

The education of children from Ukraine in Slovakia and the Czech Republic from the perspective the professional community



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1. Introduction

More than four years have passed since the start of the war against Ukraine. During this period, tens of thousands of children and young people have found refuge in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. The education systems in both countries have faced the challenge of how best to integrate and support all these children.

Both countries were bound to do so by international human rights treaties and conventions. However, access to education is not only a fundamental human right but also a vital necessity. Participation in high-quality education ensures that children can develop holistically and integrate into society.

Even before this emergency, people of foreign origin were living in both countries, and so certain instruments and measures were already in place to support their education. However, the arrival of large numbers of people from Ukraine revealed that the existing support was insufficient in this new situation, and both countries gradually adopted new measures.

Over the past four years, Slovakia and the Czech Republic have introduced a number of measures designed to support the education of children from Ukraine. Some of these were only temporary and have since been discontinued – either because they were no longer needed or because they proved ineffective or even unlawful. Others, however, have remained in place or have been transformed into universal mechanisms to support all foreign nationals.

At present, there is a lack of analysis that would comprehensively map and evaluate the educational support provided to children from Ukraine in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. It is therefore difficult to assess which measures have proved effective and should be continued, which measures, on the other hand, have proved ineffective and need to be abolished or improved, and which solutions are missing and need to be introduced.

This analysis aims to partially fill this gap. Through interviews with experts, it maps out which systemic measures to support the education of children and young people from Ukraine have been implemented in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. At the same time, it examines how the professional community assesses these measures and what recommends to improve support for the education of children from Ukraine.

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In total, we conducted eight expert interviews – four for each country under review. We involved experts from organisations engaged in advocacy or research in the field of education for children from Ukraine or from abroad.

Given the breadth and complexity of the topic, we were unable to cover all aspects relating to support for children from Ukraine within the scope of this research. We therefore focused on four key thematic areas which we consider crucial for integration and support: 1. the admission of children to nursery and primary schools, 2. children's adaptation at school, 3. support for school staff, and 4. secondary schools (with an emphasis on school admission and completion of education).

The result of our research is an overview of key measures to support the education of children from Ukraine and an evaluation of these from the perspective of the professional community. In addition to an expert assessment of the solutions already in place, our analysis also includes proposed recommendations for improving support for the education of children of foreign origin, as identified by individual experts. The proposed changes are universal in nature and relate to the system of support for children from abroad as a whole.

These recommendations reflect the perspectives, experiences and views of the participating experts. They should not be regarded as definitive and authoritative solutions that should be implemented in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. However, they serve as an important contribution to the wider discussion on measures that could help improve the education of children from foreign backgrounds in both countries.

At the same time, the results of our research encompass the perspectives and experiences of the two countries. These countries share a common past and are still linked by numerous social, cultural and economic ties. At the same time,

these are systems with their own specific characteristics and unique approaches. These shared features and differences have enabled us to capture a broader range of experiences and implemented solutions, and to formulate proposals for both common and specific recommendations for change.

We recognise that qualitative research in the form of interviews with experts cannot replace experimental evaluation of the effectiveness of individual measures. However, we are convinced that expert assessments provide unique insights into the functioning of the support system for children from Ukraine from the perspective of those who deal with this topic professionally and in depth. This information can serve as an important and valuable basis for further discussions on the organisation of support for children from abroad, as well as a unique source for decision-making in situations where other data are not available.

I would like to thank Michaela Bednárík from the Centre for Educational Analysis for her valuable advice and comments.

2. Research objectives and methodology

The aim of the research was to use interviews with experts to map out which systemic measures to support the education of children and young people from Ukraine have been implemented in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. At the same time, we sought to ascertain how the professional community assesses these measures and what it recommends to improve support for the education of children from Ukraine.

Our research focused exclusively on measures implemented by the state, that is, primarily by individual ministries and relevant state and public institutions operating nationwide. We did not examine the activities of individual local authorities or non-governmental organisations, which, whilst having introduced a number of important measures or tools, often concentrated their efforts on a specific locality.

In total, we conducted eight expert interviews – four for each country under review. We identified the individual participants on the basis of a mapping exercise of organisations and their outputs in the field of education for children from Ukraine. We focused in particular on whether the organisations in question were engaged in advocacy or research in this area. In this way, we created an initial list of organisations, which we approached with a request to participate in the research.

At the same time, we asked the organisations we had contacted for recommendations regarding other experts. On this basis, we drew up the final list of participating organisations.

In the case of Slovakia, experts from four non-governmental organisations took part in our research; three of these are involved in providing direct support to children and families from Ukraine as well as advocacy, whilst one organisation is involved in both advocacy and research. In the case of the Czech Republic, two non-governmental organisations were represented, both of which are involved in direct support and advocacy, along with two research (academic) organisations. In six cases, we spoke to one representative of the organisation in question, whilst in two cases (one organisation from each country) two representatives took part in the interview.

Data collection took place from 8 May to 21 May 2026 in Bratislava. Three interviews with participants from Slovakia took place in person, either at the Centre for Educational Analysis (Jarošova Office Centre on Jarošova Street) or at the premises of the organisations where the respondents work. Five interviews took place online via Google Meet.

We recorded the interviews with the respondents' consent. We subsequently produced transcripts and analysed them.

The research's content focus was partly based on the holistic model for supporting the integration of children with a migrant background, as formulated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). According to this model, support for children and young people with a migrant background should focus on three key needs (Cerna, 2019):

- educational needs: language learning, catching up on missed schooling, adapting to a new education system
- social needs: communication, a sense of belonging and forming bonds, a strong personal identity
- emotional needs: safety, coping with separation, loss and trauma

We utilised this approach in particular when mapping measures relating to the adaptation of children from Ukraine. In addition to adaptation, we also focused on other topics that we identified as key to the successful integration of children from Ukraine into education.

As part of our research, we focused on the following thematic areas:

- School admission (nursery and primary schools): the admission of children from Ukraine to schools and year groups that are compulsory or to which other children are entitled

- Adaptation: the adaptation of children from Ukraine at school, in terms of education, language training, mental health support and relationships with other children
- Support with learning: support in the form of textbooks, teaching materials and aids, as well as support from designated teaching staff
- Support for school staff: methodological and pedagogical support for staff in the form of materials, training activities or advice and guidance from designated personnel
- Secondary schools – admission of pupils: processes or conditions for admitting young people from Ukraine to secondary schools
- Secondary schools – completion of education: processes or conditions for completing secondary education

Before preparing the interview script, we first used available sources to map out the key measures implemented in Slovakia and the Czech Republic to support the education of children from Ukraine. We also included these measures in the interview script – we asked about them in more detail if the participants did not mention them spontaneously.

An overview of these measures is provided in the appendix; this overview also includes measures brought to our attention by the participating experts.

3. Slovakia

3.1 Admission of children to nursery and primary schools

3.1.1 Initially voluntary, later compulsory education

According to the participating experts, the admission of children from Ukraine to nursery and primary schools in Slovakia was significantly influenced by the fact that education in these schools was not compulsory for these children during the early years. Enrolment in school therefore depended, on the one hand, on the voluntary initiative of parents and, on the other, on the willingness or capacity of the schools. Children were thus only admitted to school if their parents wanted them to attend and, at the same time, if the school was willing or able to accept them.

One of the participants expressed surprise that education was not compulsory for children from Ukraine. Until the outbreak of the war against Ukraine, the practice had been that compulsory school attendance also applied to foreign nationals. However, following the arrival of large numbers of people from Ukraine in Slovakia and the increased demand for school places, the Ministry of Education introduced a new interpretation of the Education Act, according to which compulsory schooling applied only to children with permanent residence in Slovakia. Children from Ukraine, however, had temporary residence (temporary refuge) rather than permanent residence, meaning that, under the new interpretation, compulsory schooling did not apply to them.

"I remember – I think it was about two months after the war broke out in Ukraine – when I spoke on the phone with a civil servant (...), who wanted to consult with me about how to enrol those children. And then, in the course of the conversation, it somehow came up that she told me they weren't subject to compulsory schooling, whereas I'd been under the impression for 10 years that they were, and that this applied to all children of foreign nationals. In the 10 years I'd been doing research, I'd never once come across anyone telling me that these children

were not subject to compulsory schooling; it was automatically assumed to be the case, and that's how we conducted our research,

we'd been operating in that environment for 10 years. So suddenly there was a demand for a lot of placements, and suddenly we
'Someone came up with that stupid clause because of permanent residence.' (SR1)

According to one respondent, the actual admission to schools was not a problem, especially if the children arrived gradually and were not concentrated in one place. However, difficulties arose in areas with a high number of children from Ukraine, namely in large cities such as Bratislava or Košice.

"From what I've observed across Slovakia, I get the impression that admitting the children wasn't a problem; it was as though, when the children were spread out over time and space, the schools simply admitted them. What they did with them afterwards is another matter, but as for there being any major, sort of, feedback from the regions that Ukrainian children simply aren't attending school or aren't integrating – I actually think that these foreign children are attending those schools; the problem was specific to Bratislava, perhaps in Košice, where the influx was extreme and no additional solutions had been put in place even for primary schools – perhaps some sort of adaptation classes, or anything that would temporarily help to at least ensure these children weren't left outside the system." (SR4)

There was also the view that the Ministry of Education supported the enrolment of children from Ukraine in schools mainly in a declarative manner, that is, through statements that these children should be placed in schools. According to this view, however, the Ministry did not create any special conditions or active measures to support their admission to schools.

One of the participating experts pointed out that, at a time when compulsory education was not yet in force and some of the children were not attending school, the state did not even put in place a temporary transitional solution in the form of educational or adaptation groups. According to this respondent, the possibility of setting up transitional groups was discussed, but the state did not support this, even though the existing network of leisure centres could have been utilised for this purpose.

The situation changed from September 2025, when compulsory education began to apply to children from Ukraine. This is not compulsory school attendance as in the case of children with permanent residence in Slovakia,

but a specific

regime that applies exclusively to people from Ukraine. Under this regime, children of an age to undertake compulsory pre-primary education or compulsory school attendance are required to receive education; however, these children do not have the same status as children subject to compulsory school attendance – for example, they are given lower priority when it comes to school admissions (Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, 2025). An application for a child's enrolment in compulsory education must be submitted within three months of the start of the procedure for granting temporary refuge.

The experts involved assessed the introduction of compulsory education itself as a positive step. According to one account, this measure led to two types of reaction from the parents of children from Ukraine. Some parents welcomed the change, saying that their children would finally be going to school. However, there were also parents who were opposed to this measure. Some parents looked for ways to avoid compulsory education, as they had already established a relaxed routine without school attendance.

"When the news came out that it was now compulsory, I had a lot of – I won't say a lot, but it was a common scenario – people asking: 'What should we do to avoid going to that school?' In other words, they'd already created such a calm, relaxed atmosphere for themselves. Some welcomed the fact that we'd finally be going." (SR3)

The situation was particularly challenging for children with health impairments who required special care (regular feeding, a special diet, and so on). Under the new rules, these children were also required to attend school, but schools were often unable to provide them with suitable conditions. As with Slovak children, parents of children from Ukraine were forced to arrange for their children to attend school for shorter periods.

"For example, in more serious cases – such as when a child needed to be fed every two hours, or required a special diet, or simply had needs that the school couldn't meet – the question then became: what do we do now? So we discussed the procedure, which essentially required a statement from the counselling and prevention centre and from a doctor if the health conditions were serious, and they wouldn't have to attend for the whole day." (SR3)

Children with health-related disabilities also faced other obstacles. One of the participants pointed out that children from Ukraine had difficulty obtaining a statement from the counselling and prevention centres. This was due to ⁶ insufficient capacity at the counselling centres as well as a language barrier.

"It's this whole interconnected system: for a child to be accepted, they need to get to that counselling centre to obtain the report that's actually required. So they have to get to that counselling centre somehow, and this was quite a big problem for children with disabilities. Moreover, when they were from Ukraine, the capacity of the counselling centres themselves came into play. On top of that, not every counselling centre was able to carry out such assessments and actually propose measures when there was a language barrier." (SR3)

The participating experts viewed the introduction of compulsory education for children from Ukraine as having come too late. One respondent pointed out that recommendations to introduce this obligation had existed since 2022, that is, from the start of the emergency situation linked to the war against Ukraine.

According to some participants, another weakness of the measure is that it is selective; that is, it does not apply to all children of foreign nationals, but only to children in temporary accommodation and only for the duration of the state of emergency linked to the war against Ukraine. One respondent described this as a missed opportunity to establish a system of compulsory education for all children, regardless of their residence status. Furthermore, whilst this is a crisis measure, it may be in place for a long time, yet no follow-up measure has been prepared that would provide a universal solution for all foreign nationals.

"Question: From 2025, compulsory pre-primary education has in fact been introduced for those children from Ukraine.

SR1: Yes, but not for all children of foreign nationals, only for children in temporary refuge and only for the duration of this crisis.

Question: And how do you view that?

SR1: Disastrous, because I always view this from the perspective of the child's best interests and the child's right to education. This applies universally to all children in the world, not just to Slovak children who hold citizenship. So I, too, see compulsory schooling as the realisation of a child's right to education. That is A. And B is that they have done this only for these children and only temporarily; I consider this an absolutely wasted opportunity to finally get things right again." (SR1)

According to one respondent, the problem also lies in the fact that, under this specific compulsory education scheme, children from Ukraine do not have a local school where they are guaranteed a place – unlike children who are completing compulsory pre-primary education or compulsory schooling. In practice, however, based on this experience, it does not happen that a child cannot find a school – if the school in their place of residence does not have sufficient capacity, the regional school administration office or the local authority will find an alternative place. Even so, this constitutes a double standard, which results in a lower level of guarantee for children from Ukraine.

Some respondents also highlighted the problem that schools and local authorities do not have access to data on foreign nationals residing in their area who are required to fulfil their compulsory education. This makes it impossible to monitor compliance with compulsory education or to actively implement measures to ensure that children from Ukraine attend school.

"They simply do not have reliable information about which foreign children are in their area. Whilst they know about Slovak children from the register and can immediately retrieve how many children have started compulsory education in a given year, they do not know this about foreign children. So I see this as a major issue: how to ensure that even children whom the system is unaware of, who do not enrol themselves, are actually captured by the system when education becomes compulsory." (SR1)

"The state currently lacks monitoring mechanisms and a seamless link between the police and education systems that would cross-reference which children are physically in the system and where they are located." (SR4)

There were also comments that parents are not sufficiently informed about the introduction of compulsory education. There were 7

, for example, that when enrolling their children in nursery school, parents were unable to argue that compulsory pre-primary education from the age of 5 also applied to these children. For example, in some cases, parents applied for their child's admission only verbally, and the school gave them a verbal refusal. The parents accepted this response without lodging a written appeal on the grounds of compulsory education.

There were also doubts as to the extent to which the introduction of compulsory education had been effective. One respondent pointed out that no data is available on how the measure has actually taken effect. According to him, the provisional figures on the number of children from Ukraine in schools do not indicate that all children are already attending school.

"I feel that we do not yet have data on how this has actually turned out, or any assessment of whether all Ukrainian children are indeed in school. But it is highly unlikely that this measure has resulted in them already being in schools, because even the figures we have provisionally as at 31 December do not fully indicate that all children are in primary and nursery schools on the basis of compulsory schooling." (SR4)

Some experts pointed out that, even after the introduction of compulsory education, the problem of insufficient capacity in schools persists. One of the participants noted that the shortage of places in nursery schools has led to the emergence of private establishments with multiple branches, which operate as pre-school facilities for Ukrainian children. However, according to this statement, this practice results in children from Ukraine receiving support and care separately from other children and not coming into contact with the Slovak environment.

"Back in Bratislava, I know they're up and running; they're probably private – they're called Sadok, and there are several branches across Bratislava – but these are precisely the pre-school facilities that Ukrainian children attend. (...) It was a sort of response to the fact that they didn't have the capacity and the children needed to be placed somewhere, so essentially it's not a state solution or a regional solution, but rather a private one." (SR3)

3.1.2 Administrative increase in capacity

In relation to the shortage of places in nursery and primary schools, some of the experts who took part pointed out that this shortage had already existed before the arrival of children from Ukraine. It was, therefore, a long-standing systemic problem. According to one comment, however, the arrival of children from Ukraine intensified this problem and made it even more apparent.

To address the shortage of available places, schools were able to increase their capacity through administrative measures. At the start of the emergency, nursery schools were permitted to admit children up to 10 per cent above standard hygiene limits (ÚVZ SR, 2022), whilst the Education Act allowed, for specified reasons, the maximum number of children or pupils in a class to be increased by three.

One participant reported that primary schools had made use of the option to increase the maximum number of children per class, whilst she had not encountered this in the case of nursery schools. Another respondent, however, was unaware of how schools had actually utilised this option.

Some of the participating experts assessed this measure predominantly positively. They viewed it as a departure from rigid legislation in the children's best interests and as a sign of an effort to take action. At the same time, however, it was also seen as an ad hoc or emergency measure, which should have been followed by a systemic solution (such as increasing capacity based on demographic forecasts); yet, according to one respondent, this did not happen.

"At the time, I saw it as them trying to do, well, anything. I viewed it positively in the sense that they were trying to do something. That they were able to make an effort. Because in Slovakia it's often the case that paragraph I don't know which C says it can't be done, so it can't be done. I view this quite positively, that they made these concessions. To be honest, I don't know how the nurseries dealt with it, or whether they had any problems with it. But I also consider this slight deviation from the legislative framework in the children's best interests to be a good solution – although I always expect this to be an ad hoc measure, as we're putting out a fire, whilst at the same time thinking about how to set things up for the future. The question is, what are the forecasts for the birth rate? We know they're poor, so perhaps we won't need to expand nursery capacity, but let's work with these figures. We know that this is how our population will develop, this is how the number of foreign nationals will grow, and we will need this much capacity." (SR1)

This was also linked to criticism that the administrative increase in capacity had not been sufficiently complemented by the construction of new physical facilities. According to this statement, the administrative exemption alone was insufficient to address such a widespread problem, and from the perspective of ensuring the quality of pre-school education (high number of children per class), one respondent described this measure as cynical.

"We know that the quality of education in nursery schools has long been criticised – the number of children, the teachers' workloads. And in this crisis and situation, to actually say, 'Well, just try to squeeze even more Ukrainian children into those existing capacities', was utterly cynical." (SR4)

3.1.3 Map of available places

Another measure to support the admission of children from Ukraine into schools was an interactive map of available places, which was intended to show schools' spare capacity. The map was designed to make it easier for parents of children from Ukraine to choose a suitable school.

There were reports that this map did not work reliably. The information was often out of date and did not reflect reality. According to this account, the map caused chaos, particularly in the first few years after the outbreak of the war. People were applying to schools based on the data on the map, even though there were in fact no places available there. At the same time, it placed disproportionate pressure on specific schools that appeared on the map without this reflecting their actual capacity.

"The map was supposed to contain information on which schools had what spare capacity to admit these children – including nursery schools – but this did not match reality. The map project was not managed in such a way that it actually served its purpose. I mean, yes, people found some schools on it, but then in reality they discovered that either the places

didn't exist, or that it wasn't possible to enrol a child at that school at all. So there was extraordinary chaos for the first year or two. And so this map initiative didn't actually help; they still had to go to a lot of trouble to do the work, and it often just duplicated the effort, putting a lot of pressure on some schools when they suddenly realised they were on some map – so it wasn't well aligned with the actual needs of those schools.” (SR4)

3.1.4 NIVAM regional coordinators

In connection with the placement of children from Ukraine in schools, one of the participants also mentioned the regional coordinators. These were posts created at the National Institute for Education and Youth as part of a project financially supported by UNICEF. The regional coordinators operated in individual regions, and one of their tasks was to assist with the placement of Ukrainian children in schools (MŠVVM SR, 2023).

This respondent assessed that, in terms of admitting children from Ukraine to schools, this was the most effective solution. However, this solution was hampered by the fact that the regional coordinators had limited capacity (there were too few of them), and the aforementioned lack of capacity in the schools themselves across the various regions was also a problem.

“Essentially, the most effective solution that emerged was precisely those teams at NIVAM – the regional teams supporting the integration of children from Ukraine into schools. But whilst this was a good solution, it did indeed come up against limitations in terms of both their own capacity and the capacity of schools in those regions.” (SR3)

We discuss this measure in more detail in the section on Children's Adaptation at School.

3.1.5 Children's group

Another systemic measure was the option to set up a so-called children's group (MPSVR SR, 2022a). This was a scheme which, through a financial grant, enabled a private individual to provide childcare for up to four children, from birth until the start of compulsory pre-primary education in Year 9 nursery school. This measure was implemented by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family.

As with the administrative increase in school capacity, one participant assessed this measure positively as a sign of an effort to take action. However, according to this statement, there was a lack of vision for embedding this solution within the system.

‘I think there were still possibilities to set up a sort of children's group; I'm not sure if it wasn't under the remit of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family – I think I wrote about it somewhere once, that there were such children's groups, like nurseries, that something like that existed. And I also view it positively that, at the time when it all began, I feel they were at least trying to tackle things on an ad hoc basis, but it wasn't done with a vision of any sort of systematisation. That is my biggest criticism.’ (SR1)

3.1.6 Key recommendations

We also asked the participating experts for recommendations that could improve the current system for admitting children from abroad to nursery and primary schools. They proposed the following recommendations:

Introduce a system of education for foreign children on the same terms as for other children

- Introduce an education system (entitlement to a place in nursery school, compulsory pre-primary education and compulsory school attendance) for all foreign children on the same terms as for other children, regardless of their residence status
- Consequently, remove the link between compulsory education for children from Ukraine and their residence status and the state of emergency

Expand school capacity

- Plan school capacity on the basis of demographic forecasts (birth rate trends, number of foreign nationals)

- Invest in building school capacity, for example by accelerating the construction of container schools

Create a database of foreign nationals categorised by their residence status and make the data available to local authorities

- Create a database/register of foreign nationals based on their residence status
- Allow local authorities access to this database so that they have access to up-to-date data on foreign nationals in their area
- An alternative could be to introduce an obligation for foreign nationals to register with the local authority if they are granted residence there
- Introduce automatic database updates to reflect changes in residence status (loss or acquisition of residence status)

Continuously monitor the delivery and quality of education

- Link data from the Ministry of the Interior (children located in a specific area) with data from the Ministry of Education (the Ministry's Information System, which contains data on children in schools) to identify the exact number of children missing from schools and their whereabouts
- Introduce ongoing monitoring to assess whether the right or obligation of foreign nationals to education is being upheld, whether school capacities are sufficient, and what the quality of their education is (adequacy of support, mapping the risk of children with special educational needs being excluded from education)

Strengthen awareness-raising and communication with parents/legal guardians of children

- Improve the provision of information to parents in their own language (in the form of guidance and assistance) regarding compulsory education (that they must enrol their child in school, which school they should attend, and how the process works)
- Create an information pack for parents of foreign nationals, to be made available in individual schools
- Launch a targeted communication campaign in Ukrainian/the children's mother tongue on compulsory education; the campaign should send a clear message that families are welcome and also have economic benefits
- Create a portal in Ukrainian/the children's mother tongue with up-to-date information on schools' options and capacities
- Actively seek out children who are not in the education system

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3.2 Children's adaptation at school

3.2.1 Adaptation classes

An important systemic solution to support the adaptation of children from Ukraine was the option to set up an adaptation class in primary school. An adaptation class serves to compensate for gaps in pupils' education who do not have sufficient command of the language of instruction. It may be set up for a minimum of four and a maximum of ten pupils from a single year group or from several year groups, and a pupil may be placed in such a class for a maximum of one school year. This measure only came into effect from September 2025.

It was pointed out that, from a legislative perspective, this was not an entirely new measure, as the Act already provided for classes designed to support children's transition to primary school. However, these classes were intended only for children with special educational needs or children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Subsequently, the possibility of establishing such classes was extended to include foreign nationals.

The participating experts assessed the measure itself as largely positive. It was noted that this measure had been proposed in the past and that it is a prerequisite for ensuring an effective support system for children from abroad. However, one respondent pointed out that this solution must meet certain conditions: it must be temporary, non-segregating and permeable (it must ensure the flexible reintegration of children back into mainstream classes).

“But we’ve been proposing it for years now – both you and us, in one form or another. So, as a systemic tool, I view it very positively. Provided, of course, that it has precise limitations, is temporary, non-segregating, and – I don’t know – permeable, meaning flexible reintegration; but in my view, it cannot be effective without an adaptation class. At least to some extent, in some form, as every child may need it differently. I think it’s a very good systemic tool.” (SR1)

According to the participants, however, this solution also carries risks. In line with the conditions mentioned above, it was suggested that there is a risk that concentrating children in a separate class could lead to segregation.

“It can certainly help to some extent. At the same time, it also has a slight element of segregation, in that these children are effectively set apart and have their own separate class. It is somewhat questionable to what extent this can work, or to what extent it might also be problematic.” (SR2)

Several comments highlighted a fundamental shortcoming: the Ministry of Education had not allocated any funding for the establishment of adaptation classes, had not created any conditions for them, and had not provided any systemic support, for example in the form of premises or staffing. The measure therefore existed only on paper, which frustrated those working on the ground, as they had no way of implementing it.

“No money was allocated for it, no conditions were put in place, and no systemic support of any kind was provided. I regard this, as I said right at the start, as yet another huge missed opportunity to put something good in place. The fact that I write a clause into the law means nothing. It’s just that if someone is, say, really driven, raises the money, wants to do it – having seen it in the Netherlands for 10 years – then they can do it at that school and no one will stop them. But that’s not a systemic step.” (SR1)

There was also a suggestion that the problem might have been a lack of willingness on the part of teachers, as they have long been facing burnout.

In connection with the funding of adaptation classes, it was noted that the state had communicated information about possible financial support for adaptation classes only verbally, through consultation procedures. There was no written guarantee, therefore, that a school setting up an adaptation class would receive the necessary funds.

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“The absolutely crucial point is that the state is currently claiming that it does, in fact, support these adaptation classes through the consultation process, but it has only said this verbally. So schools have no indication from the Ministry that, ‘if you set one up, we’ll pay for it’. But I know that they did declare this verbally during some dispute proceedings concerning the decrees.” (SR4)

According to this statement, the Ministry of Education also rejected a proposal that adaptation classes should be funded in a similar way to the introductory years. Allegedly, it saw neither a reason nor a practical need for this. According to this respondent, the lack of a funding system meant that some schools funded adaptation classes by hiding the running costs under other support measures, such as language courses. The respondent criticised this practice as unsustainable.

“As things stand, I know that those who are brave enough (...), well, they use that money – they even pay for it through a support measure, meaning they hide the entire running of the class under a language course. And so far, no one has dared to challenge it. (...) I don’t think it’s systemic. It can’t work like this; if someone in Čadca decides to set up an adaptation class, they have no idea that there’s a way to get round it using some loopholes.” (SR4)

The lack of a support system has meant that, according to one statement, there are only three adaptation classes for foreign nationals in Slovakia. This respondent stated that the state is officially aware of only one of them. The other two classes were opened at a school which did not register them in the Ministry of Education’s information system.

One participating expert also shared findings and experiences from the ongoing pilot scheme for an adaptation class. According to him, although there was some nervousness at the school initially, the results so far are promising. The school wishes to continue with the model, is prepared to open further classes and is even considering creating the post of a foreign nationals’ coordinator. This assessment suggests that where there is

a high number of foreign pupils and the school takes a systematic approach to their education, a whole support system develops around the adaptation class. At the same time, however, this respondent pointed out the risk that if an adaptation class is introduced in isolation without follow-up care (for example, without monitoring the child three years after the class has ended), the support may not be successful.

“I can imagine it being introduced merely as an isolated measure in a school where no further support services are established, and it will simply focus on that group of children for one year, but we won’t be looking at how the child is faring perhaps for another three years after the programme ends, so in that respect I’m afraid I’m already sceptical that the adaptation class on its own won’t solve the problem, because it’s just an initial measure. We know that the system for educating foreign nationals doesn’t rely on adaptation classes. That’s just the start, and then a whole series of further measures must follow.”
(SR4)

At the same time, the respondent pointed out that, even during the first year of the pilot scheme, it became apparent that one year in an adaptation class might not be enough for all children.

3.2.2 Language support for pupils

Language courses in the official language for children from abroad are a tool that was already in place before the war against Ukraine. They are run by individual schools. Prior to 2022 and at the start of the state of emergency, there was no legal entitlement to a language course, nor was there an obligation on schools to provide one. From 2023, a system of support measures was introduced, including a measure to ensure the provision of a course in the school’s language of instruction. Under the Education Act, a child is entitled to this support measure on the basis of a recommendation from a teaching or specialist member of the school staff.

The duration of the course was adjusted during the state of emergency. Prior to 2022 and at the start of the state of emergency, the language course consisted of a basic course lasting 48 hours and an advanced course lasting 64 hours (NIVAM, 2022). Subsequently (from 2023), the duration of the basic course was adjusted to between 48 and 200 hours, and the duration of the extension course ranges from 64 to 150 hours, making a total of up to 350 hours (Ministry of

Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, 2026).

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With regard to language support, several participating experts criticised, in particular, the insufficient time allocated to the language course. One participant illustrated this shortcoming using the example of a bilingual grammar school, where intensive language training totalling 20 hours per week takes place during the introductory period.

The low volume of language training was also evident in relation to the operation of the adaptation class. According to one respondent, the state presents the current volume of 350 hours as sufficient, but in their view, the adaptation class requires a much higher allocation, namely between 600 and 700 hours.

Criticism was also levelled at the format in which language support is delivered. According to one account, children received this instruction in the form of an after-school club rather than as a subject entitled ‘Slovak as a second language’. This may also have had a negative impact on the quality of language education.

“And these children had it as after-school clubs. It’s not a subject called ‘Slovak as a second language’. It’s simply a measure organised at the level of an after-school club; that’s how it was done and, in my view, how it’s still done, so the quality of that language education cannot be good in such a system. So there should be a standard guarantee of a certain number of hours per week of Slovak as a foreign language, taught by a professional teacher who knows how to teach Slovak as a second language. And at the same time, in my view, the frequency should be higher.” (SR1)

From a funding perspective, some respondents viewed it positively that, unlike the adaptation class, this programme had secure funding. On the other hand, there were comments that this funding was administratively complicated. It was channelled through a negotiation procedure, which is complex. This may have discouraged some schools from running the language course or from running it with the support of the Ministry of Education.

“It’s good that there’s some funding for it, fine, but there were problems there too, in that it had to be sorted out through a negotiation procedure – I don’t know how. It’s not as if schools can just press a button on a computer somewhere and the money will appear in their account because they need it for these children; it’s very complicated.” (SR1)

According to the participating experts, another problem may have been the lack of information available to schools about the language tools on offer. It was also suggested that whether a school has the willingness and interest to support children from abroad plays a crucial role in the provision of language support.

3.2.3 Regional coordinators / regional methodologists

Regional coordinators, and later regional methodologists, were positions created within NIVAM. These positions were established as part of a project funded by UNICEF (NIVAM, 2025). The role of the regional coordinators was to liaise with schools, assist with the enrolment of Ukrainian children in schools, and help arrange psychological support and interpreting services for schools or for Ukrainian families when communicating with schools.

The project came to an end in late 2025 and responsibility for the initiative was transferred to the regional education authorities. Opinions on this tool varied amongst those involved, though positive assessments were more common.

One participant viewed it positively that this tool had been created and that both teachers and children in the region had such support available to them. However, she had no data on the tool’s actual effectiveness. At the same time, she viewed it negatively that the tool had been scaled back from the original coordinators to regional methodologists, which she regarded as a missed opportunity to embed these roles permanently within the education system.

“I think it’s great that it exists, because it’s NIVAM, it’s a state institution, and it operates at regional level. It’s a shame it’s been scaled back so much. In my view, we’ve once again missed a chance to introduce something into the system, because I believe a regional methodologist is a good tool – they operate at a lower level, it’s a subsidiary role, and they’re available to the teachers and children in that area, as it were. I would actually strengthen them as much as possible, as much as possible. (...) I don’t know, whether they were effective – I’ve got no data, no research, nothing – but logically and philosophically, it strikes me as a good tool.”
(SR1)

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Another participant assessed the teams of regional coordinators as the most effective support she had observed in the area of integrating children from Ukraine into schools. She welcomed the fact that such a task force had been set up within the Department of Education, in contrast to the health or social services sectors.

At the same time, however, she recognised the problem of a lack of capacity among the regional coordinators. She cited a specific experience in Bratislava, where there were only three coordinators for a huge number of people. She also saw it as a problem that it was difficult for the regional coordinators to help place children in schools, as there was a shortage of places.

“At least in Bratislava, I think there were three of them, and given the influx of people in that particular region, I think they did what they could, but of course it wasn’t possible; it didn’t work out perfectly.”
(SR3)

“They often mentioned that they were already in contact with those nurseries and knew that places were so limited that even for them it was difficult to find those schools, to link the family with the school so that it would be successful and the child would be accepted.” (SR3)

However, there were also critical assessments of the work of the regional coordinators. The problem lay in the systemic anchoring of this mechanism. One participating expert emphasised that the measure had been introduced by UNICEF and not by the state. By way of comparison, he noted that in Vienna, this agenda was managed by the city in cooperation with the state and had been implemented as a systemic element.

He also pointed out that in the Czech Republic and in Vienna, Ukrainian assistants had been introduced directly into schools instead of coordinators. He viewed the Slovak solution as a dysfunctional hybrid. Instead of assistants

for children in schools, coordinators were created, yet they lacked a clear remit for coordination. In practice, he argued, the regional coordinators

merely managed the technical processes of enrolling children within a dysfunctional system. He therefore did not view regional coordinators as a measure specifically aimed at the integration of foreign nationals, but rather as an increase in the number of officials carrying out administrative work.

“What was launched here is such a muddle that there weren’t enough support staff in schools for the children, but there were coordinators here, even though there was no one to coordinate. What they did was coordinate certain technical processes, helping to place children in schools within a dysfunctional system. This wasn’t a specific measure designed to help integrate those foreign nationals; it was simply a case of the state increasing the number of officials who were carrying out some administrative work related to integration.” (SR4)

According to this statement, the fundamental shortcoming was that the regional coordinators lacked authority. These staff members held no official position that would have enabled them to access the system. In schools, as well as in their dealings with the state and NIVAM itself, they were perceived as external staff with no real decision-making authority. They were not linked to NIVAM’s other activities or to the Ministry of Education.

“They held no official position that would allow them to access the system. They were often present at those schools, and were also perceived as outsiders in relation to the state and NIVAM itself. In other words, they were not people who had any power to make decisions about anything. They were, in effect, little more than volunteers. Even though they were employed by NIVAM, from what I understand, it simply wasn’t a service that was linked to NIVAM’s other activities, and certainly not to the Ministry.” (SR4)

From personal interviews with several coordinators, this respondent gained the impression that they were floundering and felt caught between a rock and a hard place – between family on the one hand and school on the other. They had no real opportunity to resolve problems, as the actual powers lay with the regional school administration office.

This respondent also took a critical view of the project’s overall outcome. According to him, the three-year work of the regional coordinators had not translated into systemic measures. As evidence, he cited the fact that, as the project was drawing to a close, the Supreme Audit Office published findings stating that the system for educating foreign nationals was in a poor

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and is not based on any strategy.

“A coordination role requires – if it is to work and if it is to subsequently become part of a system in some way – that the coordinators actually do something, and it turned out that these coordinators were doing something here for three years, but this did not translate at all into any government measures. It was simply a case of them carrying out crisis management here for three years, but after those three years we see no final outcome from it. The project ended in December 25, three or four months ago, and since then there has been silence. And the outcome of this project is that, in the summer of 25, we received a report from the Supreme Audit Office detailing the disastrous state of the education system for foreign nationals and the management of issues relating to foreign nationals, and highlighting the lack of a strategy in this area. So I ask: if this project was supposed to be successful, how is it possible that, at the conclusion of the project, a government analysis was published stating that nothing has been achieved here?” (SR4)

On the other hand, this respondent also acknowledged that the regional coordinators had made a certain contribution. Thanks to them, some children were able to enrol in schools.

3.2.4 Placement in year groups

Another measure concerns the placement of children in the appropriate year group. Children from abroad are placed in the appropriate year group by the headteacher after assessing their current level of education and their command of the language of instruction. The law allows a child to be conditionally placed in the appropriate year group according to their age on the grounds of insufficient command of the official language; however, there was no restriction on placement in lower year groups.

One of the respondents pointed out that the placement of children in lower year groups has been restricted by legislation. Placing a child one or two year groups lower is now only possible with the consent of the counselling and prevention centre and the parent. This participant viewed this restriction positively.

“There may be some children where we think it’s worth placing them a year lower. Fortunately, the law

has stipulated that this is only possible with the knowledge of the counselling and prevention centre and the parent's consent. So this was a major problem at the start and

a great many children were disadvantaged by being placed a year or even two years below their actual age. Fortunately, this has now been stopped by legislation.” (SR4)

3.2.5 Language support for parents of children

One of the participants also mentioned language courses for adults (including parents), which are run thanks to support from the Ministry of Education through grants to language schools (MŠVVM SR, 2026b), or via employment offices. According to this statement, parents do not feel linguistically prepared to communicate with the school, and these courses could have helped them. Adults from Ukraine were interested in the courses.

“About two years ago and last year, some language schools received grants to teach the Slovak language. So I know there was a demand for this, and that people signed up for those courses. It also helped with communication; in other words, it could have been a tool to facilitate communication between parents and the school – which is also important – taking into account the wider environment of the pupil, both in a broader and, well, a more immediate sense.” (SR3)

3.2.6 Support measures

Social integration

Measures introduced even before the arrival of these children, or introduced without directly responding to the need to integrate children from Ukraine into education, may also have contributed to the children’s adaptation.

Such tools include support measures. One participant pointed out that the catalogue of support measures also includes a measure aimed at the social integration of children at school. In the catalogue of support measures, this measure is referred to as an activity to support social inclusion. Its purpose is to support the child’s social integration into the school environment and society. The measure helps to develop social skills, strengthen relationships with classmates and school staff, and prevent social exclusion (Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, 2026a).

According to this statement, this measure has great potential and is formulated broadly enough to cover the needs of children from abroad as well. Within its framework, adaptation, non-educational and extracurricular activities could be provided, such as cultural adaptation or an adaptation stay.

“And it’s also quite broadly formulated, so that, in my view, it covers all adaptation measures – those non-educational, extracurricular ones, such as engagement, information provision, cultural activities, adaptation, adaptation stays, things like that.” (SR1)

However, funding is an obstacle to making use of this support measure. According to this respondent, it is unclear what it means in practice for a child to be entitled to this measure.

Tutoring

One participant pointed out that, for children from Ukraine, support measures were most frequently required within mainstream education, namely teaching assistance, adjustments to the forms, methods and content of education, and extra tuition, particularly in the Slovak language and mathematics.

However, when it came to receiving this support, children from Ukraine faced the same obstacles and problems as other children who needed support measures. According to one account, several schools viewed support measures as something non-binding and voluntary. For example, it was difficult to access extra tuition in the Slovak language and mathematics. Schools were often reluctant to provide it, as extra tuition meant extra work for teachers.

‘From what was most in demand – and I think this perhaps also reflects the needs of ordinary children – it was that extra tuition: Slovak and maths. And I also came across situations where the school didn’t want to provide it because

it meant extra work for the teachers and they didn't want to do it. In some places it worked, in others it didn't; in my view, it depends very much on the interest shown by the school management and the teachers as to whether we provide it or not.” (SR3)

At the same time, it became apparent that the system for enforcing support measures does not work well. Under the law, a headteacher may state that they do not have the conditions to provide a support measure. The relevant regional school administration office has the power to review this statement and assess whether it is justified or not. If the statement is not justified, the school must provide the support measure; if it is justified, the regional education authority must take the necessary steps to ensure that the support is provided, as a matter of priority, at that school. However, one participant stated that it was precisely the regional education authorities that had failed to provide the necessary support measure for the child.

In this context, the respondent also highlighted barriers on the part of the children's parents. Some parents were reluctant to submit a request for a review of the provision of support measures, as they perceived this as a form of complaint against the school and did not wish to jeopardise their relationship with the school.

Parents' approaches to applying for support measures also varied. Some parents actively sought support, whilst others did not submit an application. This led to unequal access to support for children in the same situation.

3.2.7 School psychologists

Some of the participating experts mentioned that school psychologists could help with mental health support (including trauma management) for children from Ukraine. However, they highlighted the shortage of such professionals in schools.

Another issue with the work of school psychologists may be a lack of cultural sensitivity in psychological counselling. Even if a school has a psychologist and a child is able to access this service, the counselling may not be effective, as psychologists often do not know how to work with children from a culturally backgrounds. According to one respondent, this is a more general problem that does not only concern Ukrainian children, but also, for example, queer young people or other foreign nationals.

“But what is proving to be a problem is that – and this isn't just Ukrainian children, but essentially any other children, such as queer young people or various foreign nationals – the psychological counselling that is available is not culturally sensitive. And this is proving to be a major problem: even if there is a psychologist at the school and the child can go to see them, it turns out that it is not effective because they do not know how to go about it.” (SR1)

According to the participating experts, even the use of an interpreter may not be the most appropriate solution for overcoming the language barrier. This is because some information may be lost during interpretation, and trust is much harder to build. Moreover, the problem is not just linguistic, but also relates to the difficulties associated with moving between countries or experiencing culture shock.

“Interpretation isn't really the ideal solution. It didn't work out for us either. A lot of things seem to get lost in the process. At the same time, it's much harder to build trust that way.” (SR2)

“They respond by saying, ‘Right, so I'll get an interpreter,’ but it's not just about the language. There are so many dimensions to what it means for a child to move from one country to another. They experience culture shock, they have various dual concerns – there are so many issues involved. Those psychologists don't know anything about it at all.” (SR1)

There was also the view that it might not even be enough for a school psychologist to share the same background as the child. According to one comment, for example, whilst the work of Ukrainian psychologists is certainly beneficial, even they may not know how to respond to the issue of moving between countries and war-related trauma. The issue of culture shock requires specialised training, even for a psychologist from the same country.

“There are Ukrainian psychologists, which is great, but in my view they may not necessarily know how to deal with that transformation, that move from one country to another, or that war trauma. But in my view, the issue of

of culture shock is a huge one; even if there were a psychologist from the same country, she might not be able to deal with it – you need specialised training for that.” (SR1)

There was also the experience that the problem with increasing capacity or employing specialists in psychosocial support is not a lack of money, but a lack of will on the part of the responsible institutions. They do not view this issue as a strategic priority.

“I’ve even heard from people on the ground that the advisory bodies said, ‘We could actually employ them; we might even find the money for them through the Regional Employment Offices’, but that ‘we don’t want to’. This means that the only Regional Employment Office that has supported this is the one in Bratislava, but at the level of the other Regional Employment Offices, we do not see any indication that they wish to treat this issue as part of the system at all. It’s not that they don’t have the money for it, or that they might not be able to set some aside for it, but they simply don’t see it as a strategic priority within the counselling system to train specialists to support foreigners.” (SR4)

3.2.8 Key recommendations

We also asked the participating experts for recommendations that could improve the current system for the adaptation of children from abroad. They proposed the following recommendations:

Support the operation of adaptation classes

- Establish a funding scheme for adaptation classes (for example, by introducing an increased funding standard or earmarking specific funds for the establishment and operation of adaptation classes) and communicate this publicly
- When funding adaptation classes, also take into account the costs of psychosocial support in the child’s mother tongue
- Consider the possibility of a child remaining in an adaptation class for more than 12 months (following the Swedish model), whereby in the second year the child could attend a combined programme – in both the adaptation and the mainstream class; however, this option should be based solely on a professional assessment of the child
- Ensure support after the adaptation class has ended, for example by providing a language maintenance course (2–3 hours per week) delivered by a language teacher for all children of foreign nationals at the school
- Monitor the child even after the adaptation class has ended – monitor the child not only during the adaptation class but also for several years (3–4) after completing it (following the Swedish model), to prevent the risk of regression upon returning to a mainstream class if the child does not receive follow-up support
- Link the adaptation class to further measures – the adaptation class should not be an isolated measure, but should be linked to further support (language support, psychosocial support, integration into the class)
- Use modern technological tools to teach subjects (such as history, physics and chemistry) in the child’s mother tongue (in parallel with intensive Slovak language tuition) and, during the first year, allow for the assessment of knowledge and skills in the mother tongue

Consider the possibility of establishing specialised schools for the integration of foreign nationals

- Consider the possibility of designating temporary specialised schools which would focus on the integration of foreign nationals in a given area – permeability to mainstream schools must be maintained to prevent segregation

Improve language support for children

- Increase the duration of the basic language course to approximately 600 hours to reflect the actual needs and practice in integration classes

- Guarantee a minimum number of weekly lessons in Slovak as a foreign language, to be delivered by a qualified teacher, with a higher frequency of language tuition during the first three months
- Simplify the administrative process for funding language courses
- Improve schools' awareness of existing language support tools and of who to contact if necessary
- Ensure language support is also provided in nursery schools

Introduce differentiated teaching in Slovak language lessons

- Introduce differentiated teaching in Slovak language and literature lessons – teachers should teach Slovak as a second language alongside Slovak language and literature, using adapted materials
 - An alternative could be a teaching assistant who, under the teacher's guidance, delivers the content in a simplified form

Adapt the content for foreign nationals

- Reduce the content for foreign nationals based on minimum learning outcomes – the aim of educating foreign nationals in the initial phase need not be to cover the entire curriculum across all subjects

Introduce language assessment

- Introduce a simple, user-friendly language assessment tool (based on language levels)
- Link the results of language assessment to clearly defined measures and appropriate funding

Introduce psychosocial assessment

- Introduce the creation of a child's psychosocial profile (modelled on the portfolios used for children with special educational needs), which will capture the child's environment, experiences and journey, so that the child's context can be understood

Introduce academic assessment

- Introduce educational/knowledge-based assessment (in mathematics and core subjects) in the child's mother tongue, so that the content of education and teaching materials can be better tailored

Provide psychosocial support

- Introduce and fund the role of an intercultural support worker in schools to provide psychosocial support in the child's mother tongue – for at least the first two years after starting school, and ideally for a further year after completing the adaptation class
- Support the employment of Ukrainian/foreign-language psychologists in schools
- Alternatively, train members of the community in question to provide 'psychological first aid' to children from that community
- Introduce specialised training for school psychologists to work in culturally diverse environments, or establish positions for psychologists trained to work in culturally diverse environments within selected (local) counselling and prevention centres

Support the development of children's mother tongue

- Introduce a system to support the development of children's mother tongue, which could be provided by teachers of various foreign languages – teachers would visit schools regularly (following the Vienna model), focusing on the development of the mother tongue (rather than tutoring or psychosocial support)

Support language courses for parents

- Support language courses for parents to improve communication between the family and the school

Introduce an adaptation plan and appoint a person responsible for adaptation

- Draw up a general adaptation plan that any school could use – the plan should cover the entire process from the child's first entry into the school building (finding their way around, rules, administration, communication with parents, cultural specifics) right through to the prevention of bullying
- Appoint a designated person (a member of the school support team or, if the school does not have a support team, another member of staff) who would be responsible for the adaptation of foreign children at that particular school

Introduce activities to strengthen team spirit and prevent bullying

- Introduce activities to strengthen the class community and prevent bullying – these activities should not take the form of a separate compulsory subject, but could be carried out as part of ethics education, the school club or extra-curricular activities

Introduce transitional/adaptation measures for newly arrived children

- Establish an adaptation period (approximately 3 months from arrival in the country), during which children will have access to informal educational and psychosocial activities whilst the family settles in and until they are fully integrated into the school system.
 - Establish transitional educational groups or classes that would provide an informal setting offering basic language and psychosocial support to children until they are fully integrated into the education system
 - The existing network of leisure centres could be utilised for this purpose
 - The model of the integration centre in Nitra could serve as a template

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Make the system of support measures operational

- Strengthen staffing capacities dedicated specifically to support measures (e.g. tutoring)
- Strengthen the contractual and methodological links between schools and counselling and prevention services so that they function as a single system
- Consistently apply existing tools and rules relating to the provision of support measures

3.3 Support for school staff

3.3.1 Teaching materials and methodological support

The participating experts pointed out that schools had access to a number of guides and methodologies relating to support for children from Ukraine, produced by the National Institute for Education and Youth (NIVAM) and the Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology (VÚDPaP). Some respondents viewed these initiatives positively. It was also mentioned that the Ministry of Education had published a number of guides on its website, for example on how to welcome a Ukrainian pupil.

At the same time, however, some respondents expressed uncertainty or doubts as to the extent to which, and how, these materials are actually used in schools, and whether schools are even aware of them.

“VÚDPaP and NIVAM have done an awful lot, and I’m not sure if it’s the Ministry; in my view, it’s more likely through these organisations. There are a million guides, methodologies, I don’t know what else. I don’t know how they’re used in those schools or whether the schools are aware of them.” (SR1)

"On the Ministry of Education's website, there are various guides on how to welcome a Ukrainian pupil and what can be done. So there's plenty of material like that, but whether schools actually use it or not, we can't tell you." (SR3)

Several of the participating experts mentioned the Slovak language textbook for foreigners, *Aha, slovenčina!*, published by a private language school in collaboration with NIVAM and UNICEF, as a key teaching resource. The creation of the textbook was viewed largely positively. One of the participants praised the speed with which the textbook was produced.

On the other hand, one respondent also highlighted some weaknesses associated with this textbook. According to this comment, it became apparent that the text-based textbook alone is insufficient, and that audio recordings and teaching methods for working with it are lacking. Furthermore, this textbook is unable to cater for all age groups. Another drawback was the lack of accompanying teaching resources for the textbook. Consequently, schools using it had to proceed intuitively.

"It very quickly became apparent that this was insufficient and that simply having a text-based textbook in hand was not enough; that a whole host of additional materials, audio recordings and teaching methods were needed to work with the textbook, and also that it is not possible to teach all age groups using a single textbook. So, as if this were the only thing I'd picked up on – that it had sort of been done – but the measure was insufficient, because, well, there was absolutely no training provided for it; there was no system in place. So some people did use it, but they went about it intuitively." (SR4)

The haphazard distribution of the textbook, which varied according to immediate need, was also viewed negatively. When there was a large influx of people, the textbook was given out for free; later, it was only available for a fee, which, according to one respondent, came across as a reactive rather than a planned decision.

Another shortcoming in this area was the lack of teaching materials for nursery schools and younger children. One respondent also perceived the fact that existing teaching materials are not organised under a unified policy on teaching materials as a systemic problem. According to this respondent, individual teaching materials are produced independently and without coordination.

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3.3.2 Teacher education and training

With regard to the education and training of teachers to work with children from Ukraine, one of the participants was convinced that teachers lack didactic training for working with foreign nationals, neither at universities as part of their professional training nor through lifelong learning.

However, certain training opportunities do exist within the system. Participants mentioned that a NIVAM course focused on working with foreign nationals is available. According to one respondent, however, almost no one takes this course.

'There is formally a course at NIVAM with some sort of name, but from what I've heard, nobody takes it, because the state can't expect people to search through NIVAM's list of a thousand training courses on their own to find the one they want; the state isn't doing anything on a massive scale like it did with the support measures from the Recovery Plan, when it retrained the whole of Slovakia and it was free. So nobody even knows this course exists.' (SR4)

There was also a mention of the work carried out by Studia Academica Slovaca. This is an organisation that has long been providing training for people teaching Slovak as a second language. However, it does not generally prepare ordinary teachers to work with foreign nationals. According to one respondent, thanks to funding from UNICEF, approximately 100 to 200 people have completed training at this institution.

'The organisation providing the training is Studia Academica Slovaca. It has been running these courses for years, but it tends to train those who teach Slovak as a second language, rather than teachers working with foreigners. So Studia Academica Slovaca, with funding from UNICEF, paid for the training of some 100, 200 people, but it's unlikely that there's any follow-up on what happens next; my assumption, based on what I know, is that they simply treated it as a bonus course and aren't actually using it in practice, because either they don't have the foreign nationals or they simply don't have time to do it.' (SR4)

There was also a comment that, as with teaching materials, the existing training opportunities in which the state has invested (Studia Academica Slovaca and NIVAM) have not been integrated into a single coherent whole, together with the necessary funding. According to one respondent, when schools do not have a full overview of the educational provision, they are rarely able to put together a training programme on their own.

‘The state has already invested in certain things or implemented some systemic measures; for example, it has Studia Academica Slovaca and NIVAM, which have experts who could provide training, but there is no systematic approach to the education of foreigners. As a result, even these training courses, which could be of high quality, do not reach the people who need them, and there is no one to coordinate it – to say, ‘here we’ll train teachers of Slovak as a second language, and here we’ll provide training for teachers of other subjects’, and that, together with the necessary funding mechanisms, this will form a coherent whole. If schools cannot see the bigger picture, very few of them will be able to piece it together on their own.’ (SR4)

Linked to this is the problem of schools being poorly informed. According to one respondent, not all schools are aware of all the training opportunities available to them.

3.3.3 Simplification of employment conditions

Some of the participating experts also mentioned a measure whereby a Ukrainian-speaking staff member working with Ukrainian children was not required to pass a state examination in the Slovak language. Some schools took advantage of this to employ Ukrainian teaching assistants. On the other hand, the employment of Ukrainian staff only worked in schools that took the initiative. Several schools (particularly those with fewer foreign children) did not make use of this opportunity.

‘They’ve actually made the process of employing these teachers easier. Because previously, a state exam in the Slovak language was a requirement. Some schools still require it, but, for example, they can take the person on and allow them to complete the state exam whilst they’re already working; it’s no longer the case that we won’t take you on because you don’t have Slovak. So, in my view, this was a good solution, although again it was more a case of some schools took that step proactively by hiring those teaching assistants and teachers, and by employing those Ukrainian staff members, whilst others – perhaps those with fewer pupils – simply weren’t interested.’ (SR3)

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There was also the view that this did not represent any real change, as an exemption from the compulsory state language examination had already existed and applied to teachers of English and other foreign languages. The Ministry merely clarified that it also applies to Ukrainian-speaking staff.

3.3.4 Funding for support

One of the participants also mentioned that schools received a special financial grant for Ukrainian pupils. However, according to her, it appeared that schools did not use this grant specifically to support Ukrainian pupils, but rather for the running of the school.

“The school did receive some sort of grant for Ukrainian pupils, but it also turned out that they weren’t using that grant for the Ukrainian pupils, but were using it for the school as a whole.” (SR3)

3.3.5 Key recommendations

We also asked the participating experts for recommendations that could improve the current support system for school staff. They proposed the following recommendations:

Create a comprehensive set of teaching materials for foreign pupils

- Develop a coherent ‘teaching materials policy’ for foreign pupils – bring together existing teaching materials and textbooks into a unified whole
- Supplement the existing Slovak language textbook for foreign nationals with accompanying materials, such as audio recordings, teaching guides and age-appropriate materials

Improve teacher education and training

- Introduce teaching methods for working with children from different backgrounds as part of university teacher training and lifelong learning/professional development
- Integrate existing educational resources (Studia Academica Slovaca, NIVAM) into a single, coherent system with a clear division of labour (who trains teachers of Slovak as a second language, who trains other teachers) and secure the necessary funding – provide schools with a ready-made ‘menu’ of training options
- Introduce awareness-raising workshops on intercultural communication for teachers; these should take the form of a series of sessions, not a one-off activity
- Introduce training in a trauma-informed approach for teachers

Introduce regional support for schools

- Strengthen and stabilise the model of regional methodologists/coordinators; consider extending their remit to the city level
- Establish mobile teams at county level to visit schools to help them put measures in place, conduct classroom observations and provide supportive (rather than inspectional) feedback; this could involve around 10 people per county
- Establish the post of psychosocial services coordinator within the regional counselling and prevention centre
- Establish a permanent post for a Ukrainian psychologist within the regional counselling and prevention centre in all regions
- Consider having certain services (such as intercultural services) provided by local authorities rather than the school system, whilst working in collaboration with the Ministry of Education – local authority outreach workers would also be available to schools

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Support the employment of Ukrainian specialists

- Support the employment of Ukrainian professionals in roles such as nursery teacher, teaching assistant and support team member across the entire school system
- Consider implementing a model of bilingual teaching pairs in nursery schools

Introduce psychological support for teachers

- Introduce supervision and psychological support for teachers, for example through an external team of supervisors

Raise awareness amongst schools

- Systematically inform schools about all available measures and who they should contact

3.4 Secondary schools

3.4.1 Secondary school admissions

With regard to secondary school admissions, one of the participating experts noted that this area had been the most neglected and that not even ad hoc measures, such as those adopted in the Czech Republic, had been put in place.

Regarding secondary school admissions, the participating experts stated that young people had the opportunity to sit tests with assistive devices and extended time. It should be noted, however, that these adjustments were only guaranteed as part of ‘Testing 9’, not directly within the admissions process itself (NIVAM, 2023).

Some of the participating experts pointed out that the secondary school admissions process is complicated. The process of starting secondary school itself takes place in several stages and requires parents to be better informed, as it is a process that needs to be planned in advance. This is a particularly challenging situation for children outside the education system.

“Overall, the process of starting secondary school is quite complicated; there are various stages that need to be gone through, so perhaps more should be done to ensure parents are informed in advance, because this is really something that needs to be planned ahead. It’s not as though, all of a sudden, you realise you need to submit an application. And especially, for example, those children who were not enrolled in the system. For those who attended school, the application was submitted automatically through the school, but for those who aren’t enrolled – who are at home learning online – the question was: ‘How do we apply?’” (SR3)

One respondent highlighted the problem that no official guidance had been issued by the state regarding adjustments to the admission of children from Ukraine. According to this statement, the Ministry had not published any guidelines to instruct headteachers on how to adapt the admissions process. The same respondent also noted that, although the Ministry of Education had prepared guidelines on adjustments to the admissions process and the school-leaving examination for that academic year at the time of the interview, it had not published them, even though the admissions process was already underway.

This expert also highlighted resistance from secondary school headteachers to adapting the admissions process for young people from Ukraine. According to this statement, there was also little willingness on the part of regional authorities to make adjustments.

“Our experience (...) was that we appealed to headteachers right from the first year to make adjustments to the admissions process, and I was personally present at meetings of headteachers, both online and in person (...). Unbelievable hostility – ‘why should we do this for them?’ and ‘why should we do that?’, and that there is huge pressure on these schools, they’re admitting too many, and Slovak children can’t get into secondary schools. Why should we make such adjustments for Ukrainian children? It’s simply very, very hateful. So, in terms of political will, it’s very weak on the part of the self-governing regions and non-existent on the part of the state.” (SR4)

Changes to secondary school admissions are expected to come into effect from 2028 at the earliest. Instead of a standardised entrance

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exam, a language test in the official language at A2 level will suffice for foreign pupils, and this will apply to pupils who arrived from the 6th year of primary school.

The participating experts assessed this option largely positively. The transition from primary to secondary school has, in fact, proved to be a major problem, particularly due to the language barrier. According to one comment, the situation still persists where children from Ukraine often end up at schools that do not hold entrance exams at all or where there are vacancies, rather than at schools that would suit their interests or abilities.

“In addition to what we’ve discussed so far, I think it’s a major step forward that we now have a provision that’s already in the law – albeit not yet in force – but it has been approved. So I view this positively. It was a major problem. Because when we were working with local authorities, when we were drawing up those integration strategies, it became very apparent that children were having trouble making the transition. Very capable children – the teachers at those primary schools themselves wanted to admit these children, as did the secondary schools, but it simply didn’t work out very well. So I think this is very important. Then there’s also the problem that very often these children end up at schools that don’t hold entrance exams or where there’s space.” (SR1)

A critical view was also expressed. One participant criticised the fact that the condition for receiving support is not a diagnosed language level, but the year of arrival.

“Also, the fact that it applies from Year 6 onwards – it’s just not an entirely comprehensive measure. Only those who arrived from Year 6 onwards can take this test. Which isn’t quite systematic yet, because we know that a Year 5 pupil might arrive – if they’re Vietnamese or Chinese, for example – so perhaps they don’t need to have A2, but maybe B1. (...) It should probably be based on more than just the year they joined; it should be based on that diagnostic assessment, which should be carried out systematically.” (SR4)

Despite these reservations, however, this respondent considers this measure to be an acceptable compromise. He appreciated that at least some support had been put in place, even if it is a quick and superficial solution. It does, however, increase the chances of success in the entrance exams.

One of the participants also mentioned an informal practice, or rather a recommendation from NIVAM, that a child should first enrol at a school in Ukraine and then transfer to a Slovak secondary school. This was because admission to a secondary school is more difficult than a transfer, partly due to the Slovak language test.

E-applications

One of the respondents also highlighted a problem that the new system of electronic applications (e-applications) has caused for children from Ukraine. According to this account, the form is only available in Slovak and requires a personal identification number. However, children from Ukraine do not have a personal identification number in the required format, so it is not possible to complete the form.

“Now, these electronic applications are clearly a major problem as well. (...) They’re in Slovak, you have to enter a personal identification number, and there are technical issues that Ukrainian parents aren’t just unaware of how to deal with, but physically cannot fill in, because there aren’t any fields for them there. So this is a major problem.” (SR1)

3.4.2 School-leaving examination / completion of studies

In the case of the school-leaving examination, a legislative amendment has been adopted which will come into force in 2027. The amendment provides that, instead of the school-leaving examination in the Slovak language and literature, it will be possible to take a language examination – at B2 level for pupils who arrived from the 6th year of primary school and at B1 level for pupils who arrived from the 1st year of secondary school.

Opinions on this option were divided. One particularly critical view was expressed. One of the Those involved do not consider it appropriate that the Slovak language part of the school-leaving examination should be replaced by a mere language test. The key argument was that the school-leaving examination is an important qualification which also demonstrates knowledge of current affairs and

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literature. If a pupil has completed secondary school with the school-leaving examination, they see no reason why they should not also sit

the school-leaving exam itself. This respondent acknowledged that some parts of the school-leaving exam may be challenging for foreign nationals, but considers it important that, if there is a possibility that pupils will remain in Slovakia to study at university or live here, they should also be familiar with current affairs and literature.

“I don’t understand why, I mean. Because, well, this is a different kettle of fish. The Slovak language exam means I know Slovak at B1, C level, I don’t know what. But the Slovak language A-level is different – as if it were something else. In fact, if there’s a chance they’ll stay here and go to university here or live here, then I think they should know both the social studies and the literature.” (SR1)

This stance was linked to broader philosophical principles. These rest on the idea that, rather than offering concessions, the state should provide pupils from abroad with all the tools and opportunities they need to meet the same requirements as everyone else. The state should therefore invest the maximum resources and funding in the path to achieving results, rather than lowering the final requirements.

“I’m not a great advocate of making things easier for them at any cost, because in a way it’s as if we’re belittling them. I’m more in favour of them having to meet the same standards as everyone else, but that we do everything we can to ensure they have the opportunities and tools to do so. I wouldn’t be quite so lenient when it comes to the final requirements, but I would invest all the funding, resources – whatever it takes – to ensure they can succeed.” (SR1)

In contrast, there were also favourable views. In support of this solution, one of the participants argued that many universities offer degree programmes in a foreign language, such as English, so a Slovak language A-level need not be the only ticket to university.

Another expert assessed this move, also in comparison with measures taken by neighbouring countries, as one of the better things the Ministry has done. According to this statement, Slovakia has even overtaken other countries. This expert also welcomed the fact that, thanks to the distinction between levels B2 (pupils from Year 6) and B1

(pupils from Year 1

of secondary school), teachers can already know in the lower years which form of the school-leaving examination a pupil will sit, and can adapt the curriculum accordingly, thereby relieving pressure on both teachers and pupils.

However, this respondent also raised reservations regarding technical ambiguities in the implementation of this solution. He pointed out that the law does not make it clear what form the language examination will take or what it will entail – namely, whether it will be a written or oral examination, or a combination of both, and whether it will also include an essay.

He also considers the funding of the language test to be an unresolved issue. In his view, it has not been clarified whether the state will cover the cost of this option. He emphasised that sitting a language test should not be a luxury and that the state should offer this opportunity free of charge.

3.4.3 Key recommendations

We also asked the participating experts for recommendations that could improve the current system for admitting young people from abroad to secondary schools, as well as the system for completing secondary education. They proposed the following recommendations:

Revise the admissions process for foreign nationals

- Consider ensuring that language adjustments to entrance examinations are based on the results of language proficiency assessments, rather than on the year group the pupil joined upon arrival at the school – adjustments to the admissions process would depend on the language level determined by standardised assessment, regardless of when the pupil arrived in Slovakia
- Introduce special preparation prior to entrance examinations, which would include language training as well as socio-cultural orientation
- Raise parents' awareness of the application process as well as the procedure and stages of the admissions process

Adapt the E-prihláška electronic system for applicants from Ukraine

- Adapt the E-prihláška electronic system so that an identification number can be entered if the applicant does not have a birth number in the required Slovak format

Amend the school-leaving examination for foreign nationals

- Consider introducing more language proficiency levels for the state language examination (instead of the two levels, B1 and B2, based on the year of arrival)
- Abolish the written component of the internal part of the school-leaving examination (essay) if a pupil takes the language examination instead of the school-leaving examination in the Slovak language
- Ensure that the B2-level language examination at the state language school is free of charge
- Ensure that preparatory courses for the language examination are free of charge if the secondary school is unable to provide high-quality language preparation itself
- Take the pupil's language proficiency into account in all other school-leaving examination subjects and, where necessary, provide them with a dictionary, extra time or an assistant

4. Czech Republic

4.1 Admission of children to nursery and primary schools

4.1.1 Obligation and entitlement

In the Czech Republic, from the start of the emergency situation, the same educational conditions applied to children from Ukraine as to other children. They had a legal right to a place in their local nursery from the age of three, compulsory attendance at nursery school from the age of five, and compulsory schooling at primary school.

The experts involved assessed these equal conditions unequivocally positively. It was noted that compulsory education sets clear rules for all stakeholders and that schools take a more responsible approach to admitting children. According to this view, it appears that in the case of secondary schools, where education is not compulsory, the situation is worse, as schools have less interest in admitting these children.

‘I think it is certainly a good principle that compulsory education for these pupils sets certain rules, because we then notice that in the case of those secondary schools where attendance is no longer compulsory, those schools sometimes do not even have much interest in addressing this issue further, as attendance is not compulsory, whereas in the case of primary schools, where school attendance is compulsory, those schools approach the matter somewhat differently in light of this principle.’ (ČR3)

“Definitely positively, because even enrolment in those nursery schools was on a voluntary basis – by which I mean from the age of three to four, when they are not in the pre-school year – and at the same time, when they were in the pre-school year, so that the same conditions applied there; so I view this positively.” (ČR1)

One of the respondents also mentioned that children can enrol in nursery school outside the regular enrolment period.

He viewed this option positively, because the first refugees from Ukraine, who arrived at the end of February and early March, did not have to wait for the regular enrolment period but were able to enrol their child immediately.

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“In the Czech Republic, we have the specific rule that a child is entitled to be admitted to their local nursery school from the age of three and may be admitted even outside the enrolment period. This means that when the first war refugees began arriving in late February and early March, they did not have to wait for the enrolment period – which in our country at that time was not until the first half of May – but could enrol their child in nursery immediately. And if the child was five years old and was due to turn six, they were actually obliged to enrol them straight away.” (ČR2)

The experts taking part differed in their views on how soon after arriving in the Czech Republic a child had to start school. According to one statement, children of compulsory school age had to enrol in school immediately, as they were not tourists and were not subject to the 90-day period during which they were not required to start school. Another respondent, however, mentioned a 90-day adaptation period during which a child is not required to start school upon arrival in the Czech Republic. Once this period has elapsed, however, the parent is obliged to enrol the child in school. According to the methodology, the second version applies: during the first 90 days of residence in the Czech Republic, it is not necessary to ensure enrolment in school (MŠMT ČR, 2025b). Enrolment in school is appropriate only when the child is ready for it and does not perceive it as a stressful event.

Despite compulsory school attendance, however, several participants highlighted problems with the participation of children from Ukraine in education. It was noted that during the peak influx in 2022, parents struggled to find a place at a school in their area of residence, and some children did not attend primary school for more than half a year.

Another respondent referred to a 2024 analysis which indicated that at least 12,000 to 15,000 children had not been enrolled in school, representing approximately one-fifth to one-third of children from Ukraine in the Czech Republic. One respondent also noted that they continue to encounter cases of children who have not been placed in school, with

some children have been waiting for a place for up to two years. He pointed out that this creates a significant gap in social inclusion.

“They certainly aren’t attending school, because in fact some organisations carried out surveys during 2024 to see how well Ukrainian children were integrated into the education system, particularly in terms of compulsory schooling, and they found that in fact a quarter to a third of those children – which is the discrepancy between the Home Office’s records for children under 15 and the school register of children enrolled in schools, so the figures differ in this way. This means that there really were at least 12,000–15,000 children – that is, about one-fifth to one-quarter, but perhaps as many as one-third of the children – who were not actually attending school.” (ČR2)

“We keep coming across cases where children have been waiting up to two years to be placed in a school. This is because, for example, there was COVID beforehand, meaning they weren’t in school for perhaps a year or two; then they might have travelled with their family for perhaps as long as a year, and then they came here and waited another two years to be placed in a primary school. So you can imagine what a huge gap – or indeed a chasm – has opened up in these children’s social integration.” (ČR1)

According to the experts who took part, these situations arise despite the existence of legal procedures for placing a child in school. One expert stated that these problems were also caused by a lack of information among parents, who did not know who to turn to if a school did not accept their child.

“It has always been recommended that they contact the local authority, because primary schools are run by local authorities – that is, in the case of a town or city, the relevant district – so they should contact the district office; and the local authority has a duty to ensure compulsory school attendance, so it should accommodate them. The problem is that this information did not always reach these people. They did not know who to turn to.” (ČR3)

There were also communication problems caused by language barriers or a clash of schedules between the parent and the official responsible.

One of the participants also pointed out that the failure to comply with compulsory school attendance was partly facilitated by

a statement by the chair of the association of primary school headteachers, according to which children from Ukraine did not have to start school, as it was not known whether the conflict would end within 90 days. Some Ukrainian parents may have welcomed this statement. According to this statement, this was also linked to pressure from Ukraine to ensure that children were not integrated into the local school systems and for their distance online learning to be recognised.

According to one participant, schools refused to admit Ukrainian children with health impairments. They justified this by stating that they lacked medical staff and that parents should contact a school that did have such staff.

“We actually had two or three cases where the children were diabetics or had an autism spectrum disorder, and the local school told them that they weren’t the right school for them, that they had to look for a school where there would be – as they so nicely put it – a ‘nurse’.” So here I was trying to find out whether something like that exists in Ukraine, and I didn’t quite manage to get a clear answer, but I fear – and this is simply my opinion based on my professional experience – that it might have been a way of directing those parents elsewhere, because the local school saw them as a burden.” (ČR2)

According to one account, there were also cases of private schools expelling children by terminating their contracts and advising parents to place their child in an educational centre, which, however, was not a school.

“Either they took them into a private school and then terminated their contract. They said that because the contract was ending, the children had to leave that school, even though this is against the law and you cannot terminate school attendance in this way in the Czech Republic, and they recommended certain educational centres to the parents – centres that do not have school status – simply on the basis that the children could attend them. And the point here is that these were mainly children with some form of disability.” (ČR2)

Some schools refused to admit children from Ukraine on the grounds that there was a risk of creating a segregated class, for example where more than half the children in a class spoke a different mother tongue. However, schools differed in their views on what constituted

constituted segregation, or at what proportion of children segregation occurs. According to the respondent, however, such a refusal is not in accordance with the law. At the same time, he points out that the risk of segregation is a problem.

“It happens that a school does not refuse a child on capacity grounds – in the sense that there would be no space left in the class after the intake – but says: ‘I can’t take another foreigner in there now, because I’ll end up with a segregated class; I’ll have, say, more than half the children in the class with a different mother tongue, and I won’t do that.’ And now, the school’s interpretation of what constitutes ‘segregated’ or what they consider a ‘high proportion’ naturally varies, but that too is often the reason. It is often the reason, but at the same time it is not in line with the law. They should, strictly speaking, admit that child. But that doesn’t solve the problem, because if segregation is actually taking place there, then that isn’t the right way to ensure it works properly.” (ČR1)

Another participant also mentioned the opposite trend. At a time when pupil numbers are falling, some schools are beginning to specialise in foreign pupils, as this enables them to retain staff, particularly teachers of Czech as a second language.

There was also a comment that nursery schools were failing to fulfil their duty to report cases where children from Ukraine were not attending compulsory education. According to this respondent, the law requires nursery schools to report any child over the age of five who is not attending school. However, it was not possible to assess whether this was due to deliberate action on the part of the nursery schools or a combination of ignorance of the law and negligence.

Some of the participating experts pointed out that segregated classes were being formed in some schools, or that some schools were admitting a disproportionately high number of pupils from Ukraine, whilst other schools were not admitting such pupils. One respondent cited a specific case from a Czech town where two primary schools were situated just a few metres apart; one had not admitted a single Ukrainian child, whilst the neighbouring school had admitted a hundred Ukrainian children.

“This is precisely what led to a situation where we had a street (...) with one primary school, and another primary school just a few metres away each other. Not a single Ukrainian refugee was admitted to one primary school. The other primary school next door admitted 28 100 Ukrainian refugee children. Because that one school said, ‘OK, we’ll give it a go.’ Of course, they shared this information amongst themselves in those Facebook and WhatsApp groups, so the Ukrainian parents stopped trying to push their children into schools and nurseries where they knew it was pointless, where they’d been turned away, and simply found another way to get them into a different school.” (ČR4)

According to the statement, the reason was that there was no uniform interpretation of the obligation to admit children from Ukraine. Some schools were convinced that they had no legal obligation to admit these children, as they were at full capacity. Other schools admitted these children on moral grounds. The uneven distribution of children was further exacerbated by the fact that parents of children from Ukraine were sharing information amongst themselves about which schools were accepting children from Ukraine and which were not. They placed their children in schools accordingly.

In this context, one respondent commented that there was a lack of top-down efforts to manage and organise the redistribution of children from Ukraine across schools. This respondent stated that there were disputes between the Ministry of Education and the regions over who should resolve the issue of the children’s placement. The result of this dispute was that nothing was done.

“There certainly should have been some kind of directive approach to the redistribution of Ukrainian pupils. This is to ensure that we do not end up with a school that has 50 pupils and, next door, a school with none. This placed disproportionate pressure on those schools that had decided to admit them. Discussions took place there as to whether the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT) had the authority to resolve this, or whether it should be dealt with by the region, which is the school’s governing body, and so on. The Ministry argued that, after all, the region is better placed to assess what is happening in those schools than the founding authority; the region, in turn, argued that it lacks the legislative tools to push the issue forward, and so on.” (ČR4)

Some of the participating experts also highlighted the problem that schools or local authorities did not have access to data on foreign nationals in their area. The register of foreign nationals’ registered stays was separate,

and local authorities, as the founding bodies, did not have access to it. The founding bodies therefore lacked information about children from abroad in their area.

“The school’s founding body – which is usually the local authority, the city council or the local government – provides the schools with a list of future pupils. But because we have a separate register of foreign nationals, it became apparent right from the first year that the permanent residence registration offices for Czech citizens could not see this information, and that it was necessary to grant them access, within their own municipal register – not to the entire register, but only to the municipal register – and to grant access to the database of registered and declared stays of foreign nationals.” (ČR2)

From the perspective of data on foreign nationals, the lack of an obligation to deregister has also proved to be a problem. Foreign nationals are obliged to register upon entering the Czech Republic, but according to one statement, there is no obligation to deregister, meaning that the relevant authorities do not know how many pupils of school age are actually present in the Czech Republic. According to the statement, this situation makes it difficult to plan school capacity – it may happen that a pupil enrolls in January or February but does not turn up for school in September, with the school only finding out in September when the term begins.

One participant also pointed out that Ukrainian refugees with temporary protection do not have a personal identification number. For this reason, schools assign pupils their own internal number. This makes it impossible to track a pupil’s educational journey within the education system.

“Ukrainian refugees who have been granted temporary protection here do not have a personal identification number, and the Ministry of Education, for example, registers pupils on the basis of their personal identification number. So, from what we’ve gathered – and we’re finding this out bit by bit from various sources – in the case of schools, it’s quite often the case that the school assigns them one of its own numbers. This means it is also quite difficult to track a pupil’s educational pathway – for example, that they move from this primary school to that primary school, then go on to this secondary school, and from there perhaps transfer to another school. So, the educational pathway of this particular pupil, who has temporary protection, is currently more or less impossible to trace.” (ČR3)

One of the respondents also highlighted the lack of real-time monitoring. Whilst the Ministry of Education has data from the reports sent to it by schools, it has not made this data available for ongoing analysis. In

According to this respondent, ideally there would be a system in which²⁹ experts would analyse the data on an ongoing basis and propose changes based on it.

“I think there was also a lack of real-time monitoring, because at one point the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports pretended that they were unaware of any inequalities between the schools in terms of how many refugees they had taken in and so on. (...) In an ideal world, there would be a system where that real-time data would be analysed by analysts who understand the subject, and they would make recommendations based on that data on how to adjust policy.” (ČR4)

4.1.2 Special enrolment

In connection with the admission of children from Ukraine, a so-called ‘special enrolment’ procedure was introduced in the Czech Republic. This measure meant that the children of Ukrainian refugees were enrolled in school at a later date than other children. Special enrolment applied to both nursery and primary schools. Over the years, the conditions of the special enrolment process changed, until it was eventually abolished by the Constitutional Court.

The experts who took part in the discussion assessed special enrolment predominantly negatively. One of the participants criticised special enrolment because it did not achieve its stated aim. According to the statement, this measure was introduced to help distribute children from Ukraine evenly across schools in areas where there is a shortage of places, such as in Prague. However, this effect did not materialise. On the contrary, the result was that schools filled their places by the regular deadline and subsequently did not accept any further children.

“Even at the time, we spoke out against this measure, arguing that it was ineffective and nonsensical in that it did not achieve what it was intended to do. The MP who tabled the amendment argued that there are areas such as Prague, where schools are already so overcrowded that these special enrolment rounds would help to distribute the newly arriving children more evenly across those schools. But the system does not work that way. What actually happened was that these children could not enrol at the same time as the others; they enrolled later, and the schools that were already at full capacity had already reached their intake limit and were not accepting any more pupils. But

no one at the level of the school authority, the region or the schools themselves actually had any active responsibility for ensuring that these children who had not been admitted were looked after.” (ČR1)

This measure also led to the opposite effect to that intended, namely the concentration of children in certain schools. According to the statement, in some cases agreements were reached between two schools, whereby one refused the children and the other accepted them.

“At most, there was some sort of local agreement between two schools whereby one refused the children and the other accepted them. However, this actually led to the opposite effect, which was certainly not an even distribution, but rather their grouping together again in certain selected schools.” (ČR1)

Another negative aspect was that children from Ukraine who were moving from nursery school to primary school were unable to enrol alongside their nursery school classmates.

It was also suggested that this measure was unlawful, breached several international legal obligations and was unacceptable from a humanitarian perspective. It was a manifestation of a policy of segregation. This respondent pointed out that any foreign national arriving on the day of the regular enrolment would have to be automatically admitted. Only Ukrainians with temporary international protection status had to wait until the schools had first admitted the other children.

“Firstly, it is seriously unlawful, it violates a whole host of international legal obligations, and it is essentially inhumane, unacceptable and downright despicable behaviour. In fact, as an organisation, we issued a statement on this matter, in which we unequivocally stated that this separate enrolment process – whether for nurseries or schools – makes no sense at all; it is highly segregatory, or a manifestation of a truly covertly highly segregatory policy. The argument put forward was that if any foreigner other than a Ukrainian were to arrive – and even if they were not a Ukrainian war refugee, but simply someone on a work visa or for family reunification – and were to arrive on the day of enrolment or even before the special enrolment sessions for Ukrainian refugees took place, they would have to be automatically admitted to that school or nursery. But only those Ukrainians with temporary protection status had to wait until everyone else had been processed before the so-called Ukrainian enrolment took place.” (ČR2)

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On the other hand, one respondent also expressed an understanding that in the first year, when a large number of school-age children arrived within a short space of time, it made sense to first ascertain where there was and where there was no space. According to this respondent, however, in the second year this measure ceased to make sense, as the initial rush had already subsided.

“I had a certain degree of organisational understanding in that first year, because enrolment took place from the start of April. So what happened here was that – I don’t know how it was in Slovakia – but in less than a month, several tens of thousands of children of school age turned up here. So I realised that in order to sort things out and find out where there were places and where there weren’t, it made sense.” (ČR2)

4.1.3 Administrative increase in capacity

Some of the experts who took part also mentioned the possibility of schools being able to administratively increase their capacity. Even before the war against Ukraine, the Education Act allowed the standard class size limit to be exceeded by four pupils. Furthermore, in light of the emergency situation, schools were able to increase their registered capacity without having to submit an opinion from the regional public health authority or the building control authority.

The experts involved assessed this measure as largely positive. According to one comment, it was the right move in the initial phase, helping to get children into schools.

“I think that, again, in that first phase, it was the right step, which really helped to get those children into schools.” (ČR1)

“I view this positively because, to put it this way, the worst that could have happened was a slight reduction in comfort, a faster turnover of children using the toilets, or the need for better organisation in some confined

areas of the school – such as a corridor or a hallway – which, from a safety perspective, isn't an issue, but in reality, from a technical standpoint, there wasn't much more that could be done at that point.” (ČR2)

However, there were also some reservations. One respondent pointed out that schools lacked follow-up support. Schools increased their capacity in good faith, but nobody subsequently provided them with any support to manage the situation.

“After a year or two, those schools realised that they had increased their capacity in good faith in the first year. But at the same time, nobody supported them further. That means they really did have a huge number of children there. Teachers were running out of steam; they were frustrated that it was a very heterogeneous environment in which to provide support, and at the same time, I think they felt that they had taken on these children in good faith, but now they were left to bear the burden of there being such a large number of them, and the situation was persisting.” (ČR1)

There was also criticism that the Ministry had not checked whether schools had actually increased their capacity.

It was also noted that in some regions, such as Prague or Pardubice, school capacities are full even after making use of the option to increase capacities administratively.

There was also a critical comment that the physical capacity of nursery schools had not been expanded. According to this comment, the responsible parties had assumed that the situation with children from Ukraine was only temporary, and so no construction or expansion of nursery schools had taken place. According to this respondent, capacity increases had mainly concerned primary schools.

4.1.4 Key recommendations

We also asked the participating experts for recommendations that could improve the current system for admitting children from abroad to nursery and primary schools. They proposed the following recommendations:

Improve the provision of information to parents/legal guardians and schools

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- Create a public database of schools that allows users to search for their local school by address, and which will include a list of other schools run by the same governing body, sorted by distance
- The Ministry of Education should inform/remind headteachers that they have a statutory duty to report cases of children who are not attending compulsory education
- Alternatively/in addition, inform legal guardians via the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs that children must attend school (and that the school is obliged to admit them)

Link and make data accessible

- Ensure that school governing bodies have access to the database of registered foreign residents within their jurisdiction
- Link data between the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs concerning children and young people, so that their educational pathways can be tracked
- Address the issue of missing personal identification numbers for children under temporary protection, so that their educational pathways can be tracked across schools and levels of education

Coordinate and manage the placement of children in schools

- Consider introducing a directive (centrally managed) mechanism for the even distribution of pupils across schools, to prevent disparities in the representation of children between schools
- Clearly define the responsibilities of the Ministry of Education and the regions regarding the coordination of pupil placement

4.2 Children's adaptation to school

4.2.1 Adaptation groups

As part of the adaptation process for children from Ukraine, it was possible to set up so-called 'adaptation groups' for children who had not been placed in mainstream schools. These were after-school groups intended exclusively for Ukrainian children and did not fulfil the requirements of compulsory school attendance.

The experts involved had mixed views on this measure. Several agreed that, in the long term, it was not a viable solution and that the priority should be to place the child in a school. However, they saw their purpose as a short-term emergency solution for children who had not been placed in a school, particularly in towns with a shortage of places.

"There were then certain mechanisms which, in our view, were not entirely effective or ideal, but which served as a sort of transitional period or intermediate stage – an emergency solution for a short period – and these were the adaptation groups, which could be set up specifically for those children who had not been placed in schools. But at the same time, a major shortcoming of these adaptation groups was that, whilst the children were attending them, they were not fulfilling their compulsory schooling requirements." (ČR1)

One respondent acknowledged their role at the outset of the emergency. Czech language lessons were, in fact, also provided within the adaptation groups.

"I believe it probably had its place at the very beginning, at a time when it was perhaps a huge shock for everyone and it took a while for the state administration to get itself organised and actually find a system that could work. (...) It was more of a leisure activity, but at the same time intensive Czech language lessons were taking place there, so I believe the quality was there in some instances, but in others it wasn't." (ČR1)

The problem, however, was that the children remained in the adaptation group for too long. It was meant to be a short-term stopgap

a period of crisis, but in some towns it lasted for several years. One respondent also encountered cases where children attended the adaptation group repeatedly, for longer than one school year, without any work being done to integrate them into a mainstream school.

"In my view, it went on for quite a while; it lasted far too long, given that a systemic solution should have been put in place earlier, and in fact, in some towns, these adaptation activities are only now being phased out. In Prague, they're still running, and it's only next year that the city council has decided not to reopen them and to disband the existing ones, so that actually makes it four years. And yet we know from our experience with clients that in some cases these children were there repeatedly, having been there for longer than one school year, and in fact without any follow-up, such as the adaptation group being supplemented by the support of a social worker who would, in the meantime, have sought to integrate the child into school." (ČR1)

According to one account, in areas suffering from overcrowding, these groups could become places where children were simply left without any prospect of being placed in a mainstream school. Adaptation groups could slow down efforts to find a place at school, as both parents and the authorities felt that the child was already placed somewhere.

Another respondent pointed out that, in the case of adaptation groups, this amounted to hidden segregation. When a school was unwilling or unable to admit a child, it offered them a place in an adaptation group. According to this view, placement in a closed group is not adaptation, but segregation. If adaptation groups continued beyond the end of the school year without the children being integrated into a class, they constituted a tool of segregation that violated the child's right to education.

"The term 'adaptation groups' sometimes concealed so-called extracurricular activities taking place at school during teaching hours. This means that if they could not or would not admit those children, a sort of 'benefit' was offered to the parents: that if they weren't admitted, they would at least be taken into that group of Ukrainian children. But quite frankly, the fact that someone puts me in a closed group of my own does not mean I am adapting within that system; it means I am being segregated." (ČR2)

"I understood that when they first arrived, there was a need to maintain some sort of socialisation process, perhaps to help them get used to the school. I understand that the school may have spare classrooms or teaching rooms during school hours, where the after-school club is usually held, and that they made use of these, but those children must attend school, not an adaptation group. (...) But at the very least, if they went beyond that period – to put it simply, if they dragged it out until the end of the school year – and those children were not subsequently integrated into the classes, then this is clearly a tool of segregation, where the child's rights to attend their primary school and receive a proper basic education are being violated." (ČR2)

One respondent also perceived the varying quality of the adaptation groups as a shortcoming. This was due to the fact that they were set up by a whole range of organisations, whilst there was no uniform framework, no set curriculum or duration, nor any qualification requirements for staff. In some places, they functioned merely as a means of looking after the children; in others, they worked better.

"They were run by a whole range of organisations. These could have been libraries, for example. It really varied, and there was no guidance on what the framework should be, what the content should be, who was responsible for it, or who taught Czech in the group, what qualifications they should have, how many hours a day the children spent there, or what actually took place there. In some places it really did function as a sort of after-school club, whilst in others it had a slightly better structure, but it certainly lacked any firm framework." (ČR1)

However, there were also some partially positive assessments in terms of the children's mental wellbeing. The adaptation groups for children ensured that their time was spent more meaningfully. According to this statement, it was also beneficial for parents, as someone looked after their children whilst they were looking for work.

"I think it did have its significance, particularly in terms of mental wellbeing. The children started to have a routine again and began going to school. It was good for their parents too, as someone looked after the children whilst they were at work or looking for work. But in the long term, as far as integration is concerned, it tends to marginalise them from Czech society." (ČR3)

4.2.2 Language training

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The system for language training for children from abroad was already in place before the arrival of children from Ukraine. Within this system, there are so-called 'designated schools' for language training. In the past, these were schools with a higher proportion of foreign pupils (at least 5 per cent), which were responsible for the language training of children from abroad.

Later, it was made possible for any school educating at least five pupils entitled to language training to become a designated school (META, 2025). One participant viewed this expansion of the eligibility criteria for becoming a designated school positively.

Some participating experts criticised the insufficient scope of language training. It was noted that mastering Czech requires more hours (approximately 600 hours) than the existing system allows (400 hours).

"There are various estimates of how many hours of individual tuition are needed to master a language, and Czech is generally regarded as a difficult language, requiring 600 hours. That's how we've set it up; initially it was raised slightly, but the following year – sometime in 2020, I think from September 2023 – yes, in September 22 it was raised slightly, but not in connection with Ukraine; however, in September 23 it was increased to 400 hours spread over, say, one or two years." (ČR2)

Another negative aspect was the unequal access to language training depending on the school. According to one participant, pupils who were not attending a designated school had poorer access to language training. Such pupils were reliant on online learning or on afternoon classes at designated schools, which placed an additional burden on them.

"If you're there as a foreigner at a school that doesn't offer this, it's quite difficult to get these Czech lessons, because either it's some sort of online course that takes place after school – and the school will only provide you with an internet connection – or the child has to take the course from home using some sort of

in the late afternoon, so that's yet another disruption. Whereas if they're sitting right there in the school, their timetable can be adapted to suit.” (ČR2)

Children in small and rural schools were particularly hard hit by this system of language training. According to some respondents, language training worked relatively well in large cities. Conversely, in areas where pupils had to travel to a designated school, the training did not work. According to some accounts, pupils from non-designated schools did not attend the designated schools.

“Language training works quite well in large cities, but it works very poorly in those regions where long commutes are necessary and there aren't many designated schools for language training. This means that children who attend their local school, where this language preparation is not provided, cannot access it by travelling 70 km to another school twice a week for one hour.” (ČR1)

“In the case of non-designated schools, where pupils are supposed to be sent to designated schools – and these are primary school pupils – there are relatively very few such pupils, because who would send a seven- or eight-year-old child to a school in a different area? Quite simply, this system doesn't really work.” (ČR3)

Some of the participating experts also criticised the fact that entitlement to language support is linked to the length of stay (2 years) rather than the pupil's language proficiency. According to the law, pupils with insufficient knowledge of Czech who have been attending compulsory schooling in the Czech Republic for a maximum of 24 months are entitled to language support (META, 2025). According to some comments, this can lead to a pupil losing their entitlement to support, even though they might need it.

“We don't like the system whereby entitlement to language support is based on the length of stay. We understand that at a time of large-scale refugee influx, when it is not possible to test every child, this approach makes sense. You set a specific threshold for how long a pupil has been in the Czech Republic or how long they have been attending the Czech education system. Entitlement is determined on that basis. Looking ahead in the long term, we believe that, given that every pupil is an individual and learns the language differently – some pick it up straight away, whilst for others it takes much longer – so this entitlement should be based on testing their knowledge of the language, and on that basis they should have the opportunity to continue learning or being taught Czech as a second language for longer.” (ČR3)

“We sometimes get a pupil who no longer qualifies for this entitlement, and the school asks how it can support them, but in fact it has itself missed the window of opportunity when it could have provided them with that language training.” (ČR1)

Linked to this was another shortcoming: the lack of systematic monitoring and testing of pupils' language progress. According to one respondent, the results of such testing could be used to better tailor language support to individual needs.

“It would certainly be worth it – and I'm just saying this, I don't know whether it's happening or not – to assess their language adaptation and, as part of that, to regroup them within the groups, because some find the language easier, others less so. So, simply put, those who are doing better should be pushed forward, and those who are struggling should be given more support and more repetition, so that they can really get to grips with the basics; because they'll catch up with the rest later, but if they don't have that foundation or it's simply shaky, then it's difficult for them. Simply monitor and test language progress consistently, even every six months. I've never heard of anything like that happening there. Not even colleagues who specialise in teaching foreigners talk about it.” (ČR2)

One respondent also highlighted a good practice in language training in the form of a so-called 'flow class'. This involves an intensive block programme of language training, for example over three months, followed by a gradual return to the regular class. According to this statement, this model works particularly well in large schools with a high number of newly arrived pupils, where it is possible to ensure a stable teaching staff. The model is effective because the child quickly reaches a level that enables them to join mainstream lessons.

“We see a significant impact in areas with what I wouldn't call mainstream schools – large schools, for example in Prague, with a high number of pupils and a high number of newly arrived pupils, where it is possible to ensure stable

schedules for both the teachers and everything else. And we certainly consider it effective in that the child very quickly reaches a level where they can join mainstream lessons and continue to cope normally.” (ČR1)

“They attend Czech lessons there, say, for three hours a day, and then in the fourth period they go to their own class for PE or art. This means there is an element of integration there, and increasingly for other subjects too; as soon as they are able to cope, they join in with mainstream lessons.” (ČR1)

However, another respondent also highlighted the risk that, during such block-based language training, a child might become detached from their class group, or have to gradually get used to two different groups (the language training group and the regular class). This can be challenging for these children in terms of their wellbeing. According to this statement, it is therefore important for the child to remain connected to their home class from the very beginning.

“The child gets used to – when we talk about adaptation – two groups. They have their own group, which they get used to in the language preparation group, whether it is a through-stream group or another type. Or, if they have spent several months in an adaptation group, they have been surrounded by children they have got used to, and then they have to move back into a mainstream class with a completely different group. So this is a challenging aspect for the child in terms of wellbeing and in terms of that adaptation.” (ČR1)

Another participant pointed out that the choice between block-based and continuous forms of language training also depends on the pupil themselves. In her experience, some pupils, particularly at secondary schools, do not want special treatment because they feel it causes them to lose their status within the group and they want to be on the same level as Czech pupils. Other pupils, on the other hand, do not find afternoon tuition suitable because they are already tired. She therefore considered an individualised approach to be ideal, although it is demanding for teachers, and would leave the choice of format to the schools, which know their pupils best.

There is also a second option for children to access language support. One of the participants stated that the law allows a child to receive language support in the form of Czech as a second language, if recommended by an educational and psychological counselling centre. According to this statement, this is a workable solution, particularly

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where the system of designated schools does not work. On the other hand, this respondent pointed out that the Ministry does not promote this option very much, as it is more costly. According to this statement, in practice this also means that other pupils who do not have a recommendation from the counselling centre but who also require language support join the language support programme for the pupil in question.

It was also mentioned that, in primary schools, it is possible to replace the second foreign language with Czech from Year 5 onwards. This option was viewed positively. However, the fact that the same option is not available in secondary schools was viewed negatively.

One respondent also mentioned as a positive point that a child is entitled to language training even during the compulsory pre-school year at nursery school. According to this respondent, however, the problem is that there is a lack of systematic support for younger children.

One of the participants also highlighted the problem of employing teachers of Czech as a second language. According to this comment, it is difficult for a specialist in this field alone to find a stable position, as demand depends on the fluctuating number of pupils who require language support.

“To focus solely on this one specialism – that also depends on the number of pupils who will need it, which is unstable. So, on the one hand, it is difficult to be a specialist in Czech as a second language and find a stable position in a school. After all, how can they be sure they will always have the same number of pupils who will need it? So it sometimes happens that schools do need them, but only for a year, two or three, and then simply no longer.” (ČR3)

4.2.3 Age-based placement cap

Another measure concerned the placement of children from Ukraine into year groups. According to one respondent, a cap was only introduced retrospectively, stipulating that a child may be placed in a year group no more than one year below their actual age. Previously, there had been no such maximum limit.

The previous arrangement therefore allowed a child to be placed several years below their actual age. According to one respondent, this had negative consequences. The children were significantly socially marginalised, as they were two to three years older than their classmates. At the same time, there was no evidence that this led to faster language acquisition.

“They soon realised that, firstly, these children were very socially marginalised if they were, say, two to three years older than the children in their class, and this situation became worse and worse as it dragged on. This meant that even in the eighth and ninth years, when the children were already significantly older, it caused major problems. At the same time, it did not help in the sense that their Czech language skills did not develop in any particularly different or faster way, so it certainly did not have the intended effect, and the children suffered greatly as a result; nor were the teachers satisfied with the way things were working, so it was simply incorporated into the legislation.” (ČR1)

Another problem was that, once a child had been placed several years below their actual age, it was no longer possible to move them up to a higher year group, even if it turned out that the original placement had been incorrect. The respondent also pointed out that the risk of placing children more than one year below their actual age still persists, as some schools are unaware of this restriction.

4.2.4 Adaptation Co-ordinator

To support the adaptation of children from Ukraine, an adaptation coordinator could be employed at the school (NPI ČR, 2026a). This post is primarily funded by the National Pedagogical Institute. The role was intended to last for forty hours over the course of one month (4 weeks) following the child’s enrolment at the school. The coordinator’s duties included

to guide the child around the whole school; this applied not only to Ukrainian children but also to children from other culturally 36 backgrounds.

The participating experts assessed this tool predominantly positively. According to one comment, this tool proved effective, but would require more working hours.

There was also a comment that, thanks to the adaptation coordinator, both children and teachers know who they can turn to. The coordinator is able to build a close relationship with parents and overcome the language barrier.

“Having an adaptation coordinator at school is always a good thing, because the children know who to turn to. The teachers also know who to turn to. If the adaptation coordinator is a good one, they have a close relationship with the pupils’ parents and are able to communicate with them, because that’s absolutely crucial. This is one of the things teachers often complain about – that it is difficult to communicate with the pupils’ parents.” (ČR3)

Some respondents also highlighted the risks associated with this role. One problem was the inconsistent and unsystematic funding of coordinators from various sources (projects, the school’s own resources). Another negative aspect mentioned was that the coordinators are teachers themselves, who receive low pay for their work.

“Co-ordinators are paid from various sources. Sometimes they are paid from projects, sometimes from the school’s own resources; sometimes the co-ordinators are actually teachers at that particular school, and in fact nobody – not even the headteacher – gives them any sort of small bonus for it.” (Czech Republic 3)

4.2.5 Ukrainian teaching assistant

Ukrainian teaching assistants could also work in schools. This was a post funded by the Ministry of Education. Teaching assistants had to meet the professional qualifications set for teaching assistants, i.e. have completed a teaching assistant training programme or a course in pedagogy lasting at least 80 hours (MŠMT ČR, 2022d).

The participating experts assessed this measure predominantly positively. It was noted that these posts were particularly helpful at the outset of the emergency. One advantage was that there was a person in the classroom who spoke the child's language and could interpret situations for the teacher, enabling the teacher to respond more effectively to situations and needs as they arose. They played a positive role not only in relation to teachers and pupils, but also communicated with parents and helped them overcome barriers to school.

"I would objectively say that having someone there with those children who spoke their language and was able to interpret the situation for the teacher meant that the teacher could respond to it much more effectively." (ČR2)

"Those Ukrainian assistants (...) acted as a sort of point of contact, not only between the teacher and the pupils, but they also shaped the whole ecosystem there, including the parents – the Ukrainian parents – and somehow helped overcome the barriers that, for example, even those Ukrainian parents faced in relation to the schools. So they did things they weren't even supposed to do, but I think it was a good thing." (ČR4)

However, problems also arose in connection with the work of the Ukrainian teaching assistants. According to one account, there was no clear definition of their job description and responsibilities. The language barrier was also an issue – the assistants often spoke only Ukrainian, whilst nobody else at the school spoke Ukrainian, which led to misunderstandings. This was because the assistants were mostly mothers or relatives of the Ukrainian children who did not have a good command of the Czech language. In this context, it was suggested that the children's integration would likely be aided if they were spoken to more in Czech than in Ukrainian.

"It helped a great deal at the start, but at the same time, as there were no clear guidelines on what their role should entail, who should look after them, or who should set them tasks. Moreover, these were often people who really only spoke Ukrainian, and perhaps nobody at the school spoke Ukrainian, so there were sometimes misunderstandings about exactly what his job entailed, and communication wasn't properly established." (ČR1)

"More or less anyone could have become this Ukrainian assistant. Their knowledge of Czech was very poor, so perhaps the pupils' integration could have been better supported if they had been spoken to more in Czech rather than Ukrainian." (ČR3)

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Doubts were also raised regarding the qualifications of teaching assistants. One respondent believed that the teaching assistants did not even have the basic accredited course required for this role. At the same time, however, they stated that this was a better solution than having no one at all.

There was also a comment that Ukrainian teaching assistants worked well in segregated or homogeneous classes where there were children from Ukraine. However, in the case of mixed classes, where children from other countries were also being taught, their role was limited solely to the Ukrainian children.

"It worked well, for example, in those segregated classes, but the moment you have a Ukrainian teaching assistant in a mixed-background class. (...). That is to say, when there were children from, say, Mongolia, Vietnam, Africa – from anywhere, really – as far as I can recall, it didn't actually work there, because those Ukrainian teaching assistants worked well specifically with children from Ukraine, but it wasn't always possible to apply this across the board to all schools in such a way that it would actually work everywhere in every case. It simply had to be tailored to individual needs" (ČR1)

Some respondents viewed it negatively that the Ministry of Education had stopped funding this role, or rather that there was insufficient funding for it. However, there was also the view that the need for these posts is now minimal, as most Ukrainian pupils who have remained in the system already speak Czech and do not require intensive language support.

With regard to funding, there was also criticism that funding for this post was allocated on a calendar year basis rather than an academic year basis, which caused problems in filling the post.

4.2.6 Regional adaptation coordinators

Regional – county – adaptation coordinators, who work at the regional offices of the NPI ČR, were also involved in supporting children from Ukraine. One of the participants viewed this arrangement as effective. At the same time, however, she pointed out that the regional coordinators have limited coverage. They cover only a portion of schools, as schools sometimes refuse to cooperate with them or are not even aware of their existence.

“I think they’re much better at this; the national coordinators, like the regional coordinators, are better. But as they themselves know from their own experience, they only cover a certain proportion of those schools. Although they try to reach out to the other schools, those schools are unwilling to cooperate with them. (...) And it’s not their fault; they’d like to, but the schools aren’t interested in them, or don’t know about them at all, and don’t know how to get in touch with them more easily.” (ČR3)

4.2.7 Mobile teams of female psychologists

According to one account, mobile teams of Ukrainian psychologists were also available, provided through the so-called ‘intermediate support link’ (MŠMT ČR, 2024a). One participant described the service provided by Ukrainian psychologists attending group interventions as a very important and well-developed service.

“I’d just like to add something that hasn’t been mentioned here, and I think it actually works very well: the intermediate support link offers the option of Ukrainian psychologists who can travel to primary schools to conduct group interventions with Ukrainian children. I believe this is a service that is now very important, necessary and well-established.” (ČR1)

4.2.8 Adaptation period

Within the education system, a 12-month adaptation period is also in place for children from abroad. One of the participants viewed it positively that, during this period, no pressure is placed on the children and there is space for social integration and language support.

“I think the methodology explains it well: during that one year, they shouldn’t be under pressure from educational content and assessment. Assessment should be highly motivational, and we should work closely with them so that they integrate well into the group. This means working with the whole class and, in some way, organising intensive Czech language lessons for them.” (ČR1)

On the other hand, however, this respondent viewed the fixed time limit for this period negatively. Some children may need more time to adapt and gradually integrate into the education system.

“The fact that a one-year limit has been set means that for these schools, it sometimes represents a really strict cut-off point: you’re here for up to a year, so we can assess you more leniently or not at all – but as soon as that limit expires, suddenly from tomorrow we’ll be assessing you and you have to know everything just like a Czech pupil. So it’s sometimes difficult to explain where that line ends and begins. At the same time, many children need a longer adaptation period to ensure a gradual transition.” (ČR1)

4.2.9 Teaching groups

One of the respondents also mentioned the possibility of setting up so-called ‘learning groups’ for children from Ukraine. These are groups of children with an adapted curriculum, comprising pupils from different year groups.

This respondent viewed these groups positively, as they allowed for the creation of mixed-year groups, had an adapted curriculum (for example, it was possible to combine physics, chemistry and biology into natural sciences) and involved intensive Czech language tuition rather than the acquisition of specialist terminology. From an organisational perspective, this approach was feasible primarily for schools with a higher number of such pupils, which could afford teachers of Czech as a second language.

‘The Lex Ukraine scheme allowed – and still allows, though it is not used as much now – the core curriculum to be completely set aside for these children in terms of content; this meant, however, that they could form groups of Ukrainian children across different year groups and teach them, for example, completely different subjects. To summarise,

they didn't study, say, physics, chemistry or biology, but these were consolidated into a single subject called, for example, natural sciences – and during the time that other children spent on those individual specialist subjects, whilst the newly arrived children from Ukraine would not have been able to grasp the specialist vocabulary of those subjects, they studied Czech intensively. This was possible, and it was also feasible from an organisational point of view for those schools that had a large number of these pupils; in other words, teachers of Czech as a second language were recruited to those schools.” (ČR1)

According to this respondent, this approach is no longer used very much today, as there is not such a large influx of children, so it is very challenging for schools, from an organisational point of view, to set up an entirely separate group.

4.2.10 Segregated classes

In connection with the education of children from Ukraine, it was also possible to create classes composed exclusively of Ukrainian children (so-called segregated classes). One of the participants viewed this option negatively from the perspective of these children's integration. She felt that whilst such a homogeneous class might make the teachers' work easier, it is better for the children to be educated alongside other children.

“We know from experience and from interviews that this is, as one might say, advantageous for the teachers, because they can take a uniform approach to them, they can simply speak Ukrainian there, they can make use of it and so on, but as far as integration is concerned, it's rather negative. And we also know that in classes where there is a larger number of pupils of one nationality, those pupils always tend to form their own little groups, and integration immediately slows down; the ideal situation is – although it may not be good for the pupils at the start, psychologically speaking, as they are simply on their own in that class – but the more pressure is put on them at the start, the better and more successful the integration is.” (ČR3)

4.2.11 Supportive views

Measures introduced even before the arrival of these children or were put in place without directly responding to the need to integrate children from Ukraine into the education system. Among the 39 such tools are a number of support roles.

One such measure is the social pedagogue, who, for example, works to prevent risky behaviour, supports children from disadvantaged backgrounds, assesses the social climate, works with families and coordinates support in crisis situations (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2026b). This is a new role, which was only enshrined in law last year. This role forms part of the blanket funding for support roles, alongside the school psychologist and the special needs teacher.

There have also been positive assessments of this role in relation to children from Ukraine. However, according to one account, schools sometimes perceive that children with a different mother tongue fall within the remit of the social pedagogue only if they are socially disadvantaged – that is, if they face poverty or material deprivation – and not when they simply need to feel accepted and included. This can result in the school failing to support the social pedagogue in working with these children as well.

‘Sometimes even the school itself feels – as was the case with a large Prague school, a typical housing estate school – that pupils from OMJ fall within the remit of the social pedagogue only if they are socially disadvantaged, if poverty is an issue, if material needs are being addressed and similar matters, rather than from the perspective that the child needs support to feel accepted and to be able to integrate. And then, in fact, even the school counselling service may not have the support from its own management to work with that pupil in this way – to assess them, to simply ensure they are visible, to identify them in the first place – and, on the other hand, to work with the class to which that child belongs.’ (ČR1)

It was also mentioned that schools with a certain number of pupils are obliged to employ a school psychologist, at least on a part-time basis. It should be clarified, however, that the law stipulates an obligation to have a psychologist or a special needs teacher, whilst the part-time requirement applies to schools with an average pupil number of at least 180 over the previous three years (MŠMT ČR, 2026b).

According to one account, however, many schools still do not have a psychologist because there is a shortage of psychologists within the system. The consequence for Ukrainian children was that the majority of those who needed psychological intervention did not receive it.

“After the biggest wave, a resolution was passed requiring schools above a certain size to employ a school psychologist on at least a part-time basis, and this still applies today. (...) Although this regulation is now in force, many schools still do not have these psychologists because they simply are not part of the system.” (ČR4)

However, the language barrier was also a problem. According to this respondent, a Czech school psychologist would be unable to help new children from Ukraine experiencing acute stress. They could, however, provide support to children who have been in the Czech Republic for some time, speak Czech and continue to experience mental health difficulties.

“If we’re talking about those refugees who arrive straight away and are suffering from some form of acute stress syndrome, they probably don’t speak Czech, so a Czech psychologist wouldn’t be able to do much. Nevertheless, even two years after the largest wave of migration, there are many Ukrainian children currently in those classrooms who are experiencing difficulties, who already speak Czech and could benefit from psychological support at school level.” (ČR4)

The language barrier could be overcome by employing Ukrainian female psychologists. According to one participant, some schools have employed a Ukrainian psychologist, but these have been relatively rare cases. This is also linked to the fact that funding for this role depends on time-limited projects and, despite its benefits, schools cannot afford to fund it in the long term.

“I get the feeling that it’s more of a one-off sort of thing; if a school manages to secure a project – which is usually short-term, for a year or two – it works out well for them, and they realise that... I don’t know. I know that one headteacher spoke about how they’d simply managed to secure a Ukrainian psychologist for a year and that it was absolutely perfect, but it was simply money they’d received from a non-profit organisation for a year, and after that they simply couldn’t afford to keep her on.” (ČR3)

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One respondent also mentioned the role of foreign-language assistant, which had existed even before the war against Ukraine. The role was found in schools with a higher proportion of non-European foreign nationals. This respondent viewed the role positively, noting that it worked well, particularly in Prague, as the role was often filled by foreign university students who were earning extra money whilst studying.

One of the participants also mentioned the role of coordinator for working with children with a different mother tongue. According to this respondent, this role arises spontaneously in schools, takes various forms, and is paid for by some schools but not by others. This respondent has long been highlighting the need to formalise this role, including its funding and the allocation of a specific workload.

4.2.12 The role of the Czech School Inspectorate

One of the participants also mentioned the work of the Czech School Inspectorate. She viewed it as a positive step that the issue of educating pupils with insufficient knowledge of Czech has been included in the school inspectorate’s regular inspections. Thanks to this, schools will begin to pay more attention to this area.

“One of the things is that these schools are regularly assessed and visited by the Czech School Inspectorate. And there, I think – partly thanks to the incentive provided by our project – we have succeeded in ensuring that this issue, namely the education of pupils with insufficient knowledge of Czech, has been included as one of the topics to be addressed during these regular inspections by the Czech School Inspectorate. This means that more attention will actually be paid to this issue in those schools, because every school wants to pass the inspection, so they will devote much more attention to it. But if they simply aren’t interested, if they have completely different problems, then I think that no matter how good the system is, you can’t really force them to do anything.” (ČR3)

4.2.13 Key recommendations

We also asked the participating experts for recommendations that could improve the current system for the adaptation of children from abroad. They put forward the following recommendations:

Adjust the way adaptation groups operate

- Avoid the model of isolated adaptation groups that extend beyond the short bridging period
- Ensure continuity between the adaptation group and the process of finding a place in a mainstream school (for example, through the parallel work of a social worker), so that the adaptation group does not serve to delay children's integration or slow down their placement in school

Adjust the adaptation period

- Replace the fixed one-year limit on the adaptation period with a gradual, individualised transition

Introduce a system for assessing language proficiency

- Introduce a system for assessing language proficiency at all key stages of education and base the level of support provided on these assessments (rather than on status, citizenship or length of education)

Adjust language training

- Increase the number of language training hours to bring them closer to the professionally assessed need (approximately 600 hours for Czech)
- Introduce entitlement to language training based on language proficiency testing, rather than on the length of stay
 - Alternatively, adjust the two-year eligibility threshold to prevent cases where a child or 41 school misses the window for providing training
- Consider replacing the current model (designated and non-designated schools) with a model under which every school would be obliged to provide language training for every child who needs it – and adapt the funding system accordingly
- Alternatively, encourage more schools to become designated schools even with a small number of pupils, and find a way to provide financial support for non-designated schools that nevertheless educate such pupils
- Introduce regular (for example, half-yearly) testing of pupils' language progress and, on this basis, place pupils into language training groups
- Allow the second foreign language to be replaced by Czech in secondary schools as well, not just in primary schools
- Work towards a long-term goal whereby every primary school teacher is also a teacher of Czech as a second language – and adapt the training of future teachers accordingly
- Introduce systematic language support for children younger than the compulsory pre-school age (i.e. from the age of 3)

Strengthen staffing levels to support children from abroad

- Establish and support the role of an adaptation coordinator or a coordinator for working with children with a different mother tongue – either by securing funding and allocating a full-time post, or simply by providing methodological support (recommendations varied)
- Strengthen the capacity of school counselling services so that their staff do not have to support children from abroad alongside their other duties and responsibilities
- Consider a model involving outreach workers trained in crisis intervention (not necessarily psychologists) who are proficient in the language of the target group (following the German model)

- Create micro-certificates/courses for bilingual people outside the teaching profession so that they can act as qualified teachers of Czech for foreign nationals at a time when there is a shortage of specialised professionals in the system

Support the social inclusion of children from abroad within the school community

- Introduce/promote a 'buddy programme' – pairing a newly arrived pupil with a classmate

4.3 Support for school staff

4.3.1 Materials and methodological support

According to the participating experts, schools have access to a relatively large amount of teaching and methodological materials relating to the education of children from Ukraine or from abroad. According to these accounts, these materials were produced by the Ministry of Education, the National Pedagogical Institute (NPI) and non-governmental organisations, such as META. One respondent highlighted a specialised website offering expert recommendations for nursery, primary and secondary schools, which had been operated by the NPI since the start of the state of emergency.

There was even one comment that there were too many resources. This makes it harder for teachers to navigate them and they do not know which ones to use. This can be a particular problem for novice teachers. Conversely, experienced teachers with many years' practice already have tried-and-tested textbooks or their own materials.

'Sometimes, paradoxically, there's so much of it that it's hard to find your way round, and the teachers don't know exactly what they should reach for – there really is that much. If there were just one resource, I'd say: yes, I'll go for this textbook and stick to this one. But because there's so much, they actually don't know what to choose. They are teachers who have long-term experience with this and already know, 'This textbook works, it's good to do this', they have some of their own materials prepared, and they just look up a few small supplementary bits; but if someone is starting from scratch, I think there's a lot of it, they might not know exactly where to find it, but the materials are simply there.' (ČR3)

However, there was a view that materials are not equally available for all levels of education. One respondent pointed out that materials are mainly available for primary schools. There are fewer, however, for secondary schools.

"There are fewer resources when it comes to secondary schools and certain vocational streams; if a student wants to study at a vocational school, there really are fewer resources available on the specialist terminology in that language, but I know that more are being developed over time." (ČR3)

One of the participants pointed out that many schools lack information about which measures are still in force and for whom. According to this statement, schools are confusing the language training that applies to all children with a different mother tongue with the provisions under the special Lex Ukraine Act, which apply only to children under temporary protection. Some schools are not even aware that Lex Ukraine is still in force.

"I think that, on the other hand, unfortunately many schools no longer even realise that Lex Ukraine is still in force. They often have, if I may put it this way, a significant lack of information regarding what still applies and to whom. They actually sometimes confuse language support, which in fact applies to everyone. Then there's the Lex Ukraine, which applies only to children covered by Lex Ukraine with temporary protection, but again, for example, it doesn't apply to children from Ukraine who have a different residence status; it's a real mess for them to make sense of it all, because, of course, the schools have many other different matters they have to keep track of." (ČR1)

4.3.2 Teacher training

With regard to the training and professional development of teachers, one respondent mentioned that various webinars and conferences had been organised by the National Pedagogical Institute. These activities focused, for example, on the topic of mental health and wellbeing among foreign nationals.

One of the participating experts also provided a broader assessment of the NPI's methodological activities. He spoke positively about the quality of the content of the NPI's resources (methodological guides and the like) and its training activities. According to this statement, this was partly due to the fact that the NPI had a dedicated department working on this topic.

He considered it a weakness that the NPI's outputs were merely recommendations rather than regulations that schools were obliged to implement.

"But that concerned rather soft issues, such as simply recommending that something be done, that it would be good to do this, or that they'd found in Germany that this was better. They simply weren't regulations. And as for any truly prescriptive regulations, I'm not aware of any measures having been adopted." (ČR4)

He also considered it a negative point that the NPI's outputs and activities had little impact on teachers' work. According to this statement, the NPI's outputs never reached the majority of teachers. This was due to the fact that the NPI lacks sufficient capacity to disseminate its outputs and carry out its activities.

According to this respondent, the NPI also used an ineffective method of communication and information dissemination via emails and newsletters. This information can get lost amongst the large volume of emails that headteachers receive.

It was also noted that there is a lack of link between findings from the field and the content of training. Findings from the field were not reflected in the NPI's training courses.

"Ideally, of course – and I'm coming back to that data-driven policy – if the things we'd discovered in the field could be immediately incorporated into those training courses and similar initiatives within the NPI. That didn't happen. At least we were given the opportunity within the NPI to share our findings." (ČR4)

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4.3.3 Simplification of employment conditions

Some experts also mentioned the possibility of employing Ukrainian teachers without knowledge of the Czech language. From March 2022 onwards, schools were able to employ teaching staff without knowledge of the Czech language, provided they worked in classes or groups consisting exclusively of children from abroad or Ukraine. This exemption was later revoked.

In the early years, the exemption allowed children from Ukraine to be taught several subjects (such as maths or biology) in Ukrainian.

"At that time, it was also possible to recruit Ukrainian teachers under the Lex Ukraine scheme. This meant there was an exemption regarding their knowledge of Czech. Sometimes they were taught, for example, entirely in Ukrainian – such as maths or biology – and covered the curriculum in their own language, whilst also receiving intensive Czech language tuition. It was very varied, and the legislation allowed for this." (ČR1)

4.3.4 Funding for support

The participating experts also commented on the funding of measures to support children from Ukraine.

One expert noted that the Ministry of Education had launched financial assistance for schools in the form of an increased per-pupil grant for each Ukrainian refugee, in addition to the standard grant, as well as projects to support Ukrainian teaching assistants in schools. He did not view these efforts negatively in themselves, but in his view

they came too late and did not resolve the systemic problems. According to this statement, this was due to the fact that schools were unable to use this money to improve the quality of education for children from Ukraine. The reasons were space constraints in school buildings as well as a shortage of qualified staff within the system.

"I do not think, a priori, that such efforts and ambitions were bad. They came a little later than they should have, perhaps, but they certainly did not resolve the structural problem. Because even when we speak to those schools that received a lot of money for taking in large numbers of Ukrainian pupils, they simply do not know how to use that money productively to improve the quality of education for them. And the reason for this is, on the one hand, that you can't physically expand the school building, and on the other hand, the biggest problem the schools mentioned to us was that they simply lacked the necessary qualifications and there was a shortage of staff within the system who had experience of teaching non-Czech-speaking pupils." (ČR4)

Another participant added that schools with a higher proportion of Ukrainian children had been funded for several years, initially from UNICEF funds and later from the Ministry of Education. The money was earmarked for staffing support in the form of Ukrainian teaching assistants or for teaching aids and materials. However, this funding has now ceased, and with it, the role of Ukrainian teaching assistants in schools has largely come to an end.

"From the very start of the war in Ukraine, for several years, schools with a higher proportion of Ukrainian children – refugees in particular – were funded, and that funding was specifically intended either for staffing support in the form of these Ukrainian teaching assistants, or for additional teaching aids, materials and so on. Initially, this money came from UNICEF and actually affected several hundred schools – off the top of my head, I'd say around six hundred schools; there were simply a lot of them. The number gradually fell until, in fact, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports took over this funding from UNICEF using its own resources, and that simply came to an end. This scheme has effectively fallen apart, and as a result, the involvement of those Ukrainian teaching assistants in schools has largely ceased." (ČR1)

4.3.5 Key recommendations

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We also asked the participating experts for recommendations that could improve the current support system for school staff. They proposed the following recommendations:

Raise awareness among schools and teachers about existing support

- Raise awareness amongst schools of current guidelines and support for foreign nationals
- Raise awareness amongst teachers of the methodological support available (methodologies, recommendations)

Revise teacher training and professional development

- Introduce training on working with multilingual/multicultural classes into the higher education training of future teachers
- Consider making it compulsory for teachers to complete a specific NPI online course during a crisis situation
- Incorporate researchers' field findings directly into the content of NPI training courses

Support teachers' wellbeing

- Introduce the option of a sabbatical for teachers to prevent burnout and maintain their motivation
- Reduce the maximum number of children per class
- Expand access to supervision (following the model of the organisation People in Need)

Change the teaching model

- Consider introducing a model of larger classes with multiple teaching assistants (following the example of England) instead of a model where there is a single teacher per class, which would make it possible to manage even more challenging class compositions

4.4 Secondary schools

4.4.1 Secondary school admissions

Admissions process

A number of changes have been made in the Czech Republic regarding the admission of young people from Ukraine to secondary schools.

One participant highlighted the problem that, in the Czech Republic, it is not possible to admit a pupil to the first year of secondary school during the school year. Young people from Ukraine who arrived during the year and were due to start in the first year were therefore unable to enrol in the appropriate year group. However, an exception was made for young people from Ukraine relatively quickly.

“And so we have a situation here that seems perfectly innocent, but in fact, in the Czech Republic, it is not possible to admit a secondary school pupil to the first year during the course of the school year. And what this actually means is that when, for example, a foreigner moves here – and this actually happened to the Ukrainians too, who were in Year 10 or whatever year – they couldn’t actually enrol in the appropriate year group here, because it happened to be the first year. So, even though it’s in the law, we realised it was a mess, so an exception was made very quickly to ensure this rule didn’t apply to those Ukrainian children.” (ČR2)

Another participant pointed out that this option was widely used at first, but is now a rare practice.

One of the key measures was that applicants from Ukraine could request exemption from the Czech language entrance exam, and secondary schools could assess their knowledge of Czech through an interview. These interviews are conducted and assessed by individual schools according to their own rules; however, after some time, the Ministry of Education and the National Pedagogical Institute (NPI) published a recommended interview template (MŠMT ČR, 2024b).

As part of the evaluation of this measure, one of the participants appreciated that the recommended format for the interview had been drawn up. The absence of a template had meant that secondary schools conducted the interview subjectively and even in such a way as to ensure the applicant failed.

However, according to this respondent, the risk of the interview being subjective still persists. According to this statement, it continues to depend on the specific school as to how and in what atmosphere the interview is conducted.

‘At the moment, there are even recommendations on how the interview should be conducted, whereas previously – as we know from experience – if schools decided they did not want to admit someone, they would structure the interview in such a way that they had already made up their minds themselves. At the moment, the system is even set up so that there must be a record of every pupil, which must be traceable, so that if a pupil were to lodge an appeal, they could simply refer to how the interview was conducted. So the interview now has a certain standardised format. In any case, I think it still has its flaws, because it always depends on the school in question as to how and in what atmosphere it is conducted. But I suppose it’s the best we can do for now.’ (ČR3)

Another point that was viewed negatively was that the option to replace the Czech language entrance exam with an interview was only available to applicants from Ukraine, which one of the participants perceived as discrimination against other foreign nationals. However, this was later changed, and other foreign applicants were also given this option.

In connection with the extension of this option to other applicants from 2026, time-related criteria have also been established: the entrance examination in the Czech language and literature will be waived only for applicants who attended school outside the Czech Republic for at least two of the last three academic years prior to submitting their application. One of the participants viewed it negatively that eligibility for support is linked to the time of arrival in the Czech Republic, or rather to the length of stay in the Czech Republic, rather than to the identification of actual need. Applicants who do not meet these time criteria are only offered minor adjustments.

"The support is very limited for all those candidates who have been here for more than those two years. It's really just a token gesture. And that's not all – it's just a matter of a few minutes or a few per cent extra time to complete the test, which all candidates are given, plus the use of a dictionary. But this support is not automatic; it depends on a recommendation from the educational and psychological counselling centre, and from our point of view, this is also very ineffective and, in fact, not entirely well thought out or meaningful." (ČR1)

Another shortcoming identified was the lack of a marks-based assessment for this interview, which would be taken into account as part of the admissions process. The only distinction made is whether the applicant passed or failed the interview. This system has serious consequences for applicants. If applicants pass the interview, their admission to secondary schools subsequently depends solely on their maths result. This can be a disadvantage for applicants who perform less well in maths.

"What we find debatable so far – and I know the Ministry of Education is also discussing this – is simply that, whilst the interview distinguishes between 'pass' and 'fail' with no points awarded, the secondary school admissions system actually depends on the maths result. This means that a certain number of places is allocated based on their maths marks. But there are children who aren't particularly strong in maths. They might be excellent in the natural sciences; they might be excellent in chemistry. And they then face a problem because they have a low mark in maths, but simply passing that test – because they are able to express themselves – is actually not enough." (ČR3)

A system that places applicants from Ukraine solely on the basis of their maths results may reduce their chances of being admitted to secondary school.

"Because their maths results are usually always worse, this actually costs those children marks – so their chances of being admitted, given that their maths marks are converted into Czech language marks using a certain coefficient, may result in a lower ranking for them." (ČR2)

The same interviewee also pointed out that it is not publicly known how the 46 points in maths is converted to replace Czech. According to this statement, the result of the entrance exam is not subject to review, even though it is an administrative procedure.

There is a further measure relating to mathematics. A provision was introduced allowing Ukrainian applicants to sit the written mathematics paper of the standardised entrance examination in Ukrainian. Some of the experts involved viewed this measure rather critically.

According to one participant, this measure did not have a positive effect. According to this statement, data from the Centre for the Assessment of Educational Results (Cermat) showed that young people who took the maths test in Ukrainian achieved the worst results of all applicants.

"Until last year, for example, according to Lex Ukraine, we were entitled to have the maths test in the Ukrainian language. But even the data from our Cermat showed that this was not an effective form of support, as the children who took the test in Ukrainian achieved the weakest results in those maths tests." (ČR1)

One of the respondents also highlighted the risks of translating the maths test into Ukrainian. Pupils from Ukraine had, in fact, only learnt certain technical terms at Czech school and so might not have known them in Ukrainian. In such cases, a translation into Ukrainian could actually have been detrimental to them.

"At the moment, they have the option of taking the exam in Ukrainian – for example, in the case of Ukrainian refugees – but on the other hand, this is also problematic, because for the last year or two they have been receiving exam papers in Czech, and suddenly, even though it's a translation, there are subtle nuances. In my opinion, the pupils may not even be fully familiar with some of these terms in Ukrainian, because they had never heard of them before they started at that school. Descending, ascending – that's something you only learn at school." (ČR3)

As with the interview on the Czech language, a reservation was raised in this context that the option to sit the maths test in one's mother tongue applied exclusively to children from Ukraine and not to other foreign nationals, which was perceived as discrimination.

Another existing provision was that if a school sets the written part of the school entrance examination in Czech, the time limit for completing the test is extended for applicants from Ukraine (by 25 per cent) and they are entitled to use a translation dictionary. However, the participating experts did not comment on this provision.

Preparation prior to entering secondary school ('pre-year')

Several participating experts noted that young people from Ukraine lack preparation prior to entering secondary school. This preparation should ensure both admission to secondary school and the ability to cope with secondary school studies.

At the same time, some respondents drew attention to the existing preparation model, which several organisations or institutions are implementing based on the model of META's 'zero year'. It is precisely this model that could resolve the problem of insufficient preparation before entering secondary school.

"Systemically, we still lack support for children before they enter secondary school, to prepare them both for secondary school itself and for the necessary entrance examinations. That support is completely absent. It should take the form of (...) a one-year course, such as the one run by the Regional Education Centre in Plzeň. It is an intensive programme, sometimes referred to as a 'pre-year' before actually starting secondary education, which provides intensive language tuition, as well as career guidance, social counselling, preparation for those entrance exams and so on, which enables even children who have not actually undergone primary education here, and have no experience of Czech schools or the Czech curriculum, (...) to simply bridge this gap so that they have any chance at all of getting into secondary school." (ČR1)

According to the statement, the problem with this model lies in the fact that it is not part of the education system. In particular, 47 problematic is that young people in this 'zero year' do not have pupil status, which also causes problems with health insurance.

"At the moment, it isn't part of the education system at all, but we do have a post-secondary study element in our education system for those who haven't got into university. And this is actually something of an equivalent; it's a very similar model, only it's moved down a level, between primary and secondary school. It could be incorporated there, which would require, amongst other things, a legislative change that would grant participants in these courses the status of a student or pupil, which is not the case at the moment." (ČR1)

"That's where the biggest problem lies, in terms of status and funding, because at that stage it coincides with the end of compulsory schooling. At that point, they are no longer a pupil – neither of primary school nor of secondary school – and the question arises as to who will pay their health insurance and what status they will have within this system. And that is one of the issues that needs to be addressed in some way and discussed, because it is financially very demanding." (ČR3)

The lack of integration into the education system means that there is no systematic funding for this solution either. At present, these programmes are funded from sources outside the Ministry of Education.

4.4.2 Completion of secondary education (school-leaving examination)

Changes have also been made in relation to the completion of secondary education.

In the case of the school-leaving examination, young people from Ukraine were allowed to use a translation dictionary, were given extra time to prepare for the theoretical examination, and were granted extra time for the practical examination. However, it has been argued that these adjustments are insufficient, not least because passing the school-leaving examination requires knowledge of (Czech) literature. According to this view, young people from Ukraine have no chance of mastering this subject matter during their short period of study.

"Of course, there are certain advantages compared to the other pupils, but it seems to me that if you don't know the terms – and neither do those pupils, actually – it's quite often based on knowledge of literature; you have to have read it thoroughly, which, over those four years – and we're actually assuming here that they studied at secondary school for four years in Czech, not that they arrived from abroad in the second year and only had two years to prepare. You simply can't manage that in time, and a dictionary and a bit more time really won't help you with that." (ČR3)

It was precisely the format of the Czech language school-leaving exam that several experts perceived as the main problem. One respondent pointed out that the failure rate among foreign pupils in the Czech language exam is more than double that of Czech pupils. However, such differences do not exist in the case of school-leaving exams in other subjects.

"If we look at success rates in the Czech language school-leaving exam, the failure rate among foreign pupils is more than double that of Czech children, but in mathematics the difference is much smaller, and in English it disappears entirely. So we can see that the high level of difficulty and the reason for this failure to pass lie in the Czech language exam." (ČR1)

This finding was also confirmed by another participant, who stated that research indicates the Czech language didactic test is the main barrier to passing the school-leaving examination. As well as being an obstacle to passing the school-leaving exam, it also creates a psychological barrier in the form of fear, which causes some pupils not even to enrol on school-leaving exam courses. They fear they will not pass the Czech language exam. That is why they prefer to choose a course that does not require the school-leaving exam.

"The main barrier, as we have always perceived it – and also from discussions with the headteachers of those schools – was this didactic test in Czech and, in fact, the psychological barrier it poses for those pupils, which is that they tell themselves in advance: 'I'll never be able to pass this.'" (ČR3)

"I don't think it's that they wouldn't be able to get in, but they know in advance that they wouldn't be able to cope with this, which is why they prefer to go for a course that doesn't require the school-leaving exam. There's a certain pre-selection on the part of those pupils as to why they don't take this – because it really is a huge barrier for them." (ČR3)

An argument was also raised that the requirement for a Czech language school-leaving exam may not be in line with the needs of higher education

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studies. Whilst the school-leaving exam is a prerequisite for entry to university, Czech at the level required for the exam is no longer necessary during university studies. On the contrary, knowledge of foreign languages, such as English, may be important.

"And what's more, this is at a time when this school-leaving exam is a prerequisite for them to be able to go to university, whereas at university they will no longer need Czech in this form; on the contrary, knowledge of foreign languages is emphasised there. If they can speak English, that is much better for university than having passed a didactic test in Czech." (ČR3)

4.4.3 Key recommendations

We also asked the participating experts for recommendations that could improve the current system for admitting young people from abroad to secondary schools, as well as the system for completing secondary education. They proposed the following recommendations:

Introduce a 'pre-year' for foreign pupils

- Introduce a 'pre-year' model for foreign nationals into the education system, i.e. a one-year preparatory course for secondary school studies (analogous to the existing post-secondary school programme), modelled on existing projects and programmes
- In this context, legislatively clarify the status of 'preparatory year' participants (for example, temporary pupil status)
- Ensure stable funding for this preparatory programme

Improve the provision of information to the legal guardians of foreign nationals

- Ensure that the legal guardians of foreign nationals are informed about the secondary school system (which involves a choice between streams leading to the school-leaving examination and those not leading to it), as well as about the continuing entitlement to language support in secondary schools, in order to prevent pupils from being incorrectly directed into non-school-leaving examination streams solely due to the language barrier

Revise the admissions procedure

- Replace the subjective interview with an objective test of Czech as a second language, which will allow for an objective assessment of language skills and aptitude for study
- Alternatively, introduce a marks-based assessment of the Czech language interview instead of a binary pass/fail system, so that the interview result is also factored into the overall result
- Linguistically adapt the maths test for all pupils (not just foreign nationals) so that it is less dependent on language proficiency
- Ensure that the maths test is available in both languages simultaneously (rather than a choice between the two), so that pupils have access to versions in both Czech and their mother tongue

Revise the school-leaving examination

- Introduce a test/exam in Czech as a second language to replace the current didactic test and school-leaving examination in the Czech language and literature
 - The examination may also include Czech cultural studies and literature

5. Conclusion and summary of findings

The aim of the research was to use interviews with experts to map out what systemic measures to support the education of children and young people from Ukraine have been implemented in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, how the professional community assesses them, and what recommendations they make to improve support for the education of these children.

We conducted 8 expert interviews, 4 for each country. We selected participants based on a survey of organisations engaged in advocacy or research in the field of education for children from Ukraine, and on recommendations from the organisations approached.

In Slovakia, 4 non-governmental organisations took part (3 of which focus on direct support for children and families from Ukraine as well as advocacy, and 1 on advocacy and research); in the Czech Republic, 2 non-governmental organisations focusing on direct support and advocacy, and 2 research (academic) organisations.

The research was partly based on the OECD's holistic model (Cerna, 2019), according to which support for children with a migrant background must take into account their educational, social and emotional needs. The findings are organised into four areas:

- Admission of children to nursery and primary schools – admission to schools and year groups that are compulsory or to which other children are entitled.
- Children's adaptation at school – education, language training, mental health, relationships with other children and support from designated staff.
- Support for school staff – resources, training, advice and guidance for staff, and employment conditions for workers from Ukraine.
- Secondary schools – admission to secondary schools and completion of secondary education (school-leaving examination).

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5.1 Key findings

Admission of children to nursery and primary schools

Slovakia. Education for children from Ukraine was not compulsory during the early years, so starting school depended on the parents' wishes and the schools' capacity. Difficulties in placing children in schools were concentrated mainly in large cities such as Bratislava and Košice. The state supported the admission of children to schools mainly through declarations and did not establish any transitional educational or adaptation groups for children who could not be placed in schools.

A positive development was the introduction of compulsory education from September 2025. However, this measure came too late and is selective (it applies only to children from Ukraine and for the duration of the state of emergency). Local authorities do not have data on children of foreign nationals, and parents are not sufficiently informed about the obligations and opportunities associated with education.

The option to administratively increase nursery school capacity and set up children's groups reflected an effort to take action, but further support (in building the physical capacity of schools) and a vision for embedding these measures within the system are lacking.

Czech Republic. From the outset, children from Ukraine were subject to the same conditions as other children (entitlement to nursery school from the age of 3, compulsory pre-school education from the age of 5 and compulsory school attendance), which was positive as the compulsory nature of the system established clear rules for education.

Despite this obligation, however, a number of children were not enrolled in school and some children had to wait a very long time to be admitted. The reasons for this included a lack of information among parents, inconsistent interpretation of the obligation to admit children when schools were at full capacity, and the refusal to admit children with disabilities or on the grounds of the risk of creating segregated classes. The result was an uneven distribution of children from Ukraine across schools.

School governing bodies did not have access to records of foreign nationals' residence, and there is a lack of real-time monitoring of educational attendance. A special enrolment scheme played a negative role, as it failed to achieve its stated aim of distributing children evenly across schools and was segregating in nature (it was abolished by the Constitutional Court from the 2025/2026 academic year). An administrative increase in capacity helped in the initial phase, but schools lacked follow-up support.

Children's adaptation at school

Slovakia. Adaptation classes (from September 2025) are an appropriate systemic tool, provided that they are temporary, non-segregating and allow for progression. However, the state has not allocated funding for them nor created the necessary conditions for their establishment, and so in practice they are currently used only to a limited extent. Language courses (up to 350 hours) were inadequate, often took the form of after-school clubs, and their funding mechanism is complex.

NIVAM's regional coordinators played a positive role in some cases, but their capacity was limited and they lacked the necessary powers. A positive development was the restriction on placing children in a lower year group and the provision of language courses for parents. Schools often viewed support measures (particularly extra tuition) as voluntary, and there was also a shortage of school psychologists who could provide culturally sensitive counselling.

Czech Republic. After-school adaptation groups were only useful as a short-term emergency solution; however, in some towns they lasted for several years, varied in quality and could become a form of hidden segregation. Language training through designated schools (400 hours) was inadequate and unevenly available (the problem was particularly acute in small and rural schools). Another issue is that entitlement to language support is linked to the length of stay rather than language proficiency.

Adaptation coordinators, Ukrainian teaching assistants and mobile teams of Ukrainian psychologists all played a positive role. Teaching groups also proved effective – in contrast to segregated classes. The 12-month adaptation period was also helpful, although its fixed duration posed a problem. The rule limiting a child's placement to no more than one year below their usual year group was also positive. However, there remains a shortage of school psychologists.

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Support for school staff

Slovakia. School staff have access to a range of handbooks and teaching guides (NIVAM, VÚDPaP, Ministry of Education), but it is unclear whether schools are making use of them. One positive development was the creation of the 'Aha, slovenčina!' textbook; however, it lacks accompanying audio recordings, teaching guides and age-appropriate materials. There is also a lack of materials for nursery schools.

Teachers lack pedagogical training for working with foreign nationals; almost no one completes the NIVAM course, and training providers (NIVAM, Studia Academica Slovaca) are not integrated into the system. Only schools acting on their own initiative have made use of the exemption from the state language examination to employ Ukrainian teaching assistants.

Czech Republic. School staff have sufficient materials at their disposal, though there are fewer resources available for secondary schools. Schools are often unaware of which measures apply and to whom. The activities organised by the National Pedagogical Institute (NPI) were of high quality in terms of content, but were merely advisory in nature and had limited reach. An exemption allowing the employment of Ukrainian teachers without knowledge of Czech enabled some subjects to be taught in Ukrainian; however, this was later revoked.

Secondary schools

Slovakia. The secondary school sector has been the most neglected. Adjustments (assistive materials, extended time) applied only to the Year 9 Assessment. Children from Ukraine therefore often end up at whichever secondary schools have places available, rather than according to their interests and aptitudes. Replacing the Slovak language entrance exam with an A2 language test (from 2028 at the earliest) is an acceptable compromise; however, linking this to the year of arrival rather than a language assessment could pose a problem.

Opinions on replacing the Slovak language school-leaving exam with a language test (B1 or B2) were divided: from a critical perspective, the state should instead provide the tools to meet the same requirements; according to another view, this is a step in which Slovakia has overtaken neighbouring countries.

Czech Republic. A positive development was the adoption of an exemption allowing young people from Ukraine to be admitted even into the current first year of secondary school. Waiving the entrance exam in Czech and replacing it with an interview was an important measure; however, the risk of subjectivity remains, and as the interview is not marked, admission is decided solely on the basis of mathematics. The mathematics test in Ukrainian proved ineffective, and linking the adjustments to the length of stay is also problematic.

There is a lack of systematic preparation prior to entry into secondary school – ‘pre-school year’ programmes are not part of the system and their participants do not have pupil status. The main barrier to the school-leaving examination is the didactic test in Czech, in which the failure rate among foreign nationals is significant and which deters some young people from choosing school-leaving examination courses.

5.2 Key recommendations

Joint key recommendations for Slovakia and the Czech Republic

- Link and make data on the residence of foreign children available to local authorities and school governing bodies, and link data from the Ministries of the Interior and Education so that children not in education can be identified and their educational pathways monitored
- Improve parents’ awareness of compulsory education and of the schools where they can enrol their children
- Raise awareness amongst schools of the measures in place and the support available
- Extend language training to approximately 600 hours
- Introduce language proficiency assessments and provide support based on the results
- Appoint a designated person at each school responsible for the integration of children from foreign backgrounds⁵²
- Provide psychosocial support in the child’s mother tongue and strengthen schools’ capacity in the field of psychological support
- Prepare teachers to work with children from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds as part of their university training
- Provide teachers with supervision and professional development in working with children from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds
- Introduce a ‘pre-year’ into the education system prior to starting secondary school

Key specific recommendations for Slovakia

- Introduce equal educational conditions (entitlement to nursery school, compulsory pre-primary education and compulsory school attendance) for all children of foreign nationals, regardless of their residence status
- Support the operation of adaptation classes
- Ensure the system of support measures is fully operational
- Stabilise regional support for schools in the form of regional methodologists, county mobile teams and similar initiatives
- Support the employment of Ukrainian specialists in schools

Key specific recommendations for the Czech Republic

- Consider replacing the current model of language training (designated and non-designated schools) with a model under which every school will be obliged to provide language training for every child who needs it
- Introduce entitlement to language training based on language proficiency testing (rather than length of stay) or adjust the two-year entitlement threshold to prevent cases where a child or school misses the window for providing such training

- As part of the secondary school admissions process, replace the examination in Czech language and literature with an examination in Czech as a second language
- Replace the school-leaving examination in Czech language and literature with an examination in Czech as a second language.

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Act No. 138/2019 Coll. on teaching staff and specialist staff

Act No. 561/2004 Coll. on pre-school, primary, secondary, higher vocational and other education (the Education Act)

Act No. 67/2022 Coll. on measures in the field of education in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine caused by the invasion of troops of the Russian Federation

Appendix: Overview of key measures to support the education of children from Ukraine

Below is an overview of key measures to support the education of children from Ukraine in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. This is not an exhaustive list of all the measures introduced by the individual countries, but rather an overview of the most important measures implemented in the areas covered by our research. The overview includes measures that individual countries introduced both before and after the emergency.

Admission of children to nursery and primary schools

Slovakia	Czech Republic
Linking compulsory school attendance to permanent residence in the Slovak Republic (all foreign nationals) Period: 2022–2025 Compliance with compulsory schooling and compulsory pre-primary education is linked to permanent residence in the Slovak Republic (Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, 2023). Compulsory education (children from Ukraine) Period: from 2025/2026 The legal guardian of a child of an age at which they are required to undertake compulsory pre-primary education or compulsory schooling, who is a citizen of Ukraine, is obliged, within three months of the commencement of proceedings for the granting of temporary refuge, to apply for the child's enrolment in pre-primary education, in the case of a child who has reached the age of 5 by 31 August of the relevant calendar year, or for primary or secondary education, in the case of a child who has reached the age of 6 by 31 August of the relevant calendar year and has not yet reached the age of 16 (Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Upbringing and Education (the Education Act), Section 161r, paragraph 3).	Compulsory pre-school education and compulsory school attendance (all foreign nationals) Period: introduced before 2022 Foreign children/pupils are generally subject to compulsory pre-school education and compulsory school attendance (Sections 34a and 36 of the Education Act) (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2022a).
Register of available places in schools (children from Ukraine) Period: 2022 A map showing available places in nursery, primary and secondary schools in Slovakia, together with contact details that Ukrainian parents can use (Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, 2022).	
Option to increase the number of children per class (all children) Period: introduced before 2022 Nursery school: If the requirements set out in specific regulations are met, the maximum number of children in a class may be increased by three children on the grounds of a) a change in the child's permanent residence or habitual residence during the school year,	Option to increase the number of children in a class (all children) Period: introduced before 2022 The school's governing body may grant an exemption from the maximum number of children, pupils and students laid down by implementing legislation, up to a maximum of 4 children, pupils and students, provided that this increase does not adversely affect the quality of the school's educational activities and that health and safety conditions are met (Act No. 561/2004 Coll. on pre-school, primary, secondary,

b) the transfer of a child from another nursery school during the school year,

c) the continuation of compulsory pre-primary education at a nursery school,

d) the termination or cancellation of individual education during the school year, or

e) increased interest on the part of legal guardians in upbringing and education at nursery school during the school year. (Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Upbringing and Education (the Education Act), Section 28, paragraph 10)

Primary school: If the requirements set out in a specific regulation are met, **the maximum number of pupils in a class may be increased by three pupils** on the grounds of

a) a change in a pupil's permanent residence during the school year,

b) a pupil repeating a year,

c) a pupil transferring from another school during the school year,

d) a pupil's special arrangements for school attendance under Section 23(a) to (e),

e) a pupil's transfer to a higher year group without having completed the previous year, or

f) the transfer of a pupil to a primary school during the school year. (Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Upbringing and Education (the Education Act), Section 29, paragraph 13)

Option to increase nursery school capacity by 10 per cent (children from Ukraine)

Period: 2022–2023

The Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic has sent information to all regional public health authorities (RÚVZ) stating that, in view of the exceptional circumstances, **a 10 per cent increase in nursery school capacity** may be temporarily permitted (ÚVZ SR, 2022).

higher vocational and other education (Education Act), Section 23, paragraph 5).

Exemption from hygiene requirements for schools (children from Ukraine)

Period: from 2022

In the event of a request by a school or educational establishment, in connection with the education or provision of educational services to foreign nationals, for **a change to the data held in the register of schools** and educational establishments pursuant to Section 149 of the Education Act, where this concerns **the maximum permitted number of children, pupils** and students in the school or educational establishment, including its separate premises, beds, pupils receiving meals, classes, groups or other similar units, **no opinion is required from the competent public health authority and the building authority** pursuant to Section 147(1)(h) of the Education Act.

Schools and educational establishments **which educate** or provide educational services to foreign nationals **are not subject to the hygiene requirements regarding spatial conditions** laid down under Section 7(1) of the Public Health Protection Act. (Act No. 67/2022 Coll. on measures in the field of education in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine caused by the invasion of troops of the Russian Federation, Section 7, paragraphs 1–2)

Children's group (all children)

Period: from 2022

Slovakia	Czech Republic
As part of the service supporting the reconciliation of family and working life, childcare may also be provided in a children's group. This form of care is provided in a small group of children, comprising no more than four children, and is provided in a home environment (or another setting that is similar in terms of space and facilities to a home environment). The service to support the reconciliation of family and working life in a children's group can be provided to a child from birth until they start compulsory pre-primary education at nursery school (MPSVR SR, 2022a). Simplifying the establishment and operation of children's groups (children from Ukraine) Period: from 2022 During a state of emergency, a person under special protection, such as someone with temporary refugee status (arriving from Ukraine), may also provide care in a children's group. The individual must also provide the details required to request a criminal record check. In the case of a natural person who is a citizen of Ukraine and who, for objective reasons, is unable to prove their good character, they may, for the duration of the state of emergency, demonstrate their good character to the relevant higher territorial unit by means of a statutory declaration. During a state of emergency, a natural person is not required to provide the higher territorial unit with evidence of personnel, material, financial or hygiene conditions, nor is a written description of the scope and conditions for the provision of professional, support or other activities provided as part of this social service required (MPSVR SR, 2022b).	

Children's adaptation at school

Slovakia	Czech Republic
	Adaptation period (children from Ukraine) Period: from 2024/2025 In the case of the education of a child, pupil or student who is a foreign national enjoying temporary protection under Section 1(1) for a period of less than 12 months, the headteacher of a nursery school, primary school, secondary school, conservatoire or higher vocational college, for the purpose of helping that person adapt to education in accordance with the Education Act, may, for as long as is strictly necessary, partially or wholly replace the educational content of the school curriculum or accredited educational programme with other suitable educational content in accordance with the child's needs,

Adaptation class (all foreign nationals)

Period: from 2025/2026

In primary schools, **an adaptation class** may be established, with the consent of the school's governing body, to make up for any gaps in **pupils' education where they have an insufficient command of the language of instruction**. A pupil may be placed in an adaptation class for as long as necessary, **up to a maximum of one school year**.

An adaptation class may be established for **a minimum of four and a maximum of ten pupils from a single year group or from several year groups**.

For pupils placed in **an adaptation class, the educational process may be conducted in the relevant foreign language** or in the language of the relevant national minority, and **the subject 'Slovak Language and Literature' may be taught using the methods and forms of education and training applicable to a foreign language**. (Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Education and Training (the Education Act), Section 29, paragraphs 14 to 16)

pupil or student. Suitable educational content tailored to the needs of a nursery school child, primary school pupil or secondary school pupil need not be in accordance with the framework educational programme (Act No. 67/2022 Coll. on measures in the field of education in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine caused by the invasion of the armed forces of the Russian Federation, Section 3).

Special enrolment (children from Ukraine)

Period: 2022 – 2024/2025

In view of the current situation, in which it is impossible to predict how many foreign nationals will remain in the Czech Republic in the coming school year, **a 'special enrolment' scheme** is being introduced **for pre-school education and for admission to the first year of primary school**. Special enrolment is intended exclusively for foreign nationals and takes place between 1 June and 15 July 2022, on a date set by the headteacher of the specific school (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2022a).

Period: 2022

In the 2022/23 school year, the headteacher **is no longer obliged to announce a special enrolment period – they may opt for either a standard enrolment period or a special enrolment period at a later date**. The decision on whether to hold a standard or special enrolment period will be made by the headteacher in consultation with the school's governing body (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2023a).

Period: 2022/2023

In the current school year 2023/2024, it will no longer be possible to hold a so-called special enrolment for foreign nationals under temporary protection. Enrolment in nursery and primary schools for the 2024/2025 school year will take place for all children and pupils on the standard dates and in the standard manner (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2024e).

Period: 2023/2024

In the 2024/25 school year, the headteacher has **the option (but not the obligation) to announce a so-called special enrolment**. The decision on whether to carry out a standard or special enrolment will be made by the headteacher in consultation with the school's governing body. When deciding whether to announce a special enrolment, we recommend considering, above all, the school's current occupancy and capacity, and the expected number of children or pupils under temporary protection who, given their place of residence, may be able to join Year 1 at the school in question. We recommend that schools only utilise the special enrolment procedure **in truly exceptional cases** (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2025a).

Period: 2024/2025

Abolition of special enrolment (children from Ukraine)

Pursuant to Constitutional Court Ruling No. 30/25, the option to conduct so-called special enrolment is abolished with effect from the 2025/2026 school year (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech

Slovakia	Czech Republic
	Period: from 2025/2026
	Teaching group (children from Ukraine) Period: from 2022 If it is in the interests of the pupils' adaptation, it is possible to form groups of foreign pupils for certain subjects, provided that they do not attend lessons with other pupils from their home class. Pupils from any year group may be placed in these groups (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2022a).
	The option to create so-called segregated classes and sections comprising only Ukrainian children (children from Ukraine) Period: 2023–2024 A class or section comprising exclusively foreign nationals may be established in a nursery, primary or secondary school, conservatoire or after-school club only if no other arrangement is possible for organisational or staffing reasons (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2023a). Adaptation group (children from Ukraine) Period: 2022–2023 Support for after-school adaptation groups for foreign children aged 3 to 15 who have migrated from Ukraine and are residing in the Czech Republic. The main aim will be to support the adaptation and socialisation of Ukrainian children to the Czech environment, to support the development of their language skills, particularly their spoken Czech, to prepare children for entry into Czech schools, and to support the children's mental wellbeing and mental health (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2022b).
State language course (all foreign nationals) Period: introduced before 2022 Language courses in the official language are organised for foreign nationals to remove language barriers (Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Upbringing and Education (the Education Act), Section 146, paragraph 3). State language course – increase in teaching hours (all foreign nationals) Period: from 2023 For foreign nationals with no knowledge of the language of instruction, the basic language course comprises 48 hours – 200 hours per course; and for foreign nationals with a basic command of the language of instruction, an advanced language course with a time allocation of 64 hours – 150 hours per course (Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, 2026).	Language training (all foreign nationals) Period: introduced before 2022 Free preparation for integration into primary education, comprising Czech language tuition tailored to the needs of pupils fulfilling their compulsory schooling (hereinafter referred to as 'language preparation'), is provided at a school established by a municipality, a region or an association of municipalities, which is on the list of schools designated to provide language preparation (hereinafter referred to as the 'list of designated schools') (Decree No. 48/2005 Coll. on primary education and certain requirements for the fulfilment of compulsory schooling, Section 10(1)). The headteacher of a designated school shall place in a language preparation group a pupil who has been attending compulsory schooling at a school in the Czech Republic for no more than 24 months prior to the submission of the application and who is a foreign national or a citizen of the Czech Republic with integration needs similar to those of a foreign national (Decree No. 48/2005 Coll. on

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	primary education and certain requirements for the fulfilment of compulsory schooling, Section 11(1)). Language training – increase in allocated time (all foreign nationals) Period: from 2024/2025 The total duration of a pupil’s language training is at least 100 hours and at most 400 hours over a maximum period of 20 months of teaching (Decree No. 48/2005 Coll. on primary education and certain requirements for the fulfilment of compulsory schooling, Section 11b(1)).
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	Subject: Czech as a Second Language (all foreign nationals) Period: from 2023 Schools at the second stage of primary education will now be able to offer all foreign pupils, instead of a further foreign language, the subject ‘Foreign Language’ or ‘Czech as a Second Language’. It is also now recommended that Czech as a Second Language be offered as an optional subject within the available timetable. The minimum number of pupils required to enrol for an optional subject is 7. However, it is also possible to form groups of pupils from different year groups (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2025b).
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Placement of pupils in year groups (all foreign nationals) Period: from 2023/2024 Foreign nationals as defined in paragraph 1 who do not have permanent residence within the territory of the Slovak Republic for the place pupils in a year group according to their age and to utilise the individualised approach of the relevant year group, with the headteacher determining their to facilitate the pupil’s gradual integration. The pupil should not, on the basis of their previous education and command of the language, be placed more than one year below the level corresponding to their age (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2022a). due to insufficient command of the official language a foreign national may be provisionally placed in the appropriate year group school places the pupil in the appropriate year group according to age;	Placement of pupils in year groups Period: from 2022 It is generally more appropriate to place pupils in a year group according to their age, taking into account the level of their previous education and an assessment of their educational needs, for placement in a lower year group (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2022a). Period: 2022–2024 The headteacher of the primary school places the pupil in the appropriate year group according to age;
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group according to their age. If the pupil so wishes, they may be placed in a lower year group, subject to the informed consent of their legal guardian and the representative of the institution and the institution’s opinion (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2022a). they may be placed one counselling and prevention (Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on upbringing and education (the Education Act), Section 146, paragraph 4).	group according to their age. If the pupil so wishes, they may be placed in a lower year group, subject to the informed consent of their legal guardian and the representative of the institution and the institution’s opinion (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2022a). an assessment of their educational needs, one year lower (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2022a).
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	Ukrainian teaching assistant (staff from Ukraine) Period: from 2022 The primary role of the Ukrainian teaching assistant (UKR AP) in the initial phase is, in particular, to familiarise foreign children/pupils with the school environment and their rights and responsibilities, and to support them in feeling safe and secure at school. The UKR AP provides direct support to these children and pupils in their education, offers methodological support to teachers, helps to overcome language and cultural barriers in the classroom and at school, strives to create a positive classroom atmosphere, and cooperates with
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Regional coordinators (children from Ukraine)

Period: 2022–2025

Direct support to schools is provided by regional coordinators based at the eight regional offices of NIVaM (Bratislava, Banská Bystrica, Košice, Nitra, Prešov, Trnava, Trenčín, Žilina). Their role is to liaise with schools, assist with the enrolment of Ukrainian children in schools, help arrange psychological support, and provide interpreting services for schools or Ukrainian families when communicating with schools (MŠVVM SR, 2023).

Regional methodologists (children from Ukraine)

Period: 2025

Regional methodologists work at the four NIVaM regional centres to support the integration of children and pupils into education; their work builds on the ongoing project 'Support for Refugees from Ukraine in Education' (September 2022–April 2025) and continues to provide the following services: direct counselling and support in individual regions (schools, communities, partner organisations, etc.), provision of psychosocial support, and provision of interpreting services (NIVAM, 2025).

It provides all participants **with feedback on how the integration of the child/pupil is progressing** (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2022c).

Integration Coordinator (all foreign nationals)

Period: introduced before 2022

Support provided by the NPI ČR adaptation coordinator is aimed at children/pupils of foreign nationals (with a different mother tongue) attending compulsory pre-school and school education.

The adaptation coordinator is available to provide support to foreign children/pupils **for up to 4 weeks of teaching following their enrolment at school**. Newly arrived foreign children/pupils are provided **with assistance in adapting to the Czech school environment and integrating into the class community; help in overcoming so-called culture shock, prejudices and undesirable stereotypes**.

The adaptation coordinator for foreign children/pupils should **preferably be a teaching staff member at the school in question**; if necessary, this role may also be filled by an external teaching staff member with at least a secondary school education completed with a school-leaving certificate (NPI ČR, 2026a).

Regional coordinator for the support of teaching staff working with pupils with a different mother tongue (all foreign nationals)

Period: introduced before 2022

Each regional office of the NPI ČR has a regional coordinator for the support of teachers working with pupils with a different mother tongue (NPI ČR, 2026b).

Mobile teams (children from Ukraine)

Period: from 2024

Mobile teams from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT), supported by UNICEF, operate in the field. These focus on areas with a higher concentration of

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	of Ukrainian pupils and provide direct assistance to schools, school authorities and families. These teams include, for example, a group dedicated to segregated classes and schools , a team for out-of-school children in Prague , and teams for mental health and career guidance , which operate in all regions (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2025c).

Support for school staff

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Proof of good character by means of a statutory declaration and the submission of a psychological assessment (staff from Ukraine) Period: from 2022 A refugee who is a Ukrainian national or a family member of a Ukrainian national and who, for objective reasons, is unable to prove good character in accordance with Section 15(4), may, for the duration of the state of emergency declared in connection with the mass influx of foreign nationals into the territory of the Slovak Republic caused by the armed conflict in Ukraine, demonstrate good character in accordance with Section 15(4) by means of a statutory declaration submitted to the employer prior to the commencement of the employment relationship. If the departing employee has demonstrated good character by means of a statutory declaration in accordance with paragraph 1, the employer is obliged, prior to the commencement of the employment relationship, to require the submission of a psychological assessment of mental fitness not older than one year. (Act No. 138/2019 Coll. on teaching staff and specialist staff, Section 90e, paragraphs 1–2) Exemption from the requirement to be proficient in the state language (staff from Ukraine) Period: from 2025 During a state of emergency and for a period of two months following the lifting of the state of emergency, an evacuee is not required to meet the condition of proficiency in the state language under Section 17(1) (Act No. 138/2019 Coll. on teaching staff and specialist staff, Section 6(1)).	Exemption from the requirement to know the Czech language (staff from Ukraine) Period: 2022–2024 A legal entity operating a school or an educational establishment for extracurricular education may provide education and teaching in classes, groups and sections attended exclusively by children, pupils, students or participants who are foreign nationals or citizens of Ukraine, by employing a teaching staff member who does not meet the requirement to demonstrate knowledge of the Czech language in accordance with Section 3(1)(e) of the Act on Teaching Staff (Act No. 67/2022 Coll. on measures in the field of education in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine caused by the invasion of the armed forces of the Russian Federation, Section 6(1)).

Secondary schools

Slovakia

Replacement of the standardised entrance examination in the Slovak language and literature with a language examination in the official language (all foreign nationals)

Period: from 2028 at the earliest

A foreign national who has attended primary school in the Slovak Republic **from at least Year 6 to Year 9** may, **instead of the standardised entrance examination in the Slovak language and literature, sit a language examination in the official language at level A2** according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, organised by a body established by the Ministry of Education to carry out tasks relating to the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of education and training (Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Education and Training (the Education Act), Section 66(4)).

Czech Republic

Amendment to the admissions procedure (children from Ukraine)

Period: from 2023/2024 to 2024/2025

Foreign nationals, as defined in Section 1(1) of the Act on Measures in the Field of Education in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine caused by the invasion of troops of the Russian Federation, shall, in the admissions procedure for education at secondary and higher vocational schools:

- **be exempted, upon request, from the Czech language entrance examination**, if it forms part of the entrance examination.
- The school **will assess** the person's **knowledge of the Czech language**, which is necessary for education in the relevant field of study, through **an interview**.
- A foreign national is **entitled, upon submitting a request** attached to their application for admission to a secondary school, **to sit the written part of the standardised entrance examination in the subject area of Mathematics and its Applications in the Ukrainian language**,
- The school **may, upon request attached** to the application for admission to secondary education, **set the written part of the school entrance examination** for foreign nationals **in the Ukrainian language**
- If the school **sets the written part of the school entrance examination in the Czech language**, the **time limit for foreign nationals to complete the test is increased by 25 per cent and they are entitled to use a translation dictionary** (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2022e, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2023b, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2024c)

Amendments to the admissions procedure (all foreign nationals)

Period: from 2026

- **The entrance examination in the Czech language and literature** shall, **upon request, be waived** for persons with foreign or Czech citizenship during the admissions procedure, **provided that (..) they were educated at a school outside the territory of the Czech Republic for at least 2 of the 3 school years** immediately preceding the school year in which they submit their application, if they are studying in the Czech Republic.
- An applicant who is exempt from the Czech language examination **shall not sit the written test in the subject area of Czech Language and Literature as part of the standardised entrance examination**, nor those parts of the school's entrance examination which assess knowledge of the Czech language.
- For those who have been exempted from the Czech language examination, the **knowledge of the**

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	automatically, without having to visit an educational advisory centre, be entitled to a 25 per cent extension of the time allowed and the option to use a translation dictionary. (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2025d)
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	Placement into the current first year of secondary school (children from Ukraine) Period: from 2022 The headteacher of a secondary school or conservatoire may, in accordance with Section 63 of the Education Act, admit and place foreign nationals into the current first year (Act No. 67/2022 Coll. on measures in the field of education in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine caused by the invasion of troops of the Russian Federation, Section 4, paragraph 1). Period: 2022 – 2023/2024 The headteacher of a secondary school or conservatoire may, in accordance with Section 63 of the Education Act, admit and enrol a foreign national who is enjoying temporary protection under Section 1(1) for a period of less than 12 months, even into the current first year (Act No. 67/2022 Coll. on measures in the field of education in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine caused by the invasion of troops of the Russian Federation, Section 4(1)). Period: from 2024/2025
Extended time for the school-leaving examination in the language of instruction (all foreign nationals) Period: from 2024/2025 Foreign pupils are divided into two categories according to the length of their education in the language of instruction a) Category I – up to two years. The duration of the school-leaving examination in the language of instruction is extended by 50 % b) Category II – more than two years and up to four years. The duration of the school-leaving examination in the language of instruction is extended by 25 per cent (Decree No. 224/2022 Coll. on secondary schools, Part VI)	Adjustments to the school-leaving examination (children from Ukraine) Period: 2023–2024 A foreign national sitting the school-leaving examination may use the Rules of Czech Spelling when taking the written test in the Czech language and literature. The minimum length of the written assignment in Czech language and literature, which a foreign national takes in accordance with Section 14a(1) of the Decree in 2023, is 200 words. The minimum number of literary works on a foreign student’s reading list, in accordance with Section 14b(2) of the Decree in 2023, is 15 works. A foreign national sitting the school-leaving examination in 2023 may, when sitting the oral examination before the school-leaving examination board – with the exception of the foreign language examination – use a translation dictionary; furthermore, when sitting the oral examination in Czech language and literature before the school-leaving examination board, they may also use the Rules of Czech Spelling. For a foreign national sitting the school-leaving examination in 2023, the preparation time for the oral examination before the examination board, with the exception of the foreign language examination, is extended to 30 minutes. For foreign nationals sitting the school-leaving examination, the duration of the written examination under Section 17(2) of the Decree and the duration of the practical examination under Section 18(2) and (3) of the Decree shall be extended by 25 per cent upon their request. When sitting the practical and written

Replacement of the Slovak language and literature school-leaving examination with a language examination in the official language (all foreign nationals)

Period: from 2026/2027

A foreign national may, **instead of sitting the school-leaving examination in Slovak language and literature**, take

a) a **language examination in the official language at level B2** according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, in the case of a foreign national who **attended primary school** in the Slovak Republic **from at least Year 6 to Year 9**, or

b) a **language examination in the official language at B1 level**, if the foreign national **did not attend primary school** in the Slovakia Republic. (Act No. 245/2008 Z. on Upbringing and Education (the Education Act), Section 75a(1),

use a translation dictionary. (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2023c, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2024d)

Adjustments to the school-leaving examination (all foreign nationals)

Period: from 2025/2026

The conditions and procedure for the school-leaving examination shall be determined by the headteacher, upon request, for a person who

b) **attended a school outside the territory of the Czech Republic for at least 2 of the 7 school years** immediately preceding the school year in which they submit their application for this examination.

- **The didactic test in the examination subject ‘Czech Language and Literature’** lasts 85 minutes; pursuant to Section 20 of the Education Act, a pupil **may**, upon request, **be granted an extension of 30 minutes** for the didactic test in Czech Language and Literature **and may use a translation dictionary.**
- **The mathematics assessment test** lasts 135 minutes. In accordance with Section 20 of the Education Act, a pupil may, upon request, **be granted an extension of 10 minutes** to the duration of the assessment test **and be permitted to use a translation dictionary whilst sitting the test.**
- The examination in the subject ‘Advanced Mathematics’ takes place in the common part as an optional examination. The didactic test in Advanced Mathematics lasts 150 minutes. In accordance with Section 20 of the Education Act, a pupil may, upon request, **be granted an extension of 15 minutes** to the duration of the didactic test **and be permitted to use a translation dictionary whilst taking the test.**
- Pupils covered by Section 20 may, **upon request, be granted a 40 per cent extension to the duration of the written examination in Czech language and literature.** (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2026a)