

How to navigate your first steps in the Czech Republic

This quick guide will explain what rights you have in the Czech Republic as a refugee or “unaccompanied or separated child”, what exactly do these legal terms mean and why it is important to understand them. This guide will also walk you through different stages of your stay in the country and give you some useful advice too. So, let’s go!

Where am I?

Welcome to the Czech Republic, or Czechia, for short. Czechia is a European Union member state. Its capital is Prague and the official language is Czech. As a child, you will be safe and helped.

Am I considered a child here?

Every person under the age of 18 is a child. If you have any document (passport, birth certificate, ID card) that could prove your age, tell and show it to the police or the staff at the center. If you have no document, please tell the truth. If there are any doubts about your age, you will be asked to go for another interview and to a hospital for medical checks (x-rays, body check).



Where will I stay?

You will be placed in a center for children where the staff and doctor will meet you. You will live there, attend school and start learning Czech. The staff will take care of you and assist you with your needs. This is also the place where you will be sent to upon your release in case you have been detained. If you already speak some Czech, you can undergo further schooling in a specialized facility elsewhere which will provide you with accommodation, food, care and education in the field you are interested in or have already some experience with.

Can I get in touch with my family?

Yes! While your parents or relatives are not with you, you can get in touch with them if it is not too risky for you. Ask the social workers at the center to help you contact them. If your parents or relatives are staying in another European country, it is very important that you mention this to your guardian, social worker and lawyer.

What if I do not speak Czech?

There are interpreters to help you with all important steps during your stay in Czechia. The centers where you will live provide free Czech classes. It is important that you learn the Czech language as it will make your everyday life easier. It will also help you make new friends, study at any school and find a good job in the future.

Can I be detained?

It is not a crime to be an unaccompanied or separated child. However, if you crossed the borders while hiding

Discuss your situation with people who can help you. You will learn who they are further in this brochure. If you refuse to undergo such checks, the police will assume that you are not a child. When you turn 18, you will no longer be considered a child.

What are children’s rights?

Like all children in Czechia, you are entitled to protection and certain special rights. These are the right to have your best interests considered and the right to be heard. The first means that the authorities have to consider what is best for you in your situation. The second means they have to take into account your opinion and well-being. Czechia will take care of you and give you food, accommodation, the possibility to see a doctor and an education.

or if you arrived or reside in the Czech Republic without a valid travel document or visa, the police may place you in detention if you are older than 15 and only for very serious reasons: they can do that if they believe you can be dangerous or have committed a serious crime. The police can also place you in detention if they have reasons to doubt your age. Such detention may not exceed 90 days. If you seek asylum, you can apply only within the first seven days from the moment that you are detained. Ask to speak to your guardian. There will also be other adults in the detention center to help you in this matter.



Can I be reunited with my family?

If you are granted asylum or subsidiary protection, you and your family members may apply for family reunification. It means that the authorities will assist your parents and siblings to come to the Czech Republic to live with you as family. Ask your lawyer or social worker if you wish to know more details.

What do I do first to apply for asylum?

You have to make an application. If you are already at a center for children, ask the social workers and they will help you. You can also apply directly at the airport or at the Reception center in Zastávka u Brna or at the Alien Police regional inspectorate. If detained, you can also apply at the detention facility, but only within the first seven days. Say in simple words that you are a refugee seeking asylum in Czechia. The social workers or officers will then call a guardian to help you.

Who will help me during the procedure?

Your guardian will help you during the asylum procedure. You can also ask other organizations and their lawyers for help at any point.

In what language does the procedure take place?

The procedure is in Czech, but you have the right to have an interpreter in your language or a language that you understand free of charge. It is important that you say at any time if you do not understand the interpreter. If you have any problem with him or her, it is also okay to say so.

What types of questions will I be asked?

The Czech authorities need to understand your situation so they will ask you questions like:

Where are you from? How old are you?
Which countries did you travel through?
Do you have family members in Europe?
Why did you decide to leave your home country?
Which danger did you face?
What are you afraid of in case you return to your home country?



Legislation in a nutshell

Unaccompanied child

An unaccompanied child has been separated from both parents and other relatives and is not being cared for by an adult who is responsible for doing so.

Separated child

A separated child is in a similar situation; a child who has been separated from both parents, or from the previous care-giver, but not necessarily from other relatives, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles or adult siblings.

Who can help me?

Since you came by yourself, you will be assigned an adult guardian whose responsibility is to make sure your rights are respected and your situation is handled in your best interests. The guardian is a specialized officer from the Child Protection Section (OSPOD in Czech) and will be appointed to you by the authorities when you arrive. You have the right to get in touch with this guardian. Even if asked at any point, do not sign any papers and always speak to your guardian first. You can also ask a social worker for help or other staff at the center where you are accommodated. The centers are also regularly visited by lawyers from organizations that provide assistance to refugees and migrants in Czechia and you can ask them for expert legal help.

What is the difference between a guardian and a lawyer?

The guardian makes sure that you get all the special rights and care. That is why a guardian represents you while you make important steps and decisions with the authorities so that they are in line with your wishes and best interests.

The lawyer that will help you is a professional in the field of refugee and migrant rights. That is why a lawyer can give you and your guardian detailed information about law and advice about all the options you have.

a lawyer



Legislation in a nutshell

Refugee status

If you have been in danger, ill-treated or if you are afraid of being persecuted because of your race, nationality, religion, political opinion and beliefs or because you have something to do with a particular social group, it means that you are a refugee and may be granted asylum.

Subsidiary protection

If you were not directly persecuted but there is a war in your country and you cannot return there because it is too dangerous (i.e. you could be killed, abused or tortured), you may be granted subsidiary protection which is similar to asylum and means that you can stay here in safety.

Can I work?

You will get accommodation, food and clothes so that you do not have to work and can fully focus on studying. If you still wish to work, you must be at least 15 years old and you must have finished elementary school. You can get a part-time or seasonal job, such as helping at a restaurant, shop etc. Earning extra money sounds attractive, however, be cautious about the job you decide to take and make sure you have a valid contract with the employer. Always consult your guardian or social worker and ask for advice so that you avoid being deceived.

Asylum Procedure – step by step

What is the asylum procedure?

When you apply for asylum in the Czech Republic, it means that you are asking the Czech authorities to keep you safe because you are afraid of going back to your home country. The process where the Czech authorities look at why you cannot go back to your home country and why you need asylum is called the asylum procedure.

Do I have the right to asylum?

Only if the Czech authorities find that you cannot return to your home country, you will be given protection and can stay in Czechia. There are two forms of protection: refugee status (asylum) and subsidiary protection. These are the main differences:



It is important that you tell the truth and answer as best as you can. If you cannot answer or do not know the answer, just say so. You can always ask for a break. Explain in detail the reasons why you left your home country. Do not be afraid to speak even if it is difficult for you to talk about your experience. Everything you say will be kept confidential and not shared with anybody else. It will be recorded in writing. Sign the record together with your guardian only if it is correct. It is okay to say that there is a mistake. During the asylum interview, your guardian and a lawyer will also be present.

ASYLUM = INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION FOR REFUGEES

Support Available

UNHCR in the Czech Republic
Železná 24, 110 00 Praha 1
Phone: +420 776 437 775
email: czepr@unhcr.org
web: www.unhcr.cz

Organization for Aid to Refugees (OPU)
Kovářská 4, 190 00 Praha 9
Phone: +420 730 158 779
email: opu@opu.cz
web: www.opu.cz

OSPOD – focal point at the Municipality of Prague
Jungmannova 35/29, 110 00 Praha 1
Phone: +420 236 00 4190
email: tomas.kodis@praha.eu
web: www.praha.eu



First Steps in the Czech Republic



**Information Guide
for Young Refugees**

**How to navigate your
first steps
in the Czech Republic**