



CZECH REPUBLIC

Situation Overview

By the end of 2023, Czechia remained among the top three destinations for Ukrainian refugees with one of the largest refugee populations overall and per capita in the European Union. Over 581,000 Ukrainians were granted temporary protection (TP) since February 2022 while more than 375,000 maintained an active status as of end 2023.¹³ Women constituted approximately 47 per cent of the refugee population; and children represented around 26 per cent, highlighting potential vulnerabilities within a significant proportion of the refugee population.¹⁴

The Czech Government, working closely with regions, municipalities, partners, NGOs, and refugee-led organizations, displayed exemplary solidarity, adopting a whole-of-society approach to address the refugee situation. However, recognizing the challenges in providing equal assistance to all refugees, the Government implemented Acts, collectively referred to as Lex Ukraine V. in July 2023,¹⁵ that defined vulnerable categories of refugees for focused assistance and shifted from a system that supported all TP holders equally to a more targeted approach. The aim was to motivate TP holders to enter the labour market, foster social cohesion and dispel any perception of preferential treatment for Ukrainian refugees. While, in principle, income-related social benefits remained available to all TP holders, by the end of the year only one third of Ukrainian refugees qualified to receive social benefits from the state.¹⁶

According to research by PAQ, high numbers of economically active refugees secured jobs by the end of 2023 (72 per cent), but the majority of refugees were working below their qualifications and often face precarious conditions.¹⁷ As a result, 57 per cent of TP holders lived below the effective poverty line.¹⁸ The shift in support brought by Lex Ukraine V. led to a decrease in the recipients of social benefits and cost-free accommodation. At the same time, obstacles such as language barriers hindered the attainment of better employment opportunities and higher incomes. This led the Government to implement the sixth amendment of the legal framework before the end of the year through a package of laws called Lex Ukraine VI., which increased financial support predominantly for vulnerable groups.¹⁹

Certain challenges in socio-economic inclusion notwithstanding, there were many positive trends. Attendance of refugee children grew in all levels of education, despite limited capacities in certain educational institutions.²⁰

¹³ [Situation Ukraine Refugee Situation \(unhcr.org\)](https://www.unhcr.org/situation-ukraine-refugee-situation) as of 31 December 2023.

¹⁴ Statistics of the Ministry of Interior, as of 31 December 2023.

¹⁵ Acts no. 65-67 Coll., on measures related to the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine caused by the invasion of the troops of the Russian Federation. Accessible from zakonyprolidi.cz.

¹⁶ Statistics of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs as of 31 December 2023.

¹⁷ Report of PAQ Research from 18 December 2023. Accessible from pagresearch.cz.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Amended acts no. 65-66 Coll., collectively referred to as Lex Ukraine VI. took effect from 1 January 2024.

²⁰ 90 per cent of children attend primary schools, 70 per cent of three to five-year-olds are enrolled in kindergartens, and nearly half of refugees aged 15 to 17 attend Czech secondary schools. Source: Report of PAQ Research from 20 December 2023. Accessible from pagresearch.cz.

Refugees further reported very high coverage of health insurance (99 per cent) and good access to health services.²¹

Czechia's response to the Ukrainian refugee situation has been commendable. The implementation of targeted support through Lex Ukraine V. and VI. demonstrates the Government's commitment to addressing vulnerabilities within the refugee population. As efforts continue, addressing language barriers and other obstacles to income opportunities and ensuring sufficient educational resources will be crucial for the successful inclusion of Ukrainian refugees into Czech society.

Highlights and Achievements

Throughout 2023, the Refugee Response Plan (RRP) partners collaborated closely with the Czech Government and various state authorities, aligning their strategies to efficiently address the evolving needs of Ukrainian refugees.

In the first quarter, the focus was still on the emergency response and catering to the immediate needs of refugees. RRP partners provided assistance in emergency accommodation and delivered essential supplies. Overall, more than 4,000 refugees received basic needs assistance, including cash assistance to 1,000 children with disabilities. Over 4,500 mental health consultations took place with refugees.²² UN agencies also played an important role in coordinating efforts and resources for immediate relief.

During this period, RRP partners forged collaborations with the Ministry for Regional Development, unlocking unused apartments to create additional accommodation capacities for refugees. Partnerships with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs were expanded to address the specific needs of Ukrainian refugee children with disabilities and further cooperation with the Ministry of Interior was established to support more than 20 municipalities in their integration activities.

In the second quarter, there was a notable expansion in educational and healthcare services for refugees, alongside efforts to foster community integration. Almost 140,000 refugees were provided with help accessing healthcare services. The participation of more than 24,000 refugee children in non-formal education was ensured.²³

RRP partners intensified their focus on disseminating information about legislative changes, particularly with the entry of Lex Ukraine V. into force in July 2023. They organized numerous information sessions and consultations, employing various communication channels and products, such as social networks, flyers, posters, and printed brochures. During the first weeks after Lex Ukraine V. was in place, emergency modalities were launched to provide beneficiaries with legal and social assistance on the ground through helplines and social media. The challenges introduced by Lex Ukraine V. led to some confusion and a perceived undermining of support. However, the collaborative endeavours of the RRP partners, working in alignment with the Government, ensured the essential needs of the refugee population were effectively addressed. More than 277,000 adult refugees and 45,000 children were supported in accessing protection and child protection services, respectively.

The final quarter witnessed a consolidation of services for refugees and their inclusion into national systems, with a shift towards increased local community engagement. Gender-Based Violence referral pathways for services in Prague were collaboratively created. Efforts were made to ensure the long-term well-being and integration of refugees, including the organization of social cohesion events, trainings for social workers in intercultural work and workshops on ethical employment practices for both employers and TP holders. Overall,

²¹ 67% of refugees have access to a general practitioner and pediatrician. Source: [UNHCR MSNA](#).

²² Both figures are cumulative RRP partner results for year 2023.

²³ Ibid.

almost 18,000 refugees received support in livelihoods and socio-economic inclusion services and development programmes.

Gaps and challenges

The inclusion of Ukrainian refugees in Czechia in 2023 faced a number of multifaceted challenges, highlighting the complexities of the process, particularly for vulnerable groups, including single parents of young children, refugees with disabilities, elderly persons, and LGBTIQ+ refugees.

The transition of individuals from collective facilities to standard housing remained a major challenge. According to research conducted by PAQ, the numbers of refugees in collective facilities significantly decreased and the number of refugees in rental housing increased (up to 49 per cent of respondents).²⁴ However, more than 27,000 individuals remained in collective facilities by the end of the year.²⁵ It is recognized that these facilities pose higher risks of overcrowding, a lack of privacy, alcoholism, gender-based violence, and exploitation, making them inappropriate for long-term residence, especially for families with children. The process of transition requires not only financial support but also social assistance to address the specific needs of the most vulnerable refugees.

Decreasing financial support from the state is compelling refugees to increasingly rely on themselves. As considerable 56 per cent of refugees work below their qualifications, primarily hindered by language barriers.²⁶ Efforts are required to facilitate easier recognition of qualifications, skills development, and accessible language courses, catering not only to beginners but also to more advanced learners. Special attention is further needed for children aged 15 and above, as well as young adults, who face the challenge of re-entering education or need vocational training. Unemployed and out-of-school youth might face particular protection risks.

Despite the good level of attendance in compulsory schooling, challenges persist with regard to preschoolers and teenagers. Preschoolers face obstacles due to limited capacities of kindergartens, while teenagers struggle with integration into social collectives, especially when they continue attending online classes in Ukraine. In addition, refugee children experience challenges such as bullying and hostile environments.²⁷ The need for a safe and supportive educational environment became evident, as well as the need to foster language education and to provide accessible leisure activities to better include children into social groups.

Social cohesion emerged as a critical area that requires reinforcement: 64 per cent of adult refugees have encountered discrimination, most often when looking for housing (29 per cent) and when looking for a job (21 per cent).²⁸ Local and municipal initiatives must be supported to foster a more inclusive and supportive social environment.

The lack of personnel in mental healthcare poses another challenge. Efforts must be directed into creating safe spaces, community hubs, and activities to improve the well-being of the refugee population. Information on available services should also be better disseminated, as there is an overall lack of awareness among refugee communities. Refugees also reported low awareness of specialized services for victims of domestic and gender-based violence,²⁹ and further resources need to be directed to address this gap.

Sustaining funding levels to address the increasingly diverse and complex needs of refugees remains a primary challenge. The need for continued support and resources remains critical, ensuring long-term inclusion into society amid changing priorities and potential assistance fatigue.

²⁴ Report of PAQ Research from 9 August 2023. Accessible from paqresearch.cz.

²⁵ Statistic of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.

²⁶ Report of PAQ Research from 9 August 2023. Accessible from paqresearch.cz.

²⁷ Only half of Ukrainian children are well integrated. Source: Report of PAQ Research from 27 July 2023. Accessible from paqresearch.cz.

²⁸ Report of PAQ Research from 9 August 2023. Accessible from paqresearch.cz.

²⁹ [UNHCR MSNA](https://www.unhcr.org/msna/).

Successful engagement of Ukrainian professionals in MHPSS team

A community-based multidisciplinary MHPSS team was created in partnership with Asociace Trigon. The team consists of specialists from mental health centres in Frýdek-Místek, Opava, Havířov, and Ostrava, including psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric nurses, social workers, mental health experts, interpreters, and a special educator. The project not only provided a wide range of mental health and psychosocial support services including individual consultations with psychologists, psychiatric services, psychosocial support, case management, leisure and social activities for children and youth, and community-based integration support for adults but also employed Ukrainian mental health professionals. This unique approach enabled Ukrainian professionals to work, learn Czech, and have their qualifications formally recognized while offering mental health support to the refugee community.

Being a parent on the way to safety

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. 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.

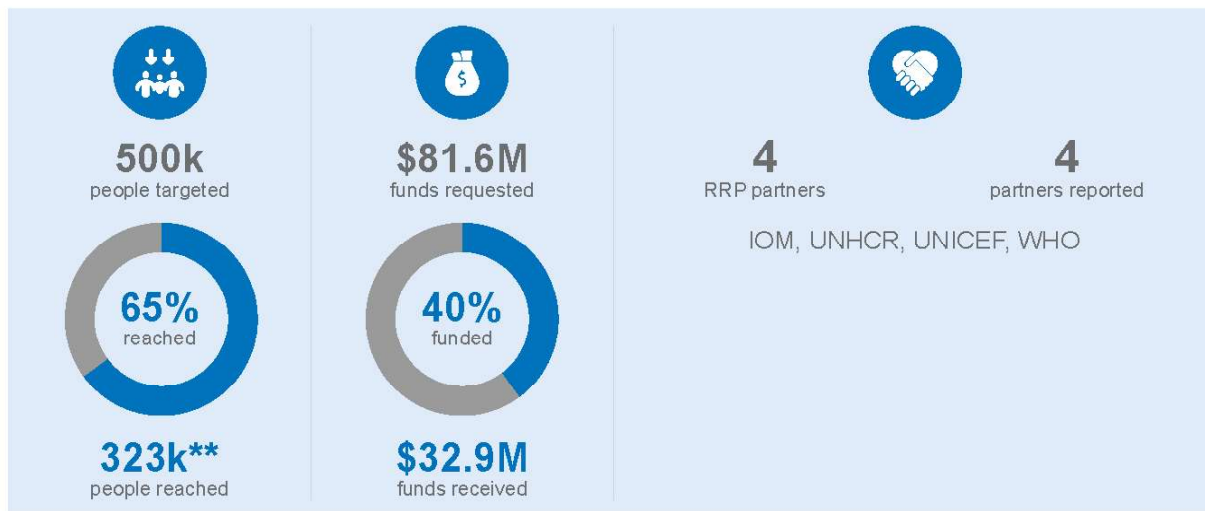
“The first month in Poland was extremely difficult for Yegor. He was sick and had a fever most of the time. When we moved to the Czech Republic, he joined the play and learning group and soon began to feel safer and better.”

In 2022 and 2023, over 4,000 young children like Yegor accessed learning and care through diverse activities and programmes in over 70 play and learning centres across the Czech Republic that have been supported by various partners, including UNICEF, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Regional Integration Centres, CSO partners, and the Municipality of Prague.



Within the framework of the 2023 inter-agency Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) for the Ukraine Situation, 4 partners joined forces in Czech Republic, in support of government-led efforts, to provide protection services and multi-sectoral humanitarian assistance to refugees from Ukraine, third country nationals seeking safety and

other persons in need. Partners also focused their activities on promoting the socio-economic inclusion of refugees as well as social cohesion between refugees and their hosts. The figures were reported by RRP partners against the regional RRP indicators.*



Sector		People reached
Protection	Individuals supported in accessing protection services	277.1k
	Children provided with child protection services	45.9k
	Participants trained on child protection and children's rights	1.6k
	GBV referral pathways established and functional	1
	Individuals reached through community outreach and prevention activities on GBV	84.3k
Livelihoods & Socio-Economic Inclusion	Individuals supported in in livelihoods and socio-economic inclusion services and development programmes	17.7k
Cash	Individuals who received cash assistance	2.9k
Health & Nutrition	Consultations provided for mental health and psychosocial support	4.5k
	Individuals supported in accessing health care services	139.7k
	Individuals trained to provide health services to refugees and host populations	209
Education	Children enrolled in formal education in host countries	51.3k
	Children participating in non-formal education programmes	24.5k
Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)	PSEA network members and partner personnel trained on SEA risk mitigation, prevention and response	685
Basic Needs	Individuals who received assistance for basic needs	4.1k

*A list of implementing partners who reported on behalf of appealing RRP partners is available on the 2023 RRP Reporting dashboard.

**The number of individuals reached is an estimate based on the highest number of individuals reached per activity, per sector and/or per region, to avoid double counting.