



**The needs of unaccompanied
minors and young adults from
Ukraine in the Czech Republic**




**organization
for aid to
refugees**



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Summary of experience from the project "Providing legal advice and psycho-social support to unaccompanied and separated children and strengthening the capacities of the child protection system in the Czech Republic to protect refugee and migrant children" implemented by OPU with the financial support of UNICEF from July 2022 to July 2023.



During the fighting in Ukraine, hundreds of unaccompanied young people, both boys and girls, left for the Czech Republic. OPU provides long-term support to unaccompanied minor migrants. Between July 1, 2022 and July 31, 2023, the OPU, with the support of UNICEF, supported 380 unaccompanied minors and young people under the age of 21 who lived in the Czech Republic without their parents as part of the project. 250 of them were from Ukraine. The project, originally aimed at unaccompanied minor migrants, has expanded to include young adults under 21 years of age. They were in a very similar situation and needed similar specialized support. This report summarizes the experience with the needs of minors and young unaccompanied migrants from Ukraine, describes the characteristics of the project's clients and recommends measures that could ease their situation in the future.


Unaccompanied children and young adults from Ukraine in the Czech Republic

The specificity of the group of young unaccompanied migrants lies precisely in their independent migration, i.e. in migration without legal representatives or without the presence and support of close adults. Such migration exposes young people not only to administrative difficulties, but especially to great responsibilities and demands beyond the capabilities of inexperienced and often immature boys and girls. In addition to legal protection, young unaccompanied migrants need additional all-round support so that their stay in the Czech Republic does not bring them particularly negative formative experiences or even spoil their lives.

Young unaccompanied migrants did not come to the Czech Republic alone because they had no family. On the contrary, young people are often sent abroad by their families. Families are thus trying to provide their children with better life prospects than what is currently offered to them in their country. If there is a war in the country, many families support their teenage sons to go abroad to protect them from possible mobilization. Whether young people go abroad to study or work depends on the specific situation of the family and the young person. If the family has sufficient financial resources and the young person planned to study, they will arrange to study abroad. If, on the other hand, he did not think about studying, or if the family mainly deals with economic security, then the young person immediately looks for a job and continuing his studies or improving his qualifications is not his priority. We consider the rapid completion of education and the complete loss of aspirations for higher education or qualification improvement to be one of the significant problems faced by young unaccompanied migrants. It has a potentially very negative impact on their future life and ability to improve their position on the labor market, especially in developed economies such as EU countries.

For a significant part of unaccompanied minors and young adult migrants, their life in the Czech Republic is very fragile and uncertain, and it is difficult for them to maintain stability. Socially, economically and psychologically.

Not everyone is completely alone here, but many are. Younger children in particular come accompanied by, for example, one grandparent or an older sibling, other young people are in the Czech Republic, for example, with family friends. However, the majority



of young people over the age of 15 do not have the background of a family or another stable adult to support them. This has an impact not only on their daily life, which they have to manage in all aspects themselves (unless they live in an institutional facility). Starting with housing, sustenance, securing studies or spending free time. Loneliness is also accompanied by insecurity, and this manifests itself significantly in situations where decisions have to be made about serious matters. Uncertainty means that young migrants are unable to have an overview of their situation or think long-term. Typically, they then make decisions impulsively, prioritizing the solution of an acute need and are unable to take into account the wider context and long-term consequences. Or, on the contrary, they avoid difficult decisions and leave problems unresolved.

Inexperience and a necessarily simplified understanding of the situations in which unaccompanied youth find themselves leads them to a rather contradictory relationship with institutions, towards which they often take extreme positions. They have a strong mistrust towards some (they can be authorities, but also professional helping organizations), on the contrary, they have an affection bordering on dependence towards others (e.g. a job broker). Both extremes can become an obstacle in orientation in society and in gaining independence, but they can also lead to the fact that young people do not recognize an offer for irregular or even illegal activity. One of the forms of mistrust towards institutions is the fear of young migrants about any registration at the authorities. They show a certain resistance to communication with official places, which can lead to a willingness to stay in the "grey zone". That is, with a pending stay, in a disadvantageous job position, with unresolved problems at school or dependent on an intermediary.

Young unaccompanied migrants are usually very independent and at first glance they manage their situation well. But even the independence of unaccompanied youth is specific. They have to take care of themselves in all aspects, so on a practical level they are independent. At the same time, this full independence is demanding for them. Some react to these demands by making independence their de facto program, they have strong opinions and are not too willing to listen to anyone's advice. Others, on the other hand, would like to find relief from large claims. They want someone who is interested in them and takes care of them. These attitudes have implications for the offering and provision of services to young unaccompanied migrants – some are completely unwilling to use services because they want to do without the help of others at all costs.

Young people not only need the support of their family, but they also need to live in their peer group. And this is what young migrants leave when they leave the country. But in a foreign language environment, it is very difficult to find a new group of peers. The natural need of teenagers is to succeed in a group of peers, which is almost impossible for newcomers without a decent knowledge of Czech. In particular, this is why many young migrants live only among their acquaintances or friends from the same country or the same language, and integration into the majority society is extremely difficult for them. And that is also why it is difficult for them to join, for example, a school collective, where linguistic and social disadvantages are combined. Which only further weakens the motivation to integrate and strengthens the tendency to isolate oneself among migrants and drop out of studies.

The assumption that young people can easily learn a new language and easily integrate into society is simply not true for teenagers. It always applies more to migrants who come with family support or have language support available. At the age of high school or second grade elementary school students, for example, attending school already requires such a high level of knowledge of the Czech language that it is impossible to acquire it within the first few months and certainly not without professional support. Czech only at the basic communication level is not enough for real integration.


The given specifics of young migrants, which to a certain extent characterize all minors and young unaccompanied migrants, are based on a current project aimed at supporting refugees from Ukraine. Based on intensive meetings with young migrants and experience with their support, we formulate the following recommendations, following which can lead to more focused support for this relatively difficult to reach and approachable group.

Recommendations for the reception and integration of unaccompanied minors and young adult migrants

A) Ensuring affordable housing

The priority for the good integration of young people is to ensure suitable housing, which will provide them with stability for managing an independent life in the Czech Republic. Housing should ideally meet the following parameters:

- Stability – existential uncertainty or the threat of losing housing is a basic destabilizing element of the experience of young migrants; only if they have housing security can they calmly study or work, plan for the future and generally strive to improve their situation.
- Affordability - some young people have financial support from their family and can afford to pay rent in an apartment or dormitory. Those who do not have this support and at the same time want to continue their studies or improve their qualifications should have the opportunity to find affordable housing, where they can earn a part-time job that leaves them time and energy for their studies.
- Suitable for young people - it is good if young people can live among young people (dormitory, shared apartment, some type of sheltered/transitional housing for young people), or in an arrangement that is closer to family than, for example, in a dormitory with older workers .
- Availability of professional support - it would be ideal if, especially in mass accommodation facilities, the possibility of support from professional workers was also connected with housing. The support should be aimed at housing itself (administrative handling, support with apartment maintenance) and should also include the area of social counseling and orientation in society (help with arranging a stay in the Czech Republic, finding language courses, orientation in the labor market or in the education system) . It should also provide contact for other necessary services (psychological support for debt counseling).
- Availability even for unaccompanied minors – minors cannot rent an apartment on the apartment market by themselves due to their young age. And even if it were possible, it would be difficult for them to find someone to rent an apartment to them, because landlords are worried about tenants who are too young. It would be appropriate to create systemic institutional capacities that would enable the accommodation of unaccompanied minors.



It would be ideal to have accommodation capacities for minors in every administrative region unit (kraj) of the Czech Republic, preferably in the form of a halfway house or similar supported but not closed housing. With capacities that are relatively quickly available.

B) Creation of a suitable background for long-term contact and identification of needs

In the course of the project, it became clear that it is difficult to ascertain the needs of minor migrants in the conditions of standard social counseling. Clients only use social counseling in a professional organization when they have a problem that they identify themselves (debts, loss of housing...). Sometimes even when the problem is almost unsolvable. For them, the social worker is not a person with whom they would share their daily worries, to whom they would confide and who could therefore get to know them continuously, know what they are solving and what is bothering them. And who would also be able to continuously and long-term help them and adequately navigate them. At the same time, understanding young migrants and insight into their situation are key to being able to support them according to their real needs.

It is therefore necessary to create a suitable background where young people can meet for a long time, spend their free time and also meet workers in whom they will trust and with whom they will communicate openly. Such a suitable background for long-term contact can be, for example, a **half-way house**, where one worker meets with the staff of the apartment for a long time and can continuously consult with the young people about the topics they are dealing with. Another possible space for meeting and sharing is, for example, a **day community center or club**, where young people can spend their free time and where they can at the same time consult their questions or problems in a less formal atmosphere. And if such a consultation is not enough, it is possible to recommend a suitable professional support service to them in time, including the offer of psychological support.

C) Comprehensible service offer

It is not so much to provide services to unaccompanied minors as it is to offer them in a suitable way so that they want to accept them.

Young migrants are very attached to their community and their circle of acquaintances, and it is therefore quite difficult for Czech institutions to approach them in a trustworthy manner and possibly establish repeated contact and a more intimate relationship. This task is a challenging task not only for Czech helping professionals, but also for Ukrainian ones.

A certain barrier for contacting unaccompanied minors and young migrants is the use of intermediaries (so-called clients), which is characteristic of Ukrainian migration. OPU workers encountered the fact that, once migrants have decided on their intermediary and, perhaps with his help, get housing or a job, they are no longer very willing to accept help or advice from other actors. This is also why it was difficult during the project to contact young people, e.g. at some hostels providing humanitarian accommodation. Not only that, the OPU workers were often not welcomed by hostel owners and/or employment brokers. But they didn't even trust the migrants themselves, because they already considered their accommodation providers or employers to be a reliable source of the necessary information.

A relatively strong barrier for offering and providing support services is the self-perception of unaccompanied minors. They do not perceive themselves as people who need help and protection, and therefore as potential clients of some support service. On the contrary, they see themselves as independent young people who manage and want to manage their lives. And so they may tend to stay away from helpers in order to prove to themselves that they don't need help.

At the same time, young migrants are not completely inaccessible. They perceive their difficulties well, they are often worried about the future, and so, despite their declared independence, they are happy to have support in long-term relationships (whether family, friendship or with a more experienced adult). Many perceive that they would need professional psychological support. Therefore, support services have a lot to offer to young people, but the service must be appropriately constructed and the offer clearly formulated. When offering advice and other services, support should be presented as an offer or some kind of extension of possibilities, and not so much as help. It is also necessary to use the established long-term contact and involve Ukrainian workers. Information about the available services should also be disseminated as much as possible in a way that is common in the community - on social networks and especially repeatedly, so that the offer becomes known.

D) Cooperation between institutions, at least OSPOD and NGOs, and the creation of a care system with sufficient capacities

We recommend the creation of functional cooperation between OSPOD workers and regional NGO services that specialize in supporting unaccompanied minors and young adults. The verified cooperation of OSPOD and OPU workers in Brno included continuity of services and an agreement on mutual information and client needs. OPU, which had the resources, could support the minor based on OSPOD's recommendation. E.g. it was possible to quickly buy textbooks, provide accompaniment and interpretation when visiting a doctor or help with formalities at offices and at school.

Such a close connection is considered by all actors to be highly functional. Cooperation between the two institutions needs to be formally set up and then all employees should be well and repeatedly familiarized with their competences. Both OSPOD and NGO workers know well what the other party's options are and can use them for the benefit of the client. Through OSPOD, NGO workers can get in touch with underage migrants to whom they can offer the organization's professional services. And OSPOD workers are sure that the needs of minors will be truly met to the maximum extent possible.

E) Provision of residence status and social security

We recommend that minors and young unaccompanied migrants simplify obtaining temporary protection in the Czech Republic, or obtaining a stable legal status (for minor migrants other than from Ukraine). And then maintain a systematic overview of whether minors have completed the administrative requirements of their stay, and support them in this.

Most of the young people were holders of temporary protection, but some could not obtain temporary protection, for example because of the temporary protection granted by another state, which can easily happen in a situation where family members leave for different states or move between them. We recommend considering the possibility of granting a DO in the Czech Republic, even if the minor child has a DO from another EU state, especially if the minor here has, for example, secured studies or other background.

Young migrants can become unaccompanied minors only during their stay in the Czech Republic. After the tightening of the rules for persons with temporary protection after July 1, 2023, due to which the financial situation of many families worsened, some mothers left the Czech Republic and left their minor children here with another caregiver. These are, for example, children aged 14 or 15 who go to school and will continue there, and the mothers turned to the OPU before their departure with a request that another person could take care of the children.

A certain simplification of the application for the extension of temporary protection in 2024 will represent the possibility for unaccompanied minors to independently register for an extension up to the age of 15.

Who are unaccompanied minors from Ukraine in the Czech Republic?

Results from the questionnaire survey

Part of the OPU project was the provision of legal and social counseling, financial support for studies and living, mentoring and the possibility of accommodation in a house halfway to the OPU. In addition to providing services, OPU staff tried to find and reach unaccompanied minors and young migrants and ascertain their needs. As part of the mapping, OPU staff visited approximately **200 accommodation facilities** (dormitories and dormitories) and other places where unaccompanied minors or young adults stay (asylums, OPU's own accommodation facilities, apartments) throughout the Czech Republic. They left information about the ongoing project in all accommodation facilities and contacted the young refugees and gave them information. A few dozen minors from Ukraine were found in the visited accommodation facilities.

The workers ascertained the situation and needs of young migrants through interviews and observations as part of their work with clients. A questionnaire was also completed with **48 clients** from Ukraine, which was completed during one of the initial consultations with a social worker or outreach worker. We are aware that the questionnaire is not an ideal tool for identifying more complex needs. The very situation of outpatient counseling in the office leads young people to the fact that they only want to solve their specific task with which they came to the counseling, and are not motivated to talk about other aspects of their lives. And this despite the fact that they often need support. At the end of the project, we conducted in-depth interviews with some of the clients about how their needs have changed after almost a year in the Czech Republic.

In addition to interviewing minors, 8 expert interviews with OPU advisors and project leaders took place during and at the end of the project, focused on reflecting on the project and formulating their experiences with the needs of minors and young adults

from Ukraine. The experience of the workers is not based only on working with the persons with whom the questionnaire was filled out. On the one hand, the workers participate in other project activities, where they are in intensive contact with minors from Ukraine and other refugees, but they also work with minors and young migrants from other countries, and can therefore compare the situation and needs of young people. The advantage of interviews with employees is also their many years of experience in the field and the ability to assess the client's situation from a broader perspective.

Age and gender: especially young boys

Among the interviewees, **2/3 are boys** and **1/3 are girls**. Young men predominate, **almost half of the interviewees are seventeen-year-old boys**. This composition corresponds to the reasons for migration: families protect their young men from potential conscription. Most often, clients came to the Czech Republic at the age of 17 (26 people). Then they come at the age of 16 (8 persons) and at the age of 18 (6 persons, see graph on the left). The two youngest girls are nine and ten years old.


The interviewed children came to the Czech Republic continuously, the most children arrived in February to April 2022, 20 people out of all interviewed. The others gradually arrived in the following months of the year until March 2023.

Parents, relatives and adult help

More than half of the interviewed young people are completely alone in the Czech Republic without an escort. Roughly a third of the children have relatives in the Czech Republic (e.g. grandmother, siblings or other more distant relatives). Apart from the youngest children who live with their grandmothers, young people communicate with their possible relatives in the Czech Republic, but the vast majority do not live with them. Another 7 children, **less than a fifth, have a close unrelated person in the Czech Republic** whom they can turn to. Usually about a family friend or friends' parents. Young refugees are in varying intensity of contact with adult relatives or acquaintances in the Czech Republic, sometimes they use their advice and help, but in principle they live independent lives and deal with their affairs independently.

Slightly more than half of the respondents have an adult in the Czech Republic who helps them with handling matters at the authorities. To a lesser extent, relatives living in the Czech Republic help them, more often it is unrelated persons - mainly professionals, social workers and other workers of institutions (children's homes, asylums, social services), but also, for example, a Czech teacher, a hostel owner or other acquaintances. **However, almost half of the children take care of their own affairs.**

The vast majority of children have both **parents** or at least one of them **in Ukraine**. Alternatively, one of the parents is in Ukraine and the other is in another country (Slovakia, Great Britain, USA, Croatia, Greece). Three children said that their mother had died, some of them only talk about one of the parents. The family situations of children are different, and it can be observed that children's families are often divided or incomplete. Some parents are divorced and already living with other partners, which can accelerate the teenager's departure from the family. Other families were divided either by the current war or labor migration before 2022. Siblings are similarly divided (one at the mother's, one at the father's).



The interviewees also have **other relatives** mainly in Ukraine, but also in the Czech Republic (20% of them) or in other countries (Germany). These are either grandparents, adult siblings or aunts/uncles who have been living in the Czech Republic or abroad for a long time.

Questions about help with family reunification were not at all appropriate for the majority of those interviewed. Their migration is often a family decision. Young unaccompanied migrants tend to be de facto sent abroad by their families. By sending their children abroad, families ensure that they can live at least a little normally. Children either go abroad to study and are also often supported by their families. Or it is in the interest of the family to send their teenage son abroad, thereby protecting him from possible mobilization. Another reason is the possibility to secure a job and a better income abroad. Some young people leave to find work, live abroad and take care of themselves. Sometimes it is necessary for them to relieve the family budget at home by leaving. In some cases, it was even necessary for a young person in the Czech Republic to earn and send money to the family as help. Such early independence from the family or going abroad is not a rule or tradition in Ukraine. It is rather a strategy of families to cope with the current war situation.

In the last phase of the project, the OPU advisors experienced a relatively new situation: mothers of minors who had been staying with their children in the Czech Republic wanted to complete the necessary arrangements so that they could go to Ukraine and have someone else take care of the children here. The reason was the tightening of conditions for refugees from Ukraine, due to which mothers left, but children aged 14-17 remained to study in the Czech Republic. These unaccompanied minors therefore could not come to the Czech Republic alone, but ended up staying here alone.

The absence of parents is a very important factor in the life of young migrants. Despite the presence of relatives or acquaintances, young people often do not come to the Czech Republic in prepared conditions, and only a few of them can use their relationships to support their life and integration. It can be said that even if young people in the Czech Republic have some connections, one of their main problems is loneliness and limited social contacts. And they also complicate their life in the Czech Republic. Young people lack both reliable support in everyday life and the care and attention that a family naturally provides. And they bear the responsibility themselves, which is a great burden for some. Whether it's about mastering your studies, all practical day-to-day arrangements, or managing your stay and all complex administration.

Residence status and staying in the Czech Republic

Most of the children were granted residence permits. Half of them had been granted temporary protection, 8 children had a visa for the purpose of tolerance and 2 children a visa for the purpose of study. Individuals also had other residence permits (application for international protection, temporary protection of another state). 6 children had no residence status at the time of mapping - either because they lost their previous residence permit or because they had not yet settled their residence matters.

The experience of OPU staff showed that for some unaccompanied minors, an obstacle to obtaining temporary protection was a reluctance to register, linked to stereotypical fears about communication with the authorities, or dealing with residence matters through an unreliable intermediary.

Almost all children who were not granted temporary protection needed help with residence matters. The complications for them were both expiring existing visas and, for example, temporary protection from other EU states in a situation where they wanted to live in the Czech Republic with friends or relatives. Temporary protection granted in another EU country is not a long-term residence status solution for young migrants. It does not even allow studying or even professional sports training in the Czech Republic - and young people would need to obtain temporary protection in the Czech Republic.

Almost all those interviewed declare that they want to stay in the Czech Republic, they have their work or study plans here. Only two people do not know, they will stay here in the Czech Republic, and one of the young people wants to continue to Canada after a while.

Housing

Roughly a third of young people live in some type of institutional facility or supported housing (youth asylum, children's home, diagnostic institute, ZDVOP, halfway house¹). Almost half of the people interviewed live in a collective facility such as a dormitory, dormitory, boarding house or hostel, which are part of state humanitarian accommodation. The last roughly quarter of people live in apartments - either in the form of cohabitation or rather in a family arrangement (cohabitation with a partner or family).

According to OPU staff, housing is a key element of support for young unaccompanied migrants. According to them, workers' hostels with a low standard of living (cramped spaces, poor hygiene, little privacy) are particularly unsuitable. In the hostels, it was difficult for migrants to pass on information about their rights, hostels for workers also tend to be connected to employment agencies, even irregular ones, and it is relatively easy for clients to become dependent on housing and/or work providers.

Smaller facilities, possibly some form of sheltered housing or at least housing among peers, are more suitable.

¹ A halfway house is exactly halfway between an institutional facility and an apartment. Clients live in an apartment, but are supported by intensive social work and other support. That is why the halfway house is classified as an institutional facility.



Institutional support of migrant minors

OSPOD (Children's social protection authority)

40 interviewed persons were under the age of 18 at the time of their arrival in the Czech Republic. Of these minors, only 15 children were in contact with OSPOD. On the contrary, more than half of them were not in contact with **OSPOD** at the time of questioning.


One of the intended goals of the project was to strengthen cooperation between OSPOD and OPU in the area of supporting unaccompanied minor migrants. For OSPOD workers, the arrival of a significant number of underage migrants from Ukraine meant new challenges. Many children came from Ukraine unaccompanied by legal representatives or accompanied by relatives who are not legal representatives under Czech law. Municipal OSPOD workers should know about these underage migrants. The OSPODs played an important role in the extension of temporary protection in the spring of 2023, when they either issued a custody document to adult relatives or handled their registration for the extension of temporary protection themselves. OPU informed all OSPODs in the municipalities about the project. In particular, OSPODs in cities where OPU has branches were in contact with OPU and knew about OPU services.

Systematic cooperation was established with OSPOD in Brno. Here, in the second half of the project, a certain connection of services was achieved, which can be considered an example of good practice in supporting unaccompanied minors. Cooperation took place in such a way that OSPOD was first thoroughly informed about the scope of OPU services (legal advice, escorts, financial support). Subsequently, when working with clients, he referred selected client-migrants to the OPU, sent clients to the OPU in a targeted manner with a specifically formulated order, and at the same time informed the social workers of the OPU about the client's needs. OPU services could thus, in cooperation with OSPOD, realistically fulfill the client's needs and thus became part of the system support. Such a procedure is also welcome for OSPOD workers, because they cannot practically fulfill the client's need themselves, and thanks to the cooperation with the NGO, they know that someone really helped the client. Whether it was an escort to the OAMP, to the doctor or to buy textbooks. Thus, it was possible to verify the good practice of OSPOD and NGO cooperation, which, thanks to the project, had the capacity to provide concrete and targeted support for underage migrants.

Cooperation with OSPOD is sometimes not helped by young migrants themselves. Some are afraid to enter into communication with OSPOD in order not to be placed in a children's home or other facility. OPU staff encountered a similar concern when mapping unaccompanied minors in hostels. Refugees distrusted the OPU staff as strangers and were afraid to inform them if there were any unaccompanied minors living in the dormitory, because they did not know what consequences it might have for them if the OPU staff did not take them somewhere.

Humanitarian social benefit

At the time of mapping, 27 children were granted temporary protection, and 18 of them received the **humanitarian benefit**, i.e. about **three quarters** of them. 8 children knew about the dose, but did not have it processed, 1 person did not know about the dose. Of all those interviewed, half of the persons received the humanitarian benefit - and the other half of the children did not receive any state financial support. Either because they were not entitled to the benefit due to their residence status, or because they did not get the benefit.



It was the settlement of the humanitarian benefit that often brought young migrants to the OPU. Because they needed help with the HUD application. As minors, they could not apply for it themselves, but needed the cooperation of OSPOD or adults who were entrusted with care (“guardian”).

Acceptance and use of professional support by minors

OPU social workers agree that minors from Ukraine are a specific group in terms of their access to the help offered by social services. Migrants from Ukraine are characterized by less trust in official institutions and, on the contrary, a habit of using the services of paid intermediaries who handle what is needed with the institutions. OPU employees perceive this habit even among young clients: most clients do not respond directly to offers of free OPU services, only those who have to solve some problems get in touch. Therefore, they seek contact with the institution, including OPU, more out of necessity than, for example, to find out about their options or to consult in advance about an important decision. And when they use the service of, for example, social counseling and have a good experience with it, they do not tend to return unless they solve a serious problem again. In the framework of social counseling, clients also do not confide in other problems than those for which they came. It is therefore very difficult for social workers to establish long-term contact and ascertain their needs.

Many clients would – according to the court of social workers – need psychological support after more than a year of independent residence in the Czech Republic. Solitude and the independent solution of many problems leads clients into demanding and often stressful situations that burden them for a long time. While at the beginning of the project only a minority of clients asked for psychological support, gradually this need was identified and accepted by more clients.

Study or work?

Half of the young people (24 people) went to school at the time of the interview - to primary, secondary or university (appropriate for their age), or to preparatory language courses. Some were just about to apply to college. Five high school students participated in online learning from Ukraine.

The other half (also 24 people) did not go to school. Among them were 16 persons under the age of 18 – most of the young people, who should therefore ideally be in school, did not go to it. Many have declared a desire to study, but it is precisely from their experiences that it is possible to see that entering and persevering in studies is difficult for unaccompanied young people. Either they don't enter the education system at all, or they drop out of it very easily. Even entering the labor market is apparently not easy: 14 people who did not go to school at the time of filling out the questionnaire did not even go to work. They mostly alternated short-term temporary jobs, punctuated by periods without employment.

A third of the interviewed young people (14 people) worked in unskilled and part-time jobs (construction, hotel, KFC). Six of the workers worked at the school. All the young people interviewed only worked part-time in unskilled jobs, where they usually earned little money just to get by. At the age of 15-18, where most unaccompanied minors are found, young people are usually still studying. For many young migrants, education is important, but if they do not have clear support from their family or a very strong self-

motivation, high school studies in particular are very difficult for them and they may not be able to complete them.

It's the same with finding a job. At this age, young people usually have no qualifications and thus cannot expect to find a stable place in the labor market, in addition to the good salary they would like. On the contrary, they are waiting for part-time, unqualified positions that do not offer much social security. To improve the job position, one would need to have a higher or at least some qualification. And that can only be achieved through further study. However, this is difficult in a foreign-language environment, so young migrants often do not decide to study, or are not successful in their studies, do not improve their qualifications, and as a result do not have the prospect of improving their position on the labor market. They work in unskilled jobs or part-time jobs, barely making ends meet and are unable to build up a financial reserve and devote themselves to school. They get into a vicious circle. After all, the brigade brings in some money, so the motivation to improve one's qualifications is ultimately not acute enough for young people. And so, at a very young age, they get used to the lowest positions on the labor market or try to improve their situation by means of irregular practices or procedures outside the boundaries of the law. The number of cases is increasing, not only among minor migrants from Ukraine, when they are involved in, for example, unclear cryptocurrency trading through various intermediaries and acquaintances, or they receive offers to lend their bank account for forwarding money of unknown origin for a financial reward. Several OPU clients were questioned by the police for this reason, and criminal proceedings were even initiated against some of them.

There are specific needs for help associated with study and work. Some young people need help with verification of completed education or with finding and admission to school. Still others want help with finding a part-time job or checking working conditions. At the same time, their independence when it comes to finding a job is high, and they tend to ask for help more often when they encounter problems that they cannot solve on their own. However, OPU workers point out that young people are willing to accept disadvantageous working conditions (work without a contract, low pay, inappropriate working conditions). This does not mean that no one leaves a bad job, but the willingness to accept disadvantageous conditions is high.

OPU workers pointed out that some clients even lost their housing and jobs for a certain period of time and reached a desperate situation where they had nothing to eat or lost their housing. According to the workers, it was characteristic of young migrants that they refused to accept help intended for homeless people. Young people did not want to belong to this category "at the bottom" at any cost. According to social workers, experiences of such failure negatively affect self-confidence and the overall psychological state of young people. Especially when they tried hard to hold on and failed. They have experienced rejection and being trapped in a disadvantageous situation that they cannot leave on their own. After such an experience, young people trust official institutions even less, are open to illegal work and accept disadvantageous or undignified positions (e.g. in the sex business). Similarly, they may be open to various means of temporarily not feeling the weight of the situation, such as drugs or alcohol.

Czech language courses

Less than half of the interviewees attended a Czech language course, some of them completed more than one course. These were courses organized by non-profit organizations, universities or language schools/agencies. One of the arrival trajectories is to come straight to the contracted language school and start a Czech language course there and use them to mediate other essentials of the stay. According to them, almost half of the young people need help with Czech, mostly those who have not attended any course. Almost everyone who is now studying in the Czech Republic went to the Czech language course. On the contrary, none of the students studying online in Ukraine took Czech. Those who only work here usually did not attend the Czech language course.

Other needs

If the young migrants themselves were to formulate their needs for the OPU workers, they mainly wanted a job and enough finances for a normal life. Although few wanted to show any problems when filling out the questionnaire, and all declared independence and balance, the answers also revealed concerns about the future and the challenges that await them. Be it residence issues, studies, administrative obstacles or even family relationships. During the first contact, OPU staff offered young migrants a consultation with a psychologist. Almost a quarter of young people showed interest in it at the first offer, but during the course of the project, other clients also asked for psychological help. According to OPU staff, this type of support is needed by almost everyone who lives abroad alone without family support.

Conclusion

Young migrants leave their country to have a better life than what is offered in their country of origin. Their personal immaturity and difficult economic and legal position often do not allow them to really achieve a better life. With our report, we want to raise awareness of the situation of unaccompanied minors and young migrants and encourage responsible actors to create measures that would systematically help young migrants. And she enabled them to start life with dignity and support. It is an investment not only in their personal life, but also in the educated and well-integrated layer of migrants in the Czech Republic. And finally to the cultured migration and integration policy of the Czech Republic.





organization
for aid to
refugees