

- **Iryna Kushnir:** My name is Iryna Kushnir. Today is 28 of April 2023, and this is an online interview with Liudmyla. The interview for the project 'Immigrants from Ukraine' in the English higher education sector. Liudmyla let's start briefly by telling us a little bit about yourself.
- **Liudmyla:** I have worked all my life in education. I started as a secondary school teacher, the first five years of general secondary school. Then, after some time, probably due to professional burnout, I left school. I even started losing my voice. There was a lot of work and a heavy load at school and two shifts. I worked in the social sector - youth social protection, education administration, social protection administration at the local level. And then, apparently, I missed the education and returned again, worked with colleagues. I learned many skills. I have always been a teacher, and here I had to work as a trainer, that is, a teacher for teachers. And at first, I was very insecure. Do I have the right to tell someone something if I have not learned much? I have always been very self-critical of myself. Thanks to work, I had a chance to improve my professional level; these were summer schools in Britain and America, and this gave me the impetus to conduct training with my colleagues exclusively in Russian, because I have been teaching English as a foreign language all my life. They responded positively to it and said that indeed, it has a very good effect on their development of their language skills. That is, there were favourable reviews, and this gave me the opportunity to somehow push myself, work better, be more persistent and somehow develop further.
- **Iryna Kushnir:** Thank you.
- **Liudmyla:** I have been back to school for the past 3 years. This is how the circumstances turned out. I am a research fellow and teacher and have worked at various levels of education. I know education, 'from different angles' so to speak, and I think I have every right to tell someone about it, because I know it well.
- **Iryna Kushnir:** Yes, thank you. And please tell us briefly about your experience of moving to Great Britain.
- **Liudmyla:** The experience of moving... It was not a planned trip. My friends tried to help their families join them, because they have been living in Britain for a long time. And precisely because there was such a dangerous situation in my city, I thought about it too, but I didn't think I would go this far. It was such an internal breakdown for me, I would say. I did not have such a great desire to go somewhere very far, but there wasn't much option for me. And since the people were familiar to me, I thought that if I joined them, it would be easier for me to travel in the future. Then I travelled alone. The circumstances turned out to be such that all those people who pushed me to move, they went separately. And I started filling out the application while still in Ukraine, submitted the application and then went to one of my relatives studying abroad. And there I was waiting for a result, whether it would be successful, what would be the answer to the application submitted to the embassy in Britain. And when I got a positive answer, I bought tickets and came here.
- **Iryna Kushnir:** Sure, sure. Regarding the higher education sector in England... How well did your experience of finding a job in the higher education sector in England meet your expectations? Well, what were your expectations?
- **Liudmyla:** The fact is that all the applications that I have looked at, which are now offered to research fellows, are aimed at research fellows, who are in researching at the moment, since I have already been working at a school for the past three years, I cannot participate in joint projects as a guest lecturer, for example. Thus, my experience is not in demand, although it is very significant. I began to look for myself again in teaching in school, although I did not always find understanding from some people when they said: 'Why are you looking for a school or teaching? You can go to work for someone else, for example, in a supermarket and not spend so much time looking for a job.' But my desire to find my niche here was very great,

so I continue to look for work in this direction. I already have some experience of working in self-education in Britain.

- **Iryna Kushnir:** And how did you imagine working at a university in England?
- **Liudmyla:** Well, I can't say that I very clearly imagined working at a university in England. I roughly thought that if I was going to work, I would probably work as a teacher's assistant, because there must be qualifications, confirmation of qualifications that coincide with those that are generally accepted here, and for them to be enrolled. Since the qualifications obtained in Ukraine and my Ph.D. diploma, even if all these documents are translated (higher education documents), they do not correspond and are not comparable to local qualification levels. That is, it is very difficult for me and the path to finding a job is thorny. Therefore, I cannot say that I have a clear understanding of what exactly I could do for living. I could probably work, participate in research on pedagogy, since I am a candidate of pedagogical sciences and at one time researched 'Teacher communication with high school students' – it was roughly called 'Formation of communication skills of high school students'. Maybe it would be in demand somewhere, we would have to look further, but first we need to establish connections with one of the universities and see if the topic that interests me also interests the local community.
- **Iryna Kushnir:** You mentioned that you were looking at some kind of program to support Ukrainians who moved to England because of the war to support their job search at universities. What were the programs, and did you look for a job at the university in another way?
- **Liudmyla:** The whole search was limited to the fact that I read the expectations, that is, the requirements for candidates, and I read up to a certain mission and understood that it was stated there that you should represent a certain scientific institution. Since I do not represent a scientific institution, and I continued to work online at the Ukrainian school, so I stopped and did not look for anything further. Perhaps it was necessary to search further and try to get a job as a teaching assistant for a start, and then it would be clear with time. Perhaps we often limit ourselves, but if you look when filling out any form, wherever you get a job in the world, you need to indicate your qualification level, and when you even start to choose from those they offer, none of them is yours. And here you do not know, even if you think in your mind that your level corresponds to their level, for example number 3 or 5, but you cannot provide any evidence of this, you do not have local documents about this qualification level and you are not considered as a worthy candidate. I am quite self-critical about this whole situation, and I am trying to find a way along the way to get confirmation of my qualifications and the correspondence of my qualifications to the levels that are indicated in their qualification scale of education in Britain.
- **Iryna Kushnir:** And can you say a little bit more about what you're doing now and what you've already done to confirm that qualification level or get one, or any certificates you might have tried to get?
- **Liudmyla:** I visited the website 'getintoteaching' and there is a separate section that concerns Ukrainians, educators abroad and primarily for Ukrainians. One of the links leads to filling out an application to compare qualification levels. I got to the point in the application when it said that I had to prove my language skills, that is, provide some kind of certificate, a document about the level of English language proficiency. It should be at least B2, and since most of those who teach have the higher level, I was a little confused why B2. But I have absolutely no certificates or diplomas about my language skills. The second way to confirm is to provide a certificate from the university where you studied that all subjects were taught exclusively in English. I cannot say that when I studied in Kyiv, all subjects were taught in English. There were subjects such as the history of the CPSU (Communist Party of The Soviet Union), dialectical and historical materialism that certainly have not been taught in English in comparison with specialized subjects that have been. But most of the subjects were still taught in English, so it gave me the impetus to contact the administration of the university where I

studied with an urgent question, and they responded. I asked them for a certificate indicating the subjects and disciplines that were taught exclusively in English. I translated this certificate, added it to this application statement on the 'getintoteaching' website regarding the comparison of qualification levels and submit it, and now I am waiting for a response. These were my steps.

- **Iryna Kushnir:** Is it considered centrally or somehow specifically by universities?
- **Liudmyla:** You know, this was some kind of impersonal application, as I understand it, like everything on gov.uk sites. So, I can't answer your question clearly. I do not know how it is considered. There was also an organization that does this requiring payment, and I don't even understand what I was filling out, it's probably a free basis, but I don't know what will happen next. That is, everything I do here, it is the first time and by feeling my way. People ask a lot of questions in chats, there are not always answers in chats, you start looking for research fellows, you ask them, you try to get an answer – you don't always find it – they advise something else, then you go somewhere else and so the search continues without interruption.
- **Iryna Kushnir:** Sure. You also mentioned for the language and for the different levels and that the requirement is to have at least B2. Do you currently have B2 and what are your plans for it (some courses or communication with people in order to raise that level)? Do you want to retake that test or maybe you won't need it anymore? What is the situation with language certificates and so on?
- **Liudmyla:** I have not passed any test. I say my level is higher than B2 because I took the online tests and saw that my level is higher than B2. But this is without proof, because I don't have any document that would test my level and certify my language skills. I have some difficulty understanding certain native speakers when they speak very fast. This is not the English we taught our students. Although before that, I communicated a lot with foreigners and always understood everyone. I can't say that I don't need to study further. My path is such that I want to improve myself in both ways, language and professionally. That's why I found professional development courses for teachers. They provide an international qualification, and most importantly, it will be an internationally recognized certificate. These are very solid funds for teachers. And there must be a level, that is, the requirements for candidates are not lower than C1. To even be admitted to these courses, you have to complete an assignment, send a very detailed application, write an essay, and then there will be an interview. And only based on the results of all these points I will be enrolled in these courses. If the requirements say that the level should not be lower than C1, then I think that this will already be a certain certification of my competence.
- **Iryna Kushnir:** Thank you. You have already mentioned many obstacles that you see in your way, in the way of other people who are in the same situation as you. You mentioned the qualification level, the language. Are there any other problems, obstacles that you encountered in looking for a job and considering opportunities to get a job at a university in England?
- **Liudmyla:** I don't know if I will continue to look for a job specifically at the university, because every day I have to think if I am able to survive in this situation. That is, I need to feed myself, think about whether I will be able to pay the rent. Because I'm currently living with a host, and it won't be forever. And if you look specifically at my situation, exactly my situation, then I have to look for a new accommodation, I have to pay for it, and I don't have much time to think about choosing where to work. That is, I want to work in the field of education, and probably since there are a lot of offers specifically in schools, I will probably continue this way. Now I work in further education, that is, in Ukraine it's 'professional education'. Because it is a college and children who came there with incomplete secondary education, general secondary education, study there. It is compulsory in Britain. This is called 'further education'. Whether I will go further and higher, I do not know. But I try to work constantly, not to interrupt my career here in Britain. And I really hope that I can do it. That is, first of all, to support myself. And, in this way, I even try to support my family and my

relatives who stayed in Ukraine. Because the wage situation there is not very attractive. Even my, not very big, salary here somehow helps me to contribute more or less to the balance. Because we are all trying to help them in the situation that has developed, when it is very difficult in all senses and wages, including in Ukraine.

- **Iryna Kushnir:** Yes, yes, thank you. You mentioned earlier, before you started taking any steps to get into the general education. At first it was clear that it was very difficult to get a job at a university, you found a job in another field in the education sector. You mentioned the constant search for answers to your questions. You can say a little more about it, because it seems that, of course, this is a new system, everything is new, there are a lot of questions, and you have to find answers to all of them somewhere. And it seems like an organized system...
- **Liudmyla:** Did you want to know how I found a job?
- **Iryna Kushnir:** Well, how did you find a job and in general, how you look for answers to your questions, when you want to know something, but there is no one source where you can get all the answers.
- **Liudmyla:** In the beginning, we had a good relationship with my host, in whose house I was given accommodation. She gave me some tips, so I'm very grateful for that. And no matter how our relations develop in the future, I am still very grateful that the British help us somehow understand more about what and how is happening in their country. I sent my CV on the CV Library website and various agencies started calling me. Then I sent my CV several more times because there were also tips from the Job Centre. I went there periodically, because we had meetings and there was a person who helped me put together my CV and told me how best to create it, that there are different types of CV and what and how would it be better if I was more of such a sought-after candidate. Then I also communicate with educators who are in Ukrainian chat groups. And one of them is my colleague. She also works in the education sector. She told me something. That is, communication with local Ukrainians is chats for Ukrainians who are in the area where I live, and these are different chats. If a person asks a question, there will always be someone who will respond and tell you something, and you gather information bit by bit. If you start navigating on different sites, one link after another, you can also get to a lot of things. And besides, the people who suggested that I leave for Britain themselves work in education. They have many associates, contacts of Ukrainian research fellows. And one of them that we turn to, like gurus who know a lot, have achieved a lot in this country, so they are definitely very authoritative people for us, and we listen to their opinion. That is, observation, discussion with colleagues, exchange of experience and listening to the advice of people who know about it.
- **Iryna Kushnir:** And are there any local sources of information where you can ask someone local, other than the people you live with, or the people who live in locality?
- **Liudmyla:** No, you know, unfortunately not. Only if I need some advice, I was going from pillar to post and don't always find the answer. I am employed by an agency, and I faced a lot of inconveniences with things that I had no idea about. And only now, at the end of the school year, I understand what, where and how it happened. And when I became more experienced and asked specific questions, I realized that the agency did not expect this from me either, because the system of paying specialists, which we are not familiar with, is different from the Ukrainian one. That is, there are questions like that, and you have to be somewhat of a lawyer and figure it out. That is, you seek advice from lawyers, educators, and people who know about taxes, what to pay, where to pay, and whether I should pay. Well, a very wide range of people who can help, but at the local level, there are no such people near me, unfortunately. Therefore, it takes a lot of effort and a lot of time to find the right person who could advise you on something useful. And I have a not very positive experience, when in one of the chats it was announced that there would be a meeting with two specialists of an international organization that deals with refugees, and there is such an organization in the city of Peterborough. And they came to our area, there was a meeting, and one of the representatives

asked: 'Where do you work? What do you do for a living? What are your requests?'. When you say what questions you have, they tell you to go to another person. Another representative sits and says, 'Here is my address, you send me your documents and if you are interested in, for example, qualification levels, I will help you. You must send all your educational documents.' I sent. Then this person disappeared from the horizon. I couldn't get in touch. When I tried to remind that there was such a meeting, it was your efforts to help us, then please help. Then I found this organization on Facebook, I wrote in messenger, and there was no response. I understood, maybe I'm wrong, but that they took all our data, everyone who was there at that meeting...maybe they reported that they helped us. It's a very bad thing that I think that, I understand, but I got a very strong impression that the help... [loss of connection] And this information was sent as a report on the work done by two representatives of this International Organization. If no one gives feedback, how else can it be evaluated? This is the experience I have.

- **Iryna Kushnir:** I got you. Regarding the possibilities. Of course, there seem to be a lot of obstacles. And do you see any opportunities and support that really exist here in Britain to help Ukrainians get a job in higher education?
- **Liudmyla:** Everything I've heard about says that you can get a job in education only at school. I have not heard any feedback that it is possible to get a job at the university. And even the person who is one of the two people I mentioned at the beginning of my story who motivated me to come to Britain, she works at the university. But this is not my specialty, it is not pedagogy, it is the natural sciences, and the person has developed certain relationships with certain educational organizations in Britain long before the war, so this person is in demand. I had a different path, and I am not such a recognizable research fellow that foreign universities would invite me to cooperate. Therefore, I stopped at school and didn't dream about anything else. Perhaps it will somehow be reconsidered later, and I will do something in a new, different way. It would be an interesting and useful experience for me.
- **Iryna Kushnir:** Thank you. Well, if it was possible to organize some kind of help for Ukrainian refugees here. What, in your opinion, would be very necessary for Ukrainians in order to facilitate such a path, with employment in higher education?
- **Liudmyla:** Well, Information, and it would be necessary for representatives of some newly created agency or institution, or simply, perhaps some community on a public basis, to start communicating with us through the channels of information that are available to us when we arrive in a new country. And through chats, meetings, people are informed, and it is found out for whom this topic is interesting. And I think that my colleague, who is currently in London, but continues to teach English language practice to her students in Kyiv online, would also like to work, but works only for Ukraine, but does not work in Britain. When she tried to somehow earn herself living, even a little, the most she could count on was working at the "Primary School". And it was still not a very good experience for her, because when we are arranged by agencies, we are not instructed at all, we are simply given materials. A person goes and teaches mathematics or something else, even though she is a philologist, and this does not give us self-confidence, you know what I mean? And a person understands that she is not in demand here, she is in demand only in her native country, because there are a lot of obstacles here. So, I think that information channels should be in those places, in every locality, where Ukrainians gather. And there are such places, I'm sure, in every county, when all Ukrainians know that, for example, on Saturdays they gather in such a church, and on Thursdays they gather for language courses there. And that is, it is necessary to give advertisements and announcements through these chats, through some pages on Facebook, and people will know more and apply, I am sure.
- **Iryna Kushnir:** Thank you. And would it be good if it were organized by residents or local people with Ukrainian roots? What would be more useful?

- **Liudmyla:** I think it would be a good idea to inquire. I am sure that in every council now, in every county there are Ukrainian-speaking residents or simply Ukrainians who work there. Because I ran into people who came from Ukraine and recently arrived; they already work in local councils, and through them local communities of Ukrainians can be reached out and some joint activity can be planned through local councils. Because they are interested in ensuring that those who came are employed, that they pay taxes because they are here. And I think that this would be a great deal and a thank you from Ukrainians who, like me, do not know much and are going from pillar to post.
- **Iryna Kushnir:** Thank you. And what are your plans for the future?
- **Liudmyla:** Plans for the future are to move to a new home, pay for it myself, and for this I need a job. Because my temporary job ends at the end of the semester or academic year. That is, every time you have to think about a new job. And for the future, I probably won't get a job through an agency, because I'm already experienced, and I'll look for a job directly on the websites of educational institutions. And I think it will give me more confidence to work on improving my language skills, first of all, pass the exam on the courses I signed up for. I hope that I will be enrolled there. That is, go further, raise my professional and language level, provide for myself, because there is no other point of support. You only have to help yourself. But apparently, the local council will also help, because there is help that all Ukrainians receive, and it is offered when moving to a new home.
- **Iryna Kushnir:** You mean the financial allowance, right?
- **Liudmyla:** A benefit so that a person can buy furniture. Financially – no. Financially – yes. They somehow pay less taxes, different types of taxes, the tax is less, so yes, there is financial allowance. Yes, you are right, there is such a benefit.
- **Iryna Kushnir:** Thank you. These are basically all the questions I wanted to ask. I just want to ask if there is anything else that came to your mind that would be worth mentioning?
- **Liudmyla:** Well, from the point of view of education, because our conversation had exactly that direction, probably not. It's just that I think we're always going to keep comparing how it's done in our school to how it's done in a British school. We see and compare every day. We have our own impressions; everyone has their own. And just like in general about medicine, about everyday life, what we encounter in everyday life. That is, there are pros and cons in each country, and what is more native and more suitable for whom is very individual. Therefore, we learn something new every day and the main thing is that we, Ukrainians, help each other. It's a really big deal because I don't feel like I'm alone because I can go to someone to turn to. I am very grateful to fate that there are such people who have achieved a lot in this country. It was very difficult, and they are ready to help others. Thank you.
- **Iryna Kushnir:** Thank you very much. Thank you very much for your answers. It was very interesting and very necessary. Thank you very much.