

Integration of Ukrainian children into the Czech educational system

The material briefly summarizes the position of children of compulsory school age coming from Ukraine from the point of view of the Czech education system, their rights and obligations as enshrined in the applicable legislation, the principles of successful integration and support of these children and practical instructions on how to proceed when accepting children into schools and solving problems with insufficient capacity.

A) Current legislation – the rights and obligations of the *Ministry of Education and*

Culture, in accordance with national and international law, fulfills its obligations to ensure the conditions for the education of refugees.

From the very beginning, the Ministry of Education and Culture considers the integration of Ukrainian children and pupils into Czech schools a priority and the fulfillment of a legal obligation - see Section 20 of the Education Act on the education of foreigners, Section 34a on compulsory pre-school education and Section 36 on compulsory school attendance.

- The Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international obligations oblige the Czech Republic to introduce compulsory basic education for all children and foreigners. From the point of view of the Education Act, the **same rights and obligations** apply to children from Ukraine with a temporary protection visa as to all other children in our territory, including the obligation to pre-school education and school attendance.
- Lex Ukraine II allows children from Ukraine to postpone the obligation of pre-school education or school attendance up to **90 days after receiving** a temporary protection visa¹.
- The Education Act enables all children without distinction to fulfill compulsory school attendance below in the following ways:
 - 1) attendance at a Czech school (§ 36), 2) individual education (§ 41), 3) at a school outside the territory of the Czech Republic (§ 38),
 - 4) in a school established at a diplomatic mission or consular office of the Czech Republic (§ 38),
 - 5) in a foreign school providing education in the territory of the Czech Republic according to a foreign educational program, established in the territory of the Czech Republic by a foreign state, a legal entity with its seat outside the territory of the Czech Republic or a foreign citizen..., in which the Ministry has authorized the fulfillment of compulsory school attendance in the relevant school year (§ 38),
 - 6) in a European school operating on the basis of the Convention on the Statute of European Schools (§ 38),
 - 7) individual education abroad (§ 38).

Children with a temporary protection visa residing in the Czech Republic can therefore fulfill compulsory school attendance according to point 1); 2); 3); and 5).

In cases where the child would participate in centrally broadcast distance education in Ukraine (so-called "Ukrainian online"), which consists only in one-way mediation of study support, during which there is no interaction with the pupil, monitoring of his work, educational progress and assessment of achievement of outputs, **the very existence of centrally broadcast teaching cannot be considered**

¹ However, in order to adapt these children to the Czech environment and prepare them for entry into the Czech education system, the Ministry of Education and Culture continues to financially support adaptation activities for the period from September to December 2022 -

<https://www.edu.cz/vyhlaseni-vyzvy-msmt-na-podporu-adaptacnich-skupin-pro-deti-cizince-migrujici-z-ukrainy-zari-prosinec-2022/>.



for automatic fulfillment of compulsory school attendance of a Ukrainian child in a foreign school in the sense of point 3) or 5).

B) Principles of successful integration and support of foreign children *Lex Ukraine I*

and II set the basic principles for the integration of Ukrainian children into the education system, taking into account both the capacities of primary and kindergarten schools, as well as vocational studies (*Integration of Ukrainian refugees 2022+ - housing, labor market, education, PAQ Research*) and the experience of other European states in managing refugee waves.

- In the first 90 days of their stay in the Czech Republic, Ukrainian children can take advantage of the opportunity to [attend adaptation groups](#) funded by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, whose main task is familiarization with the new environment, acclimatization, adaptation, integration into the team and mastering the basics of the Czech language for easier subsequent integration into Czech schools.
- Ukrainian children should primarily be individually [integrated into "regular" classes](#), so that foreign children they made up less than half of the class.
- In cases where integration into a regular class is not possible due to organizational, personnel or other serious reasons, schools can place foreign children in "homogeneous" [Ukrainian classes](#).
- As part of supporting adaptation and integration, the school can accommodate foreign children for the necessary time [educational content according to the individual needs of the child](#).
- A foreigner child is [entitled to free language training](#) in the scope of up to 200 hours as part of compulsory school attendance.
- [Ukrainian teachers](#) without knowledge of the Czech language can work in Ukrainian classes.
- In the period April–August 2022, schools meeting the conditions could draw financial resources for the position of [adaptation coordinator](#), a non-pedagogical worker helping with the integration of Ukrainian children into school life.
- In the 2022/2023 school year, schools that meet the specified conditions will be able to draw funds for the position of a [Ukrainian teaching assistant](#) who will help with the integration and education of foreign children in regular classes.

Within the framework of defending the best interests of foreign children and after negotiations with representatives of the Embassy of Ukraine, the Ministry of Education and Culture advocates and promotes full-time education of Ukrainian children:

- Participation in face-to-face teaching in a Czech school irreplaceably supports adequate gradual [adaptation and integration into society](#), which is a fundamental and necessary prevention, as evidenced by experience and research from other countries that have gone through a refugee crisis in their history.
- Participation in face-to-face teaching in a Czech school and gradual integration into the peer group is an important support for refugee children in [overcoming trauma, fears about the future and destabilization](#).
- We observe significant negative effects of long-term distance learning due to covid on the mental health and development of children, especially during adolescence. Just like Czech children, their peers in Ukraine also went through the period of distance covid education - [the extension of distance education](#) in the next school year would most likely mean an [enormous impact on the psyche](#) of these children, negative effects on mental health, further exacerbated by being torn from their home environment, uncertainty, experienced traumas, worries about loved ones, social isolation.
- It is proven that children and adolescents spending many hours a day in the "digital world" have negative effects on the development of the individual - long-term participation in distance education combined with social isolation creates conditions for [the growth of digital addiction, cyberbullying](#), etc.
- For younger children, participation in face-to-face education secondarily enables [the involvement of the parent in the labor market](#).

C) Procedure for problems with school capacity

Although overall the capacity of kindergartens and primary schools in the Czech Republic is sufficient to ensure the full-time fulfillment of compulsory school attendance and the compulsory year of pre-school education for all Ukrainian children currently residing in the territory of the Czech Republic, in some regions the existing capacity for the integration of all children not enough foreigners. This happens especially where, even before the war in Ukraine, capacities were borderline or insufficient, and then, of course, where refugees are concentrated, especially because of affordable housing or the labor market. Therefore, Lex Ukraine establishes specific rules and procedures that are a useful tool for capacity management.

- 1) The 90-day adaptation period, when school attendance is not compulsory, enables Ukrainian families with children to ensure stable conditions and suitable [housing in an area with available school infrastructure](#) and employment opportunities. During this time, children can attend free adaptation groups, the operation of which will be financed on the basis of a request from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports in the period September–December 20221 .
- 2) If the legal representative submits an application for compulsory elementary or pre-school education and the school cannot accept the child due to capacity reasons, it is advisable to recommend the legal representative to attend an available [adaptation group](#) before a place for the child is found in another school.
- 3) The director decides whether or not to accept a child for education as part of the administrative procedure. The standard period for issuing a decision is 30 days, but in justified cases the director can extend this period up to 60 days.
- 4) It is possible to admit a child beyond the capacity of the register to the kindergarten in the [individual education](#) regime. In primary school, however, even an individually educated pupil is included in the capacity.
- 5) If, even after the deadline, the director cannot accept the child, he/she will issue a decision on non-acceptance. If it is a drop-in school for the child, the director immediately informs the founder about this situation.
- 6) [The founder](#) will discuss with the principals of the other kindergartens and elementary schools that he establishes, the possibility of accepting the child in one of these schools. If the founder does not establish any other school or if it is not possible to accept a child in any of the other schools established by him due to capacity, the founder informs the relevant regional authority.
- 7) [The regional office](#), after discussion with the other school founders and principals, will determine another school within its jurisdiction where the child can be accepted. The regional office is entitled to "designate" not only a school established by a municipality or union of municipalities, but also a school of a private or church founder, if it is within the family's means and in the child's interest, following this procedure.
- 8) If, due to the full capacity of all schools established in a certain region, a child cannot be accepted, the regional office informs the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Department of Regional Education Management about the situation. The [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) determines the school in which the child will be admitted.
- 9) There is no need for the founder, the regional office or the ministry to lead on this coordination procedure finding a suitable driving school. They can also do informal meetings. However, it is essential that the "designated" school be chosen as soon as possible and within a reasonable driving distance from the place of residence in the best interest of the child, or the child's family.
- 10) Lex Ukraine also establishes [simplified conditions for the creation of new school capacities](#) by public founders. Capacity in existing or new premises can be entered in the register in a shortened procedure without documenting the opinion of the KHS. At the same time, Lex Ukraine stipulates that during the time that schools and school facilities educate or provide school services to children from Ukraine, they are not subject to hygienic requirements for spatial conditions. The Ministry of Education and Culture handles these requests for capacity increases



preferably in the shortest possible time. As of 8/17/2022, 168 such applications were approved and school capacities were increased by a total of 6,143 places.

D) Summary and outlook The

Ministry of Education and Culture continuously monitors the situation in the territory through an extraordinary investigation in schools, in the framework of which data on children/pupils/students arriving from Ukraine for education in the 2021/2022 school year and further for the new school year 2022/ 2023, vacant places (capacity) in schools and the possibility of increasing school capacity from September 2022.

The analytical outputs of this investigation, including the complete dataset, were sent to regions and other actors in the territory in mid-July 2022. KÚ and ORP have online access to the reported data.

Schools will be invited by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports to update the data before the start of the 2022/2023 school year, and subsequently the number of pupils will be "officially" reported as of 9/30/2022.

At the moment, no major problems have been announced from the territory with the admission of those children from Ukraine who came to special registrations or applied for admission to education outside of special registrations (for higher grades of elementary school) for compulsory school attendance.

In the event of a fundamental change in the situation, the Ministry of Education and Culture is ready to operationally prepare other supporting or legislative instruments.