

**UNICEF REFUGEE  
RESPONSE OFFICE IN  
THE CZECH REPUBLIC**

*Results and priorities*

---





**372,513**

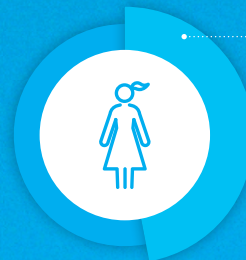
**Refugees from Ukraine currently  
have temporary protection  
in the Czech Republic**



26.1%

**96,842**

**Child refugees**



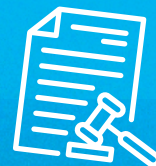
47.2%

**175,697**

**Women refugees**

On average around 1,500 new refugees continue to arrive every week in the Czech Republic.

Lex Ukraine VI legislation extends the temporary protection of Ukrainian refugees until March 2025.

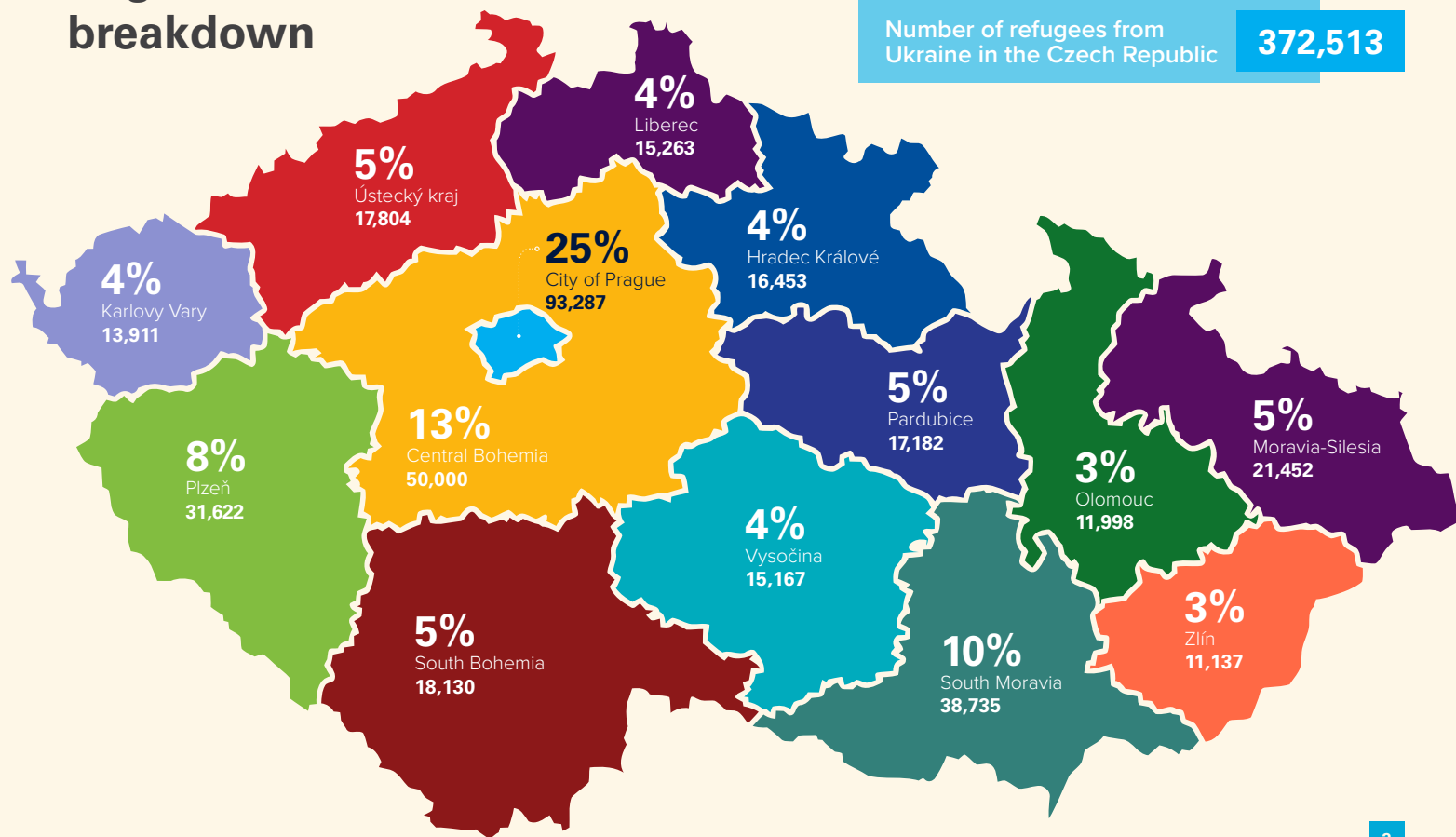




# Regional breakdown

Number of refugees from  
Ukraine in the Czech Republic

**372,513**





## Key challenges



### HEALTH

Limited availability of paediatricians and general practitioners, language barriers, and limited understanding of how to access public health services.



### EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

Parents of 45% of children aged 0-5 do not use any childcare services.<sup>1</sup> Only 44% of children aged 3-6 are enrolled in mainstream kindergartens.<sup>2</sup>



### EDUCATION

48,090 refugee children from Ukraine are enrolled and learning in Czech schools in school year 2023-24.<sup>3</sup> There are limited spaces in schools, language barriers, shortages of teachers and other staff, and unmet need for psychosocial support.



### PROTECTION

Urgent needs for mental health. Heightened risks, especially for women – such as sexual exploitation and abuse, gender-based violence, human trafficking, and labour exploitation – as well as for children separated from their parents. An estimated 30-50 minors per month arrive from Ukraine without their parents, requiring individualized case management.



### ADOLESCENTS

An estimated 16% of youth from Ukraine aged 15-24 years are not in education, employment, or training.<sup>4</sup> UNICEF's consultations with youth indicate that many youths face a trade-off between the financial pressures they face in displacement and the ability to continue education.

<sup>1</sup> PAQ Research, July 2023

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, September 2023

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, September 2023

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR, Czech Republic Multi-Sector Needs Assessment, December 2023



# UNICEF in action

The government and people of the Czech Republic have demonstrated a remarkable and enduring solidarity in welcoming over half a million refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine. At the same time, the sudden arrival of a large refugee wave has put significant pressure on the national system. UNICEF has been working in close partnership with national institutions to support the delivery of the refugee response, including targeted humanitarian services, policy and systems strengthening, as well as enhancement of national and local capacities.

Strengthening **national systems** by partnering with ministries and other national level authorities. UNICEF established workplans with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports; the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs; the Ministry of Health; and the Ministry of the Interior.

Strengthening systems at **local level** to provide services for refugee children and families through partnerships with regions and municipalities. UNICEF established a partnership with the City of Prague, which hosts the largest share of refugees (25 per cent) to provide comprehensive support and services for refugee children and their families. UNICEF is supporting refugee response coordination at regional level to address the needs of the most vulnerable refugees in a comprehensive manner.

Strengthening outreach and services for refugee children and their families by partnering with **civil society organizations (CSOs)**. UNICEF is supporting the expansion of outreach and provision of basic services to the most vulnerable refugee children and their families, including unaccompanied and separated children, children with disabilities and children from the Roma community.



# Key programmatic principles

## **COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH**

Providing comprehensive social services from early childhood to adolescence. Policy coordination with Ukraine.

## **SUSTAINABILITY**

Working with and through national systems: strengthening the system to cope with the additional pressures in a way that will – in the long term – benefit all vulnerable groups.

## **REFUGEE ENGAGEMENT**

Reflecting the voices and participation of refugees in programme design and implementation through consultations and feedback mechanisms. Building capacities and engaging refugees in the response.

## **SOCIAL COHESION**

Facilitating the inclusion of refugees in Czech society through programmatic interventions and partnerships. Expanding services to both refugee and host population in need.





**EVERY CHILD LEARNS AND  
DEVELOPS FULL POTENTIAL IN LIFE**



**Results to date:** UNICEF has supported the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) and other partners to strengthen the education system, increase enrolment and ensure quality learning outcomes for all refugee children. Since July 2022, UNICEF has partnered with the MoEYS, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the City of Prague, and various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to support the Government of the Czech Republic's inclusive approach for Ukrainian refugee children's education and development.

**Over 110,000 children and adolescents**, including **over 460 Roma refugee children**, were supported in their learning through a range of formal and non-formal education programmes to facilitate quality learning.

A dedicated **communications campaign** reached thousands of families with essential information about the Czech education system and schools, and the MoEYS **helpline responded to requests and questions from over 25,000 people**, from both Ukrainian and Czech communities.

**Over 10,000 teachers, school staff and caregivers** were equipped with skills to provide safe, healthy, and inclusive learning environments to promote mental health and psychosocial support, social and emotional learning, inclusive education, and teaching of Czech as an additional language. Over **1,000 Ukrainians and Czechs completed courses** to become qualified teaching assistants in 2023.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and UNICEF launched **a special grant scheme** enabling access to multiple forms of non-formal early learning opportunities for **over 7,300 children (including 3,900 children under 6 years of age) in 67 centres** across the country. Over **2,500 parents** of young children benefited from parenting support and consultations, adaptation and integration courses, and parent-child playgroups.



**In 2024**, UNICEF will continue to support equitable access to inclusive quality education for refugees and other vulnerable children, including Roma and children with disabilities, from early childhood to adolescence. For the 2023-2024 school year, the aim is to support learning outcomes for refugee girls and boys by focusing on the following key interventions, while strengthening the system of inclusive education in the country:

Expanding access to formal and non-formal early childhood education and care for young children aged 0-6 years

Including out-of-school children of compulsory school age (5-15 years) and prevent dropouts

Establishing multiple learning pathways for adolescent youth (age 15+), targeted at those who are facing financial pressures and a tradeoff between education and employment due to displacement

Enhancing outreach, information and communication support to Ukrainian families on education services and the other support available (such as psychologists and case management)

Systematizing capacity building of teachers, teaching assistants (both Ukrainian and Czech), and caregivers in inclusive education

Strengthening teaching of Czech language as an additional language to facilitate children's learning, social integration, and inclusion as well as future employability

Promoting a safe school environment by providing mental health and psychosocial support to refugee children, preventing bullying while promoting social cohesion, desegregating refugee children and including them in the mainstream education system

Generating and using new evidence to inform policies (such as on the impact of teacher training, Czech language proficiency, and secondary school admissions), including feedback from stakeholders and students

Advocating mainstreaming refugee-targeted interventions into national systems to enhance education and learning in the context of the Education Strategy 2030+



# Teaching Assistants

Teaching assistants play a vital role for education, learning and inclusion of refugee children in Czech schools. With UNICEF's support and in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, the Educational Institute of the Central Bohemia Region (VISK) and its partners have supported capacity building of teaching assistants through qualification courses, including provision of Czech language education for Ukrainian participants.

Oksana Demchenko used to work as a teacher and left her home in eastern Ukraine with her children after the escalation of the war. To become an assistant, she took part in a course organized by VISK, learning how to work with children and address their special education needs:

*"When I saw a teaching assistant helping my own children, it was such a great inspiration for me!"*

She is now working as a teaching assistant in an elementary school close to Prague to support Ukrainian and Czech children's learning, communication and mental health.

**[Watch Oksana's entire story: Teaching assistants play a vital role in inclusion, psychosocial support and learning](#)**

Over 1,800 teaching assistants, both Ukrainian and Czech, have enrolled in courses, and more than 1,000 already passed the final qualification exams. Hundreds more students have enrolled this academic year.





# Early childhood development

Access to early childhood education and care (ECEC) is critical for young refugee children's development, regaining a sense of normality and wellbeing. Importantly, access to ECEC enables mothers to work, improving the overall wellbeing of the family and integration.

Liudmyla and her family used to live in a small town in Lviv region. When the war started, Liudmyla decided to leave with her five-year-old son Yegor. They spent the first month in Warsaw and later moved to Prague. Liudmyla started a new job and enrolled her son in the play and learning group at Kampa Community Centre.

*"The first month in Poland was extremely difficult for Yegor. He was sick and had a fever most of the time. He was afraid of being too close to the frontline. When we moved to the Czech Republic, he joined the play and learning group and soon began to feel safer and better, partly thanks to the great teachers there. He was able to make new friends, and his health improved."*



In 2022 and 2023, almost 4,000 young children like Yegor accessed learning and care through diverse activities and programmes in 67 play and learning centres across the Czech Republic that have been supported by UNICEF through various partners, including the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Regional Integration Centres, CSO partners, and the Municipality of Prague.





**EVERY CHILD IS PROVIDED  
WITH ADEQUATE HEALTH CARE**



**Results to date:** UNICEF partnered with Ministry of Health to provide health care services for refugees and other vulnerable groups.

**Increased access to primary health care services:** Ministry of Health and UNICEF established 10 outpatient centers in six hospitals (Prague, Ostrava, Olomouc, Kolin, Stod, Havlickuv Brod and Pribram) and expanded the capacities of 27 practitioner facilities. **Over 73,000 children and women** refugees and host communities have benefited from quality health and vaccination services.

In partnership with the Institute for Post Graduate Medical Education in Prague and the Centre for Nursing and Other Health-care Professionals in Brno, UNICEF supported Ukrainian health-care professionals to obtain accreditation and inclusion into the Czech health system. **More than 800 Ukrainian health professionals have gone through intensive preparation courses** on the national health system, health service provision and Czech language courses.

**National vaccination campaign** provided practical information on how to access vaccination services, build vaccine confidence and increase demand for vaccination among Ukrainian refugees.

Through the partnership with the National Institute of Public Health, **60 Ukrainian and 29 Roma health mediators** provided infant and young child feeding counselling, information on vaccination and mental health support to **11,061 people in 14 regions**.



**In 2024**, UNICEF will continue supporting the Ministry of Health and other stakeholders to strengthen the health-care system and ensure access to quality services for refugee children, their caregivers and other vulnerable groups in the Czech Republic through the following interventions:

- Increasing the capacities of hospitals to provide quality health-care services to refugee children and women through 2 additional primary health care outpatient centres and 27 general practitioner clinics
- Building the capacity of Czech health-care providers in culturally sensitive competences to understand the challenges refugees face in the health-care system and in communicating with health-care providers
- Supporting Ukrainian health professionals to obtain accreditation and recognition of their qualifications, thereby facilitating their integration into the Czech health system
- Supporting provision of health, nutrition, and mental health programmes at community level through 14 regional community health promotion centres across the Czech Republic, targeting Ukrainian refugees and children from the Roma community
- Improving health literacy among refugees on how to access available health services and navigate the health system through targeted communications and awareness raising
- Supporting the Ministry of Health to institutionalize selected refugee response interventions such as outpatient clinics to expand primary health care for all vulnerable children





## From fleeing war to championing children's access to essential health services

Viktoriia used to work as an accountant in Kyiv. She fled Ukraine after the escalation of the war, fearing for her children's safety. "All I thought about was the safety of my children. I was tired of being afraid that my children might be harmed." Viktoriia and her two children found their new home in Pribram, where a Czech family provided them with accommodation. After learning Czech language, Viktoriia secured a job at the Pribram hospital's primary health care centre as an administrator and health mediator. She supports refugees and other patients with access to health-care services, and facilitates the communication between patients and the doctors.

Access to primary health-care services is essential for children's wellbeing and development. Regular check-ups, vaccination, and timely interventions contribute to the physical and mental health of children, fostering optimal growth.

*"Our host family supported us, played with my children, and invited us to their family gatherings. Despite language barriers, we built a real family relationship."*

Through a partnership with the Ministry of Health, UNICEF supported the establishment of an outpatient clinic in Pribram General Hospital to provide primary health-care services to over 700 refugee children and others in need.







**EVERY CHILD IS PROTECTED AND  
HAS A FAIR CHANCE IN LIFE**



**Results to date:** The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and UNICEF undertook an assessment of the Czech Republic's social and child protection system. Building on existing mechanisms, systems and services provided by national and local-level institutions and NGOs, Ukrainian refugee children and their families have been supported through the following interventions:

- More than **222,000 children and caregivers** were provided with mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) through service provision and information on access to services.
- More than **350,000 children and adults** were provided with access to services.
- Over 2,100 unaccompanied and separated children** were identified, of whom 153 were provided with alternative care.
- Over 970 Ukrainian Roma refugee children** and caregivers accessed mental health support, social services, gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse risk prevention, and response interventions. Of these, over 400 children received individual case management.
- Over 100,000 women and children** were provided with access to gender-based violence risk mitigation and prevention services.
- Over 4,600 refugees** (48 per cent women and 36 per cent children) benefited from support on housing, enrolment in education, provision of legal, protection and health-related counselling and referral through the Refugee Follow Up Support Centre in the City of Prague.



**In 2024**, UNICEF will continue to support strengthening of the child protection and social protection systems focusing on inclusion of refugees to ensure their needs are met:

- Providing financial assistance and access to services to refugee children with disabilities, in partnership with the Red Cross and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.
- Supporting child protection reform to guarantee the inclusion of refugee and migrant children, strengthen preventive services and family support, increase gatekeeping mechanisms, support family-based alternative care, and strengthen the capacity and efficiency of community-based services for refugees
- Expanding child protection services to refugee children, including vulnerable and at-risk children and families, unaccompanied and separated children and Roma children through the provision of MHPSS, access to safe child- and youth-friendly spaces for children and caregivers, and enhanced individualized case management
- Providing gender-based violence prevention, mitigation, response services and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse for refugees
- Strengthening the capacity of social service workforce professionals to adequately respond to the specific needs of refugee children and families



# Compounding challenges for children with disabilities fleeing conflict

Liubov fled Ukraine with her 9-year-old daughter Veronika, who has 90 per cent loss of hearing. The family faces additional challenges starting with their journey, as Liubov says:

*"The trains were overcrowded, with people trampling all over each other. And if you have a deaf child, it's twice as hard. If she gets lost, you can't call out to her. If someone finds her, they don't know how to help."*

Liubov and Veronika came to Kutna Hora, but eventually moved to Prague due to the need for a specialized school. Veronika needs teachers who specialize in working with deaf children, and teach sign language and how to communicate in other ways. Liubov supports Veronika with learning and finding appropriate tutors. Veronika also uses hearing aids that cost about CZK30,000 each and have to be replaced regularly. Children who cannot hear require special support to learn how to read and write. Veronika's hearing aid make learning slightly easier.



To help cover the additional costs associated with disability, Liubov and Veronika receive financial assistance from UNICEF in partnership with the Czech Red Cross and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The programme mirrors the national programme for Czech children with disabilities, and includes individual work with families, connecting them to social services in the Czech Republic. Since April 2023, nearly 1,000 children with disabilities and their families have benefitted from the programme.





**EVERY ADOLESCENT IS SKILLED  
AND EMPOWERED**



**Results to date:** Through the partnership with Ministries, City of Prague and CSOs, UNICEF supported inclusion of refugee youth through:

- Engagement of over 22,500 Czech and Ukrainian children and adolescents to connect and build bridges across cultures and collaboratively develop projects to benefit their local communities.
- 62 CSOs and city districts in Prague received grants to promote social cohesion and inclusion of refugee youth from Ukraine.
- Establishment of youth-friendly spaces in 18 Integration Centers to provide comprehensive support covering case management, non-formal education and psychosocial support.

**In 2024,** UNICEF will continue to provide access to mental health support, extra-curricular activities, and education and skills building opportunities, based on needs identified by young people:

- Providing comprehensive support to youth through a network of youth-friendly spaces, covering case management, non-formal education, and psychosocial support.
- Working with all stakeholders, including civil society, government, and the private sector, to develop alternative pathways to skills building and employment through the Cesty Initiative.
- Strengthening the capacity of frontline workers to reach and provide services to children aged 15-17 years.
- Youth-led outreach to raise awareness among all youth about the services available to them.
- Supporting a network of youth representatives across the country to inform decision-making platforms with civil society, regional, and national government.





## Cesty: Employment that empowers

Refugee youth face a trade-off between earning and skills development, with many youth leaving education early to engage in low-skill labour to cover their basic needs and sometimes send money to their families back in Ukraine.

A setback in skills-building at this critical stage of development will have lifelong consequences for professional attainment and mental wellbeing. To avoid a “lost generation” of youth from Ukraine, UNICEF’s Cesty Initiative is designed to provide youth with income-generating activities that are paired with skills-building activities. These young people will be the next generation of leaders



in post-conflict Ukraine, and today's investments in their skills will therefore have dividends far into the future.

The Cesty Initiative is built around a pledge for the private sector to provide paid, skills-building opportunities for youth. The objective is for all refugee youth to be on a pathway to continued education or professional development opportunities, to ensure that the forced displacement does not have lifelong negative effects on learning and earning.

More information on the Cesty Initiative can be found at [www.unicef.org/eca/unicef-refugee-response-czech-republic#cesty](https://www.unicef.org/eca/unicef-refugee-response-czech-republic#cesty)



## Expression of thanks

UNICEF expresses its appreciation to the Governments of the United States, Germany and Norway for its generous support to UNICEF refugee response in the Czech Republic. We also thank individuals and the private sector in the United States, Germany, Japan, United Kingdom, Sweden and others who made a contribution to support Ukrainian refugee children and families who fled from the war to the Czech Republic. Our appreciation goes to all of UNICEF's government partners at national and municipal level, as well as civil society organizations. Thank you for helping to advance our shared commitment to support children, women and families displaced by the war in Ukraine, and to protect the rights and improve the well-being of refugees in the Czech Republic.



## For every child

Whoever she is.  
Wherever he lives.  
Every child deserves a childhood.  
A future.  
A fair chance.  
That's why UNICEF is there.  
For each and every child.  
Working day in and day out.  
In more than 190 countries and  
territories. Reaching the  
hardest to reach.  
The furthest from help.  
The most excluded.  
It's why we stay to the end.  
And never give up.

unicef  | for every child

### **UNICEF Refugee Response in the Czech Republic: Results and Priorities**

**Yulia Oleinik**

Head of Office  
Emergency Coordinator  
[yoleinik@unicef.org](mailto:yoleinik@unicef.org)

**Veronika Janouchova**

Communication Specialist  
[vjanouchova@unicef.org](mailto:vjanouchova@unicef.org)

United Nations Children's Fund  
(UNICEF) February 2024

[unicef.org](https://unicef.org)