

DOI <https://doi.org/10.30525/978-9934-26-623-2-17>

IMPLEMENTATION AND PRACTICAL ROLE OF UKRAINIAN TEACHING ASSISTANTS IN CZECH SCHOOLS

ВПРОВАДЖЕННЯ ТА ПРАКТИЧНА РОЛЬ УКРАЇНСЬКИХ АСИСТЕНТІВ ВИКЛАДАЧІВ У ЧЕСЬКИХ ШКОЛАХ

Tomashevska M. O.

*Doctor of Philosophy in Pedagogy,
Assistant Professor
University of South Bohemia in České
Budějovice, Czech Republic*

Томашевська М. О.

*доктор філософії, старший викладач
Університет Південної Богемії у
Чеських Будейовицях, Чеська
Республіка*

The position of the Ukrainian Teaching Assistant (UTA) was established as a response by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic (MŠMT) to the extraordinary situation that emerged after the outbreak of war in Ukraine in February 2022. Within a few months, tens of thousands of Ukrainian refugee pupils entered Czech primary schools, facing language barriers, cultural differences, and psychological distress caused by war-related experiences (MŠMT, 2022a). Based on Government Resolution No. 285 of 6 April 2022 and its subsequent amendment No. 560 of 22 June 2022, the Ministry introduced a new, previously non-existent position – the Ukrainian Teaching Assistant (UTA). It was officially presented for the first time in the Bulletin of the Ministry of Education No. 4/2022 and defined as an extraordinary support measure designed to facilitate the education and adaptation of Ukrainian refugee pupils (MŠMT, 2022b). Funding for this position was based on Section 161(7) of the Education Act No. 561/2004 Coll. and was initially approved for the period September–December 2022. The programme was subsequently extended through additional MŠMT Bulletins (No. 1/2023; No. 5/2023; No. 7/2023) until 31 August 2024 (MŠMT, 2023a; MŠMT, 2023b; MŠMT, 2023c).

At the same time, Act No. 67/2022 Coll. (so-called *Lex Ukraine*) was adopted, allowing schools to employ Ukrainian teaching assistants on fixed-term contracts of less than 12 months, which represented an exception from the general provisions of Act No. 563/2004 Coll., on Teaching Staff. This flexible legal framework enabled schools to promptly respond to the urgent educational integration needs of Ukrainian pupils (Government of the Czech Republic, 2022; MŠMT, 2022b).

The role of the Ukrainian Teaching Assistant may differ across schools depending on the needs of pupils and the approach of school management.

However, their work can be divided into several key areas that together form the framework of their everyday professional activities.

The role of the Ukrainian Teaching Assistant (UTA) in Czech schools is exceptionally complex. It is not limited to language support but involves the holistic accompaniment of the child throughout the process of adapting to a new educational, social, and cultural environment. In everyday school life, UTAs perform a wide range of tasks:

Linguistic and educational support. They translate teachers' instructions, textbooks, and worksheets into Ukrainian; help pupils understand the subject matter, assignments, and exams; explain differences between the Czech and Ukrainian education systems; conduct individual or group sessions with children who need more time to acquire Czech; collaborate with teachers in developing Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and ensure their implementation; and assist in preparing teaching aids and methodological materials tailored to pupils' language levels.

Social and adaptation support. They help newly arrived pupils navigate the school environment – showing them classrooms and facilities, explaining school rules and daily routines; accompany them during their first days; help them make friends; monitor relationships between Czech and Ukrainian pupils; prevent conflicts or feelings of isolation; cooperate with the school psychologist and counsellor in solving adaptation difficulties; and organize informal activities such as group games, adaptation workshops, or project days.

3. *Communication bridge between school and family.* They communicate with parents in their native language, explain how the Czech school system works, including grading and homework procedures; help parents fill out school forms, applications, or club enrolments; interpret during parent-teacher meetings and relay important information between teachers and families; and motivate parents to participate actively in school life, attend events, and support their children's learning.

4. *Psychological and emotional support.* They help children cope with stress, nostalgia, or anxiety connected to the war and separation from home; provide a safe space to talk in their native language; act as a trusted person for the child, helping to strengthen self-confidence; alert teachers to signs of trauma or exhaustion and assist in finding appropriate forms of support.

5. *Cooperation with the teaching staff.* They consult with teachers on methods for working with pupils whose mother tongue differs from Czech; help prepare intercultural themes in lessons (e.g., maps, literature projects, or cultural celebrations); share insights about Ukrainian culture, educational traditions, and the specific needs of pupils; and contribute to improving the school climate and developing teachers' intercultural competences. Administrative and organizational work. They help record

pupils under temporary protection, assist in coordinating timetables and adaptation groups, and cooperate with local non-governmental organizations and interpreters.

Practical experience shows that the presence of UTAs significantly facilitates the adaptation of Ukrainian pupils, improves their academic performance, and at the same time reduces teachers' workload. Thus, the assistant becomes not only a "helper in the classroom" but also a key link between the school, family, and community.

The work of Ukrainian Teaching Assistants continues to inspire more inclusive, understanding, and compassionate approaches to education, proving that true integration is built not only through policy but through everyday human connection.

Bibliography:

1. Government of the Czech Republic. *Usnesení vlády České republiky č. 285 ze dne 6. dubna 2022 a č. 560 ze dne 22. června 2022*. Praha : Úřad vlády ČR, 2022.
2. MŠMT. *Metodické poznámky k zajištění ukrajinského asistenta pedagoga*. Praha : Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy, 2022a.
3. MŠMT. *Věstník MŠMT č. 4/2022*. Praha : Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy, 2022b.
4. MŠMT. *Věstník MŠMT č. 1/2023*. Praha : Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy, 2023a.
5. MŠMT. *Věstník MŠMT č. 5/2023*. Praha : Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy, 2023b.
6. MŠMT. *Věstník MŠMT č. 7/2023 (č.j. MSMT-27655/2023-3)*. Praha : Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy, 2023c.
7. Parliament of the Czech Republic. *Act No. 67/2022 Coll. on measures in education in connection with the armed conflict in Ukraine (Lex Ukraine)*. Prague : Parliament of the Czech Republic, 2022.