

9. Eastern Europe

Status of Japanese-language education in Eastern Europe

The number of institutions across Eastern Europe reached 497 (a 17.5% increase compared to the previous survey in 2021), the number of teachers reached 2,070 (a 20.1% increase), and the number of learners reached 56,881 (a 26.8% increase), all showing growth.

The countries with the highest number of institutions are Russia (192), Poland (47), Hungary (35), Czech (23), and Romania (21), in that order. The top three countries remain unchanged from the previous survey. The number of teachers is as follows: Russia (786), Poland (269), and Uzbekistan (157), followed by Hungary (106) and Czech (106). The number of learners ranked as follows: Turkmenistan (14,844), Russia (13,525), Poland (6,409), Uzbekistan (4,201), and Romania (3,708). Turkmenistan saw a significant increase in the number of learners (up 5,979, a 67.4% increase compared to the previous survey), causing it to swap places with Russia, which had ranked first in the previous survey. In addition, this survey confirmed the provision of Japanese-language education in Kosovo for the first time.

Looking at the changes by country since the previous survey, the number of institutions increased in 12 countries, remained the same in 10 countries, and decreased in 6 countries. The number of teachers increased in 18 countries, remained the same in 6 countries, and decreased in 4 countries. The number of learners increased in 14 countries and decreased in 14 countries.

The proportion of learners by educational level was 4.8% for primary education, 30.2% for secondary education, 35.8% for higher education, and 29.2% for non-school education, showing a similar trend to the previous survey.

The online class implementation rate across the entire region stands at 60.4%, higher than the global rate of 30.9%. When viewed by educational level, the implementation rate is particularly high in non-school education (84.4%).

Looking at the purposes for learning Japanese, interest in anime, manga, J-POP, fashion, etc. (88.1%) and interest in history, literature, arts, etc. (84.1%) were particularly high. Furthermore, interest in the Japanese language (72.4%) and study in Japan (61.4%) were also higher than the global results.

Table 2-9-1 Number of Institutions, number of Teachers, and number of Learners in Eastern Europe

(Listed in order of the number of Learners in 2024)

Country and Region	Number of Institutions in 2024 (institutions)	Number of Teachers in 2024 (people)	Number of Learners in 2024 (people)	Learners per 100,000 population (people)	Number of Learners in Primary education 2024 (people)	Number of Learners in Secondary education 2024 (people)	Number of Learners in Higher education 2024 (people)	Number of Learners in Non-school education 2024 (people)	Population* (people)	Number of Institutions in 2021 (institutions)	Number of Teachers in 2021 (people)	Number of Learners in 2021 (people)
Turkmenistan	20	88	14,844	331.1	0	11,318	3526	0	4,483,251	12	56	8,865
Russia	192	786	13,525	9.2	1,374	2,624	4328	5,199	147,590,600	151	666	12,426
Poland	47	269	6,409	16.8	225	270	2650	3,264	38,036,118	47	234	5,008
Uzbekistan	19	157	4,201	21.2	0	225	3365	611	19,810,077	18	129	3,579
Romania	21	63	3,708	19.5	25	308	931	2,444	19,053,815	12	40	1,892
Bulgaria	11	88	2,353	36.1	725	970	240	418	6,519,789	6	25	1,207
Hungary	35	106	1,847	19.2	95	335	901	516	9,603,634	32	94	1,815
Czech	23	106	1,713	16.3	0	64	688	961	10,524,167	13	83	1,304
Kyrgyz	14	50	1,708	33.4	131	280	557	740	5,107,640	13	40	1,300
Ukraine	14	93	1,498	3.1	75	65	946	412	48,240,902	17	105	2,052
Georgia	9	27	745	20.1	35	143	297	270	3,713,804	9	25	588
Kazakhstan	8	29	581	3.0	0	35	282	264	19,186,015	8	38	611
Croatia	6	27	436	10.2	8	0	192	236	4,284,889	6	21	441
Serbia	4	14	423	6.4	0	159	264	0	6,647,003	4	13	484
Belarus	9	22	390	4.1	0	0	125	265	9,435,251	10	26	384
Estonia	10	18	352	26.4	0	113	150	89	1,331,824	14	18	376
Lithuania	9	16	333	11.8	0	45	165	123	2,810,761	10	16	404
Slovakia	16	26	326	6.0	0	28	57	241	5,449,270	11	16	246
Azerbaijan	4	15	274	2.8	0	72	164	38	9,943,958	4	15	339
Armenia	7	22	239	8.9	0	0	99	140	2,689,438	8	23	321
Slovenia	5	21	239	11.3	15	0	101	123	2,108,977	4	19	244
Tajikistan	3	8	174	2.3	0	0	119	55	7,564,502	5	8	223
Albania	1	1	150	6.2	0	0	150	0	2,402,113	1	1	300
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3	4	136	3.9	0	74	10	52	3,531,159	3	4	76
Latvia	3	7	130	6.9	0	45	55	30	1,893,223	3	5	175
Moldova	1	3	126	4.5	0	0	0	126	2,805,194	1	2	131
North Macedonia	2	2	11	0.6	0	0	6	5	1,836,713	1	1	75
Kosovo	1	2	10	-	0	0	0	10	-	0	0	0
Eastern Europe overall	497	2,070	56,881	—	2,708	17,173	20368	16,632	—	423	1,723	44,866

*Source: *Population and Vital Statistics Report (as of 3 January 2025)*, by United Nations

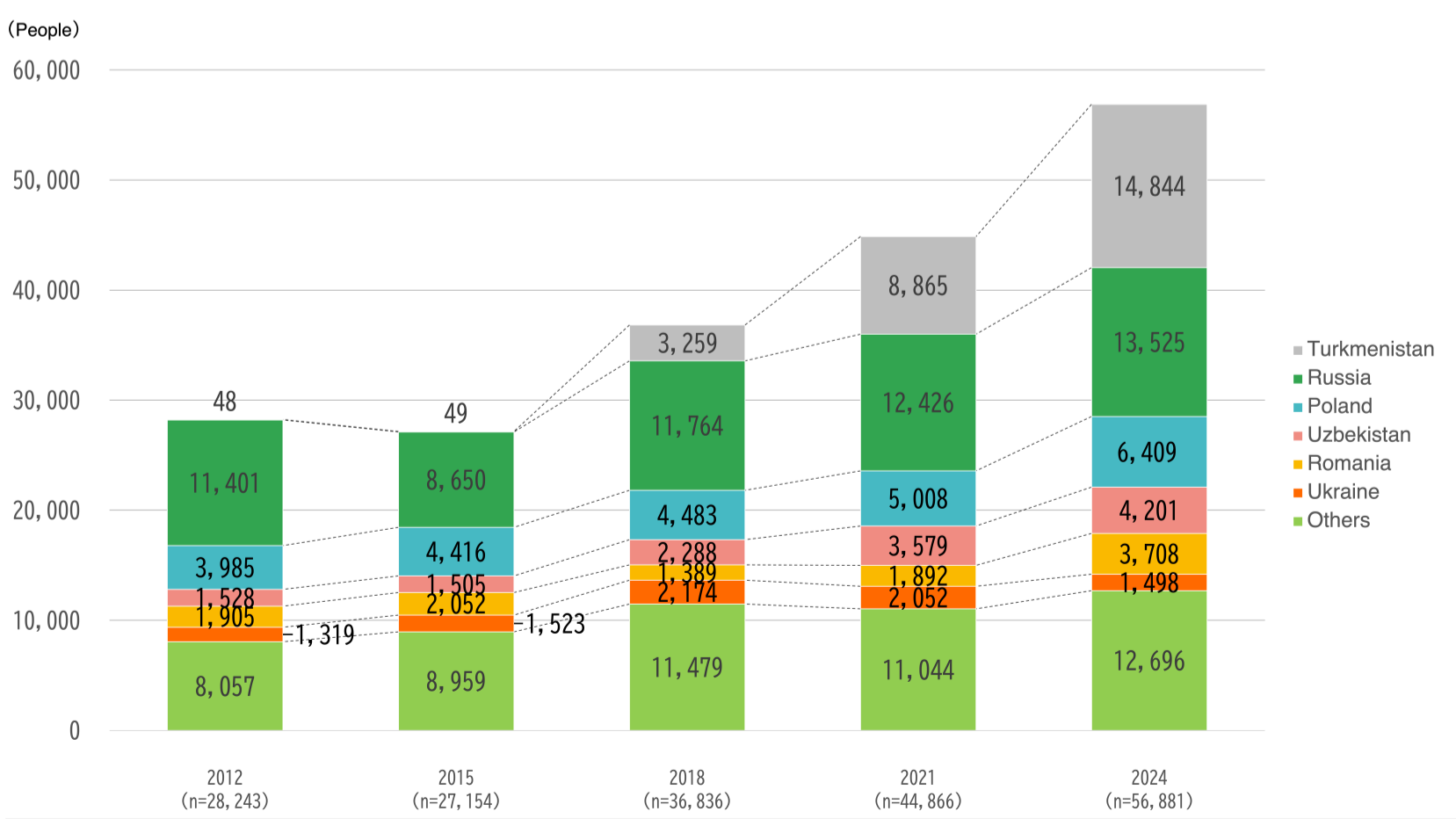
Graph 2-9-1 Number of Institutions in Eastern Europe



Graph 2-9-2 Number of Teachers in Eastern Europe



Graph 2-9-3 Number of Learners in Eastern Europe



Graph 2-9-4 Percentages of Learners by educational stage in Eastern Europe

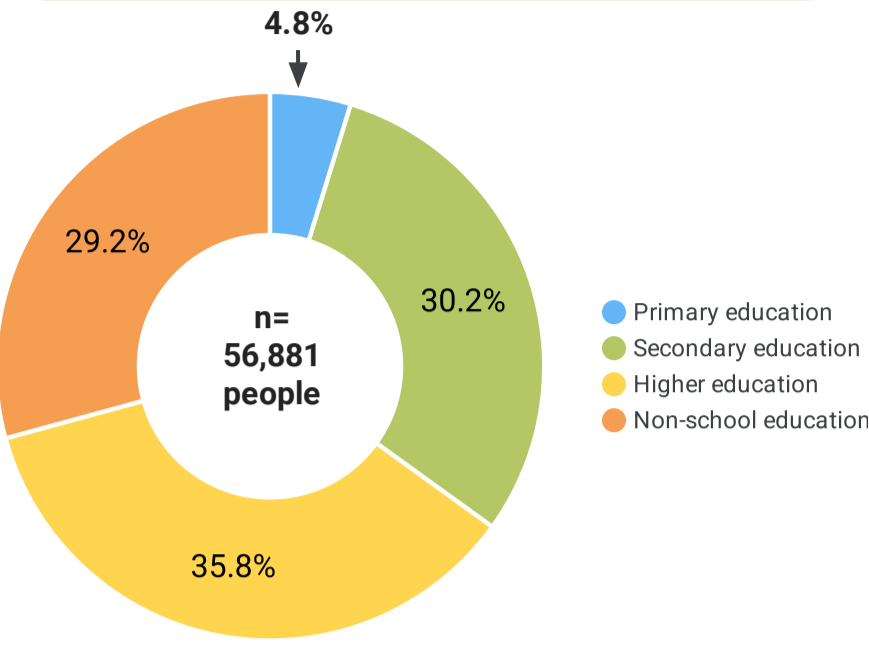
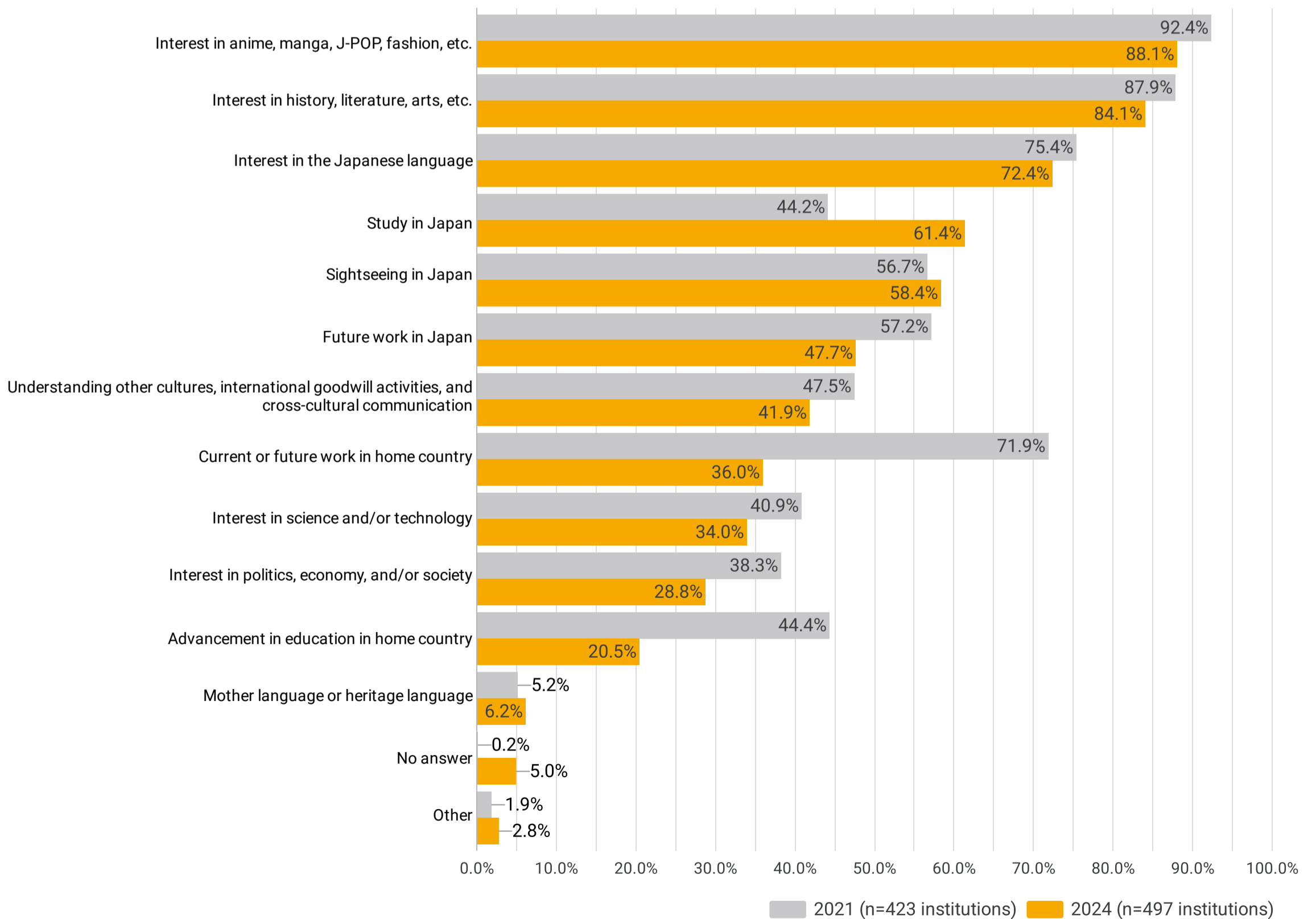


Table 2-9-2 Online class implementation ratio in Eastern Europe

Country and Region	Number of Institutions in each Country and Region	Online class implementation (institutions)	Online class implementation (%)	Country and Region	Number of Institutions in each Country and Region	Online class implementation (institutions)	Online class implementation (%)
Azerbaijan	4	2	50.0	Czech	23	14	60.9
Albania	1	1	100.0	Turkmenistan	20	0	0.0
Armenia	7	4	57.1	Hungary	35	17	48.6
Ukraine	14	12	85.7	Bulgaria	11	5	45.5
Uzbekistan	19	9	47.4	Belarus	9	6	66.7
Estonia	10	6	60.0	Poland	47	34	72.3
Kazakhstan	8	4	50.0	Bosnia and Herzegovina	3	2	66.7
North Macedonia	2	2	100.0	Moldova	1	1	100.0
Kyrgyz	14	6	42.9	Latvia	3	1	33.3
Croatia	6	3	50.0	Lithuania	9	3	33.3
Kosovo	1	1	100.0	Romania	21	13	61.9
Georgia	9	2	22.2	Russia	192	135	70.3
Slovakia	16	11	68.8	Eastern Europe overall	497	300	60.4
Slovenia	5	4	80.0				
Serbia	4	2	50.0				
Tajikistan	3	0	0.0				

Graph 2-9-5 Objectives of Japanese-language learning in Eastern Europe



Trends in each country and region

[Ukraine]

Due to Russia's military invasion, Japanese-language educational institutions have been temporarily closed, and Japanese-language educators, including teachers, continue to be forced to evacuate. Due to this impact, opportunities to learn Japanese have decreased, resulting in a significant decline in the number of institutions, teachers, and learners. On the other hand, against the backdrop of Japan's track record of support for Ukraine and expectations for continued assistance, the number of new learners is on the rise. A notable change in Japanese-language learning at educational institutions is the widespread adoption of online education due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the military invasion.

Despite the challenging circumstances surrounding the survey, it was conducted with cooperation from the Association of Japanese Language Teachers in Ukraine and other organizations. For institutions that could be contacted, staff from the Embassy of Japan in Ukraine made direct contact to carry out the survey.

[Uzbekistan]

Overall, the number of institutions, teachers, and learners increased from the previous survey (2021), but decreases were observed at certain educational levels.

At the time of the previous survey, a presidential decree was issued to strengthen foreign language education, and efforts to enhance foreign language learning were implemented even at primary education institutions. However, due to difficulties in continuing classes caused by shortages of teaching materials and teachers, as well as the revelation that there was no local demand for such education in the first place, the number of primary education institutions decreased significantly in this survey.

The Uzbekistan government is promoting the strengthening of foreign language education, including Japanese, with the aim of developing human resources and diversifying destinations for labor export. Against the backdrop of economic liberalization and population growth within Uzbekistan, Japanese educational institutions are increasingly expanding their presence in the country, while efforts to strengthen Japanese-language education domestically are also intensifying.

[Hungary]

In primary and secondary education, the number of institutions remained largely unchanged compared to the previous survey (2021), but the number of learners decreased by approximately 20%. Among these, institutions offering Japanese-language education as an extracurricular activity, a common format in Hungary, have reported that Japanese clubs have been discontinued due to successive teacher resignations.

Regarding secondary education, there is a growing trend favoring practical disciplines such as engineering and IT over foreign language education, driven by concerns about social conditions including politics and economics. Additionally, in foreign language education, there has been an increase in learners choosing European languages such as English, French, and German over Japanese.

In higher education, the number of institutions, teachers, and learners all increased. This is partly because the impact of higher education reforms since 2021 led to the privatization of many universities, resulting in a shift in management policies toward increasing student enrollment. A similar trend was observed at universities providing Japanese-language education. At some universities, an increase in the number of

classes due to increasing the number of learners led to a significant increase in the number of teachers as the universities expanded the hiring of part-time teachers to meet the demand. On the other hand, some universities continue to see significant budget cuts for foreign language education due to the effects of privatization.

In non-school education, an increase was observed in both the number of institutions and the number of learners. Regarding private tutoring, while it was common in the past to hire native Japanese speakers as tutors through personal connections, recently more Japanese-language teachers have begun seeking Japanese-language learners via social media. Tuition is often cheaper than at language schools, and while this practice is becoming increasingly widespread, reports indicate that the quality of teachers is inconsistent.

[Poland]

At present, only one institution providing Japanese-language education in primary education has been confirmed.

The 2017 education reform in Poland abolished junior high schools (*gimnazjum*) and restructured six-year elementary schools into eight-year combined schools. Additionally, high schools transitioned from three-year to four-year programs. As a result, secondary education in Poland does not include an educational level equivalent to that of junior high schools in Japan, and only upper secondary education is categorized under secondary education.

In secondary education, while the number of institutions remained unchanged from the previous survey (2021), the number of learners increased significantly (up 48.4% compared to the previous survey). Teenagers' interest in anime and manga is exceptionally high, and this likely explains why many young individual learners, whether attending private Japanese-language schools or self-studying, are taking up Japanese-language learning.

Following the establishment of the Japanese Studies Course at the University of Gdańsk, a national university, in 2023, an increase in the number of teachers and learners in higher education has been observed. On the other hand, the growing popularity of Chinese and Korean may also affect future trends in the number of Japanese-language learners. Career development for learners majoring in Japanese at university remains a constant challenge. Securing a position at a Japanese company after graduation is by no means easy, and as a result, many choose to pursue a career as a Japanese-language teacher. While Japanese-language departments may include Japanese-language teaching methodology in their curricula, there remains a need to consider establishing an environment for training Japanese-language teachers who can be immediately effective in the classroom.

A characteristic of non-school education is the prevalence of small-scale Japanese-language schools. Interest in Japanese culture is high, and the number of learners studying Japanese on their own as a hobby is increasing year by year. Consequently, the number of language schools teaching Japanese both in person and online is increasing. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for graduates of Japanese-language departments and others to offer private lessons online.

[Russia]

Following the travel advisory issued in response to Russia's military invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the number of Japanese nationals and Japanese exchange students residing in Russia has decreased, significantly altering the environment

surrounding Japanese-language education. On the political front, while relations have deteriorated, including Japan being designated an unfriendly nation, interest in Japan among Russian citizens remains exceptionally high, particularly for tourism. This is evidenced by the number of visas issued to Russian nationals for travel to Japan reaching record monthly highs since the beginning of 2025. Regarding language learning, the diversification of languages available for study is occurring alongside the emergence of multipolarism at the political level. This survey suggests that despite the growing influence of China within Russia, there remains strong demand for Japanese-language learning. However, it is important to note that the circumstances surrounding Japanese-language education vary significantly from city to city.

The number of institutions and teachers in primary education continues to decline from the previous survey (2021). On the other hand, the number of learners increased by 42.5% compared to the previous survey.

In secondary education, while the number of institutions has increased slightly, the number of teachers and learners has sharply declined. One reason Japanese-language education has struggled to gain traction in primary and secondary education is the lack of official textbooks for use in school education and shortage of teaching materials. It has also been reported that Japanese-language education in Russia is often carried out by a single Japanese-language teacher, and when that teacher resigns, Japanese-language education ceases.

Higher education is on an upward trend in terms of the number of institutions, teachers, and learners. The Central Federal District, where the capital is located, has the highest number of institutions and is seeing an increase in the number of learners. In the Volga Federal District, the number of institutions and teachers remained unchanged, but the number of learners decreased significantly from the previous survey. This may be attributable to the decline in the number of learners at Kazan Federal University and Linguistics University of Nizhny Novgorod, the district's major higher education institutions, due to reduced interest in Japanese. Furthermore, the current situation has made studying or working in Japan difficult, and the fact that Japanese-language skills do not provide an advantage in the Russian job market is also contributing to a decline in learners' motivation. Meanwhile, Orel State University (Central Federal District), Altai State University (Siberian Federal District), and Perm National Research Polytechnic University (Volga Federal District) are showing signs of expansion, for example, by newly launching Japanese-language programs. Reports indicate the presence of learners who study Japanese out of an interest in Japan while understanding that it may not lead to future employment, suggesting that learning motivations may be shifting.

In non-school education, the number of institutions, teachers, and learners is on the rise. In school education institutions, in-person classes have basically resumed since the COVID-19 pandemic, so the number of institutions reporting online classes has decreased. Conversely, in non-school education, that number has increased. Online language schools have the advantage of lower initial setup costs and easier market entry, which is also contributing to the growth of Japanese-language education traditionally provided by private tutors.

Due to recent circumstances, securing native Japanese-speaking teachers has become difficult, leading to fewer opportunities for learners to interact with Japanese speakers. Meanwhile, Japanese-language education utilizing online platforms continues. The Japan Foundation, Moscow reports that a cumulative total of approximately 200 teachers have participated in its online seminar for teachers, Japanese-Language Teachers' Day, since 2021. Teachers from both inside and outside Russia have taken the lead in establishing online exchange platforms for learners in Russia and Japan. Even under circumstances where in-person interaction is difficult, cultural exchange between Japan and Russia through language continues.

China's economic influence in Russia is also reflected in circumstances surrounding foreign language learning, and this survey also reported learners who prioritized Chinese and stopped studying Japanese. The Russian government also supports Chinese-language learning. According to the Federal Service for Supervision in Education and Science (Rosobrnadzor), the number of examinees taking the Chinese-language section of the Unified State Exam, which also serves as the university entrance exam, increased approximately 1.6-fold between 2019, its inaugural year, and 2022. (Japanese is not offered as an exam subject.) In the education system, a change occurred in September 2022 whereby the second foreign language, which had been a compulsory subject starting from the fifth grade, was removed from the list of required subjects. Along with the impact on Japanese-language learning due to China's growing presence within Russia, future developments will be closely watched.

[Other Countries and Regions]

In Kosovo, Japanese-language educational institutions were confirmed for the first time in this survey.

In Turkmenistan, following Prime Minister Abe's visit in 2015, a fundamental expansion of Japanese-language education was implemented under the initiative of then-President Berdimuhamedov (now National Leader and Chairman of the People's Council). At that time, there were only one higher education institution and one secondary education institution (equivalent to Japanese elementary through high school) offering Japanese-language courses in Turkmenistan. However, the number has now increased to seven higher education institutions and 13 secondary education institutions. Furthermore, the number of Japanese-language learners in Turkmenistan has increased from approximately 50 to approximately 14,000. Reflecting the current favorable relations between Japan and Turkmenistan, enthusiasm for learning Japanese in Turkmenistan remains high. In that country, the two major universities providing Japanese-language education are Dovletmamet Azadi Turkmen National Institute of World Language, which specializes in foreign language education, and Oguz Han Engineering and Technology University of Turkmenistan, established in 2016 with the aim of providing Japanese-style engineering education.

Despite Romania's declining population, the number of Japanese-language learners increased from approximately 1,900 to approximately 3,700 compared to the previous survey, indicating a further rise in interest in learning Japanese. In higher education, many institutions have newly introduced Japanese-language programs, and the number of institutions has increased. Looking at the breakdown of learners, while the number studying within the school education framework showed only a slight increase, the number of learners in non-school education more than tripled from 680 in the previous survey. This indicates that the center of gravity of Japanese-language education in Romania is shifting from higher education to general language courses.