people's influence on the content of educational activities by involving them in decision-making. Ensure better participation of young people in the program development process through design sessions and collective identification of critical elements.
4. Implement a project-based approach to educational activities, fostering the development of young people's ideas and elaborating team projects. Introduce a systematic approach to youth project development, encouraging active participation of young people in the process.
5. Focus on professional development for different age groups, utilising various methods such as training sessions, internships, meetings, and mentoring support.
6. Emphasise the theme of national identity through joint programs covering the study of local history, the celebration of national dates, and the understanding of social development and global processes.

- 7.** Establish a sustainable organisational culture and rules for youth centres to contribute to developing a long-lasting identity, regardless of potential changes in the centre's team.
- 8.** Develop unified approaches to implementing the component of personal development and psychological stability, considering changes in the needs of young people during and after wartime.
- 9.** Identifying common approaches to involving internally displaced persons in educational activities and recognising their needs and requests will evolve.
- 10.** Conduct continuous analysis of the needs of young people through the facilitation of reflection groups, focus groups, and mutual support groups to create programs that best address the specific needs of young individuals.