

Discrimination does not belong to school!

**PARENTS' AND TEACHERS' HANDBOOK
TO HELP FULLFIL THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION
OF MIGRANT CHILDREN**



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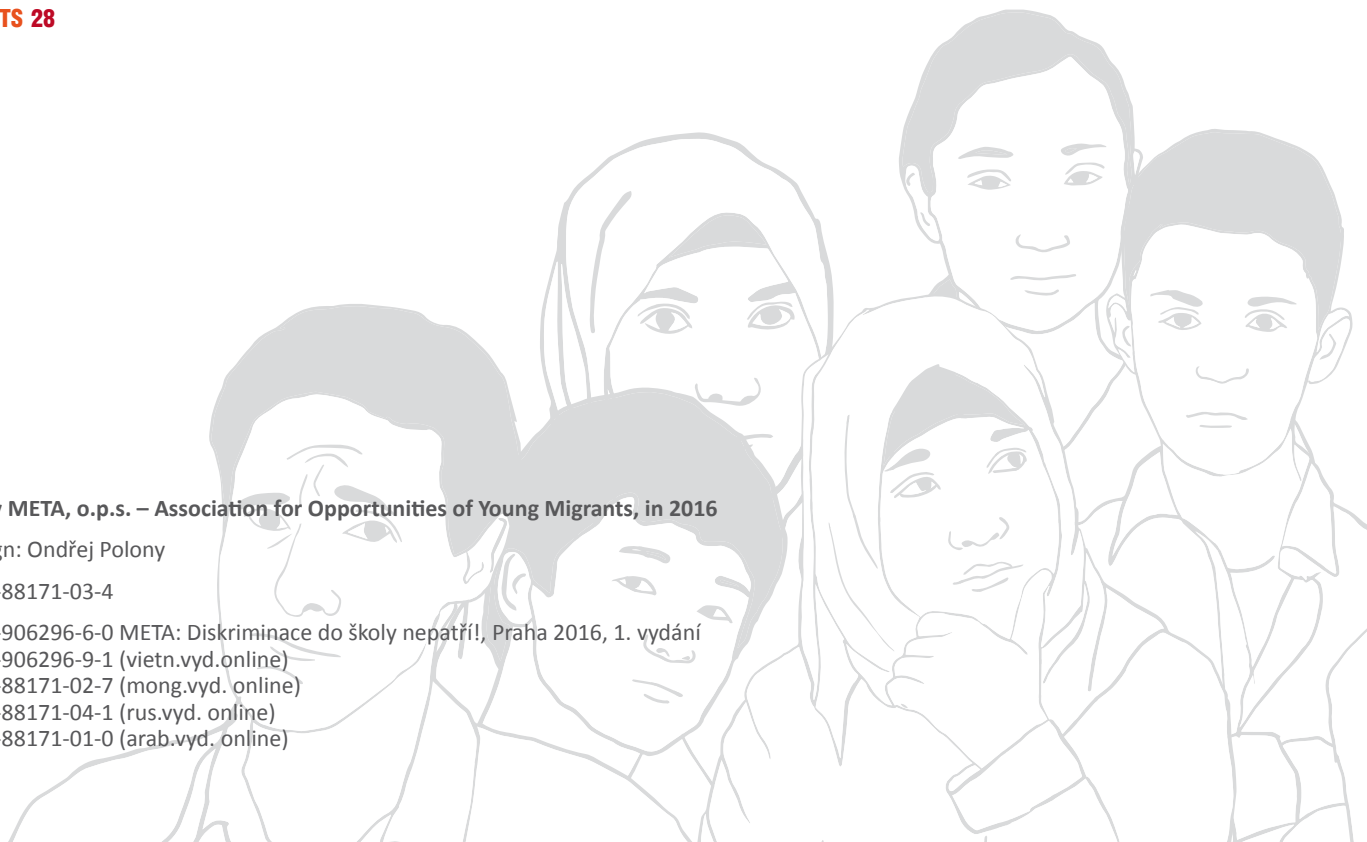
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Dear readers,

originally, we wanted to avoid the word „discrimination“. After all, it is quite an intimidating term. But we decided otherwise – what else can you call a situation when children or youngsters are kept from attending school with their peers (due to the school’s or parents’ decision) and are not allowed to use their potential to their best? Right to education is a fundamental human right declared in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We all should have this right in mind. This is the purpose of META’s activity and of this brochure – to remind us all – parents, students, teachers, school principals, professionals in NGOs, people in the state and municipal institutions - and offer some clues how to eliminate discrimination or prevent it.

On the following pages you will read about the most common situations we experience in our work. These situations prove, that the level of acceptance and the quality of work with immigrant children is always influenced by number of factors. The omnipresent and crucial handicap of migrant children in schools is the lack of knowledge of Czech and inadequate system of teaching Czech as a second language. This brochure should help parents and teachers find a common ground, provide useful information and offer a range of alternatives how to solve potential problems. Each chapter contains tips and information for parents and teachers which can be useful for both sides. We predominantly deal with problems in elementary schools, because they are the most common ones and they occur during the time of compulsory education, but sometimes the type of education doesn’t really make a difference and problems and solutions can be similar.

The **Convention on the Rights of the Child** is the fundamental document that we can encounter in all the chapters of this brochure. Our source was also UNICEF, Czech Council of Children and Youth, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and its campaign The Right to Childhood¹. We have also kept the **Education Act** in mind². Meta has successfully operated web portal www.inkluzivniskola.cz, where you can find many useful documents, tips, manuals and links covering the topic of work with children foreigners in Czech schools. On the following pages, we often refer to this portal. We recommend this portal to both teachers and parents.

We are aware of the fact that in reality it is sometimes difficult to fulfill all expectations, to live up to the responsibilities and obligations, to find all alternatives. But we must keep on trying. We hope this brochure will help.

On behalf of META o.p.s. Tereza Günterová

P.S. The names and other identification were altered.

CONVENTION ON THE RIGHT OF THE CHILD

was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on the 20. November 1989. All the countries of the world except for the United States have ratified the treaty, it is the most widespread agreement declaring human rights throughout history. The Czech Republic implemented the Convention in 1991 under Act No.3/1993 Coll. and its laws must be in compliance with the treaty.

AMMENDED EDUCATION ACT

In September 2016 an ammended Education Act should become effective. The final version is not yet available but in the text we work with the basic anticipated changes.

Schools will have many more possibilities to provide support to children and pupils, including those who do not understand the language they are being educated in. The child will have to have a recommendation from so called school counselling facility (Educational and psychological counselling centers, special-education centers). With this recommendation the child will be entitled to extra Czech language lessons, lessons with special education teacher, consultations with a psychologist or the support of assistant teacher.

There are also going to be changes in the language training for foreigners. Children are going to be entitled to a few lessons of Czech as a second language weekly.

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The most difficult conditions in education have persons from

- low income families
- whose parents have limited experience with education
- ethnical minorities, immigrants, people without steady home

1) www.unicef.cz UNICEF – United Nations Children Fund, the biggest organization in the world working for children’s rights, permanently services over 190 countries
www.crdm.cz Czech Council of Children and Youth is the umbrella organization of 97 children and youth associations
www.pravonadetstvi.cz Informational campaign of Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs for children, parents and experts 2015

2) Education Act no. 561/2004 Sb.

AS YOU CAN SEE, IT'S NOT EASY FOR ANYBODY.
BUT IT'S MANAGABLE! YOU ARE NOT ALONE, THERE
ARE SPECIALISTS, INTERPRETERS AND OTHER SUPPORT
SERVICES. DON'T BE AFRAID TO USE THEM!³ AND
ALWAYS HAVE THE BEST INTEREST
OF THE CHILD IN MIND.

Everything is so different
from what we were
used to.

What is ahead
of me?

Residence permit?! School?! Health
care?! Work?! Accommodation?!
Home?!

I am
homesick.

I am
afraid!

Will we be able
to learn Czech?

Will we
manage?

An illustration featuring four stylized human figures. On the left, a person with dark hair and a green shirt is partially visible. In the foreground, a man with glasses and a red shirt sits next to a woman with red hair and glasses, wearing a red top. Behind them are faint, grey outlines of a woman with glasses and a man with a beard. Three thought bubbles are present: one from the man in the foreground saying 'I have so many pupils in my class!', one from the woman in the foreground saying 'We need Czech courses and other forms of support, where will I find finances for that?', and one from the man in the background saying 'Will we understand each other?'.

WHAT THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD STATES:

Article 3: Best interest of the child

All adults should do what is best for children.

Article 2: Non-discrimination

The Convention applies to all children, whatever their race, religion or abilities. It doesn't matter where children live, what language they speak, what their parents do, whether they are boys or girls, what their culture is, whether they have a disability or whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.

Will we understand each other?

I have so many pupils in my class!

We need Czech courses and other forms of support, where will I find finances for that?

1. Right to education and compulsory school attendance

Issa family came to the Czech republic from war-torn Syria a few months ago. They don't have a clear idea what to expect, they have to solve a lot of problems (accommodation, finances, work, residence permit, serious health issues). School at this point is not a priority, even though they have 4 children (6-12 years old) and they consider their education important. Czech language is crucial, parents are not doing that well in this area, children are managing better. Children don't go to school yet, they attend Czech courses.

I am not even able to communicate with the school

I have no idea how to find the right school and enroll children there

The kids must go to school, but I have no energy or time to solve it now


I am afraid the school will reject us

Keep in mind that children have the right to education. School attendance is compulsory for children from 6 to 16 years of age. If you do not send your children to school, you are breaking the law.⁴

School which offers Czech courses is ideal. To get information about schools you can contact the school department of the county or municipality. Visit the nearest school with an interpreter. It is better to make an appointment in advance.

Learn about your rights and don't be afraid to exercise them. Learn about your obligations and try to fulfill them.⁵ Each school has its own set of rules, you should get familiar with them.

Ask for help from any organization or institution that helps foreigners and deals with education.⁶



If there are pupils in the school with a different mother's tongue, who do not understand the language of instruction, the school should set up a course in Czech as a second language and introduce other supportive measures (more information in the following sections). Free preparation for the integration of the pupil into the primary education should be provided by the founder of the school and/or the Regional Office (Krajský úřad).⁷ In practice this obligation is implemented in the form of a language training organized by the principal of the school. For inspiration, visit this site www.inkluzivniskola.cz/organizace-integrace-cizincu/financovani-kurzu-cestiny.

To communicate with the parents and pupils use the services of community interpreters and translators. Interpreting services are provided not only by classical interpreters but also by so called community interpreters or partially by intercultural workers. More information here: www.meta-ops.cz/komunitni-tlumoceni and www.interkulturniprace.cz.

You can find sources to facilitate communication here: www.inkluzivniskola.cz/organizace-integrace-cizincu/informace-pro-rodice-jazykove-verze and slovník.interkulturniprace.cz/

WHAT THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHT OF CHILD STATES:

Article 28: Right to education

All children have the right to a primary education, which should be free. Discipline in schools should respect children's dignity. The Convention places a high value on education. Young people should be encouraged to reach the highest level of education of which they are capable.

Article 29: Goals of education

Children's education should develop each child's personality, talents and abilities to the fullest. It should encourage them to respect others, human rights and their own and other cultures. It should help them to live peacefully in safe environment.

WHAT THE EDUCATION ACT STATES:

§ 36

The school attendance is compulsory for 9 years, in justified cases it is possible to extend the elementary schooling to 17 years of age. This obligation applies to:

- citizens of the Czech republic
- EU citizens who are staying in the Czech Republic for a period exceeding 90 days
- persons entitled to reside in the Czech Republic permanently or temporarily for a period exceeding 90 days
- participants in the proceedings for granting international protection

§ 20

EU citizens have access to education and school services under the same conditions as Czech citizens.

Citizens of other countries have access to:

- primary education
- school meals and regular after school activities organized by the school (this applies for primary and secondary schools)

Persons with legal residence in the Czech Republic have access to:

- secondary and higher professional education

Persons legally residing on the territory of the Czech Republic for more than 90 days as applicants for international, temporary or subsidiary protection or persons staying for the purpose of scientific research have access to:

- pre-school education
- elementary art education
- language training
- school services

4) The compulsory school attendance is stated in Education Act, § 36

5) Responsibilities of parents (legal guardians) are stated by Education Act § 21

6) See the chapter CONTACTS

7) Education of foreigners and preparation and provision of Czech courses are stated by Education Act § 20

2. What schools can and must do when accepting a foreigner

Mr. Issa decided to solve the situation. He managed to find an interpreter and together with the children they went to discuss the situation to a local school. The principal of the school was somewhat taken by surprise, because the family came without having made an appointment, but fortunately she was available. After a while it turned out that the fundamental problem was the lack of knowledge of the Czech language. The principal told the father to come back when the children can speak Czech, she couldn't enroll them prior to that. She also expressed displeasure over the fact that the girls were wearing headscarves. It could be a problem during physical education and the school has had no experience how to deal with such pupils.

You must submit the application to school in writing. If your children are not accepted, the school must issue a decision in writing, too. You can appeal this decision in the School department of the appropriate Regional Office (krajský úřad).

The lack of Czech language knowledge cannot be the reason why a child is denied a place at school! It may be beneficial to visit school counselling facilities (educational-psychological counselling centre, special counseling centre), where they will issue a recommendation for the school that your child needs individual approach due to language or other barriers. You will find further information about the role of the counselling services in Chapter 11.

Czech law does not say anything about wearing a headscarf at school. This matter is decided by the school, but the Convention on the Right of the Child must be always respected.

I want to go to school, I am bored at home, I need friends.

So I finally managed to organize it and this is the result?!

Where else than at school should they be able to cope with the fact that the children need to learn Czech?

I am afraid to send the children to school with this kind of attitude. Are all the schools like this?

I will be ashamed without my scarf, why does it bother them so much? Will the classmates harrass me beacuse of it? It is enough what I sometimes have to go through on the bus.

HERE ARE THE BASIC SUPPORT MEASURES:

- course of Czech as a second language
- involvement of assistant teacher
- involvement of schoolmates
- use of compensatory/individual plan
- communication with the parents

More information at www.inkluzivniskola.cz/cizinec-v-ceske-skole-aneb-organizace.

The school principal is obliged to accept a pupil from concretely designated area (catchment area) immediately and without conditions. The only exception is the lack of capacity of the school.⁸ At the same time, you have to issue a decision about not accepting a pupil in writing⁹.

As school you must ensure appropriate compensation measures (more information in the following sections). Children without knowledge of Czech language or other disadvantages must be considered pupils with specific educational needs¹⁰.

It is necessary to prepare the school staff for an arrival of a pupil foreigner, introduce his/her specific needs and provide support to teachers in solving non-standard situations. Professionals can help you set the conditions in school and class or you can find inspiration in available materials¹¹ and at www.inkluzivniskola.cz.

We recommend to address unusual situations as for example headscarves of muslim girls in a practical way. It is possible to agree on some rules with the parents – e.g. the pupil's face must be visible, it has to be tied properly for physical activities or work etc. Use the services of interpreter for communication or translated materials (you can find links in Chapter 1).

These sites can help you prepare for the conversation with parents:
www.inkluzivniskola.cz/organizace-integrace-cizincu/prijimaci-pohovor
or you can use the manual of the Centre for integration of Foreigners
www.cicpraha.org/upload/soubory/Komunikace/Komunikace-prirucka-2015_WEB.pdf

WHAT IS THE CONVENTION ON RIGHTS OF CHILD STATES:

Article 14 and 30: Right to own culture, language and religion

Minority and indigenous children have the right to learn about and practice their own culture, language and religion and speak the language of the country of their origin.

Children have the right to think and believe what they want and to practice their religion, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and which are in the interests of national security or public safety, public order, the protection of public health or morals or fundamental rights and freedom of others.

WHAT THE EDUCATION ACT STATES:

§ 16

Pupil with special needs is defined as someone who needs supportive measures in order to fulfill his/her educational abilities and rights. By support measures we understand necessary adjustments in education and educational services which correspond with the health conditions, environment and living conditions of the child, pupil or student. Children, pupils and students have a right to free support measures provided by the school or school facilities.

§ 20

Pupils foreigners are entitled to free preparation classes to be able to enter primary education, including Czech language training adjusted to the needs of these pupils. This training is provided by the Regional Office in cooperation with the founder of the school, which usually means the municipality or a city district. This authority should also if possible provide – with cooperation with the country of pupil's origin – support for teaching the mother's tongue and culture, which should be coordinated with the regular curriculum in elementary school.¹²

8) The school's responsibilities are stated in Education Act § 36, article 7

9) The particulars of the decision and possibilities appeal are stated in Administrative Procedure, Act no. 500/2004

10) Education of pupils with these needs is stated in Education Act § 16.

11) Use the Chapter CONTACTS

12) The entire § 20 of the Education Act is dedicated to education of foreigners.

3. *Grade placement - is the language knowledge or age the decisive factor?*


Mariam (12 years old) came with her parents from Iraq when she was 10. The family was granted asylum and 400 hours of free Czech language course. However, during summer they managed to attend only part of the course, then they moved to a different city where Czech courses were not available. She was placed in the first grade in the new school, because she knew only a little bit of Czech. She learnt to write in latin alphabet and now she manages Czech language and other subjects very well. But she feels estranged in the class with significantly younger classmates, she has no friends, they have nothing in common. She has many new interests, but there is nobody to share them with in the classroom.

Different types of voluntary after school activities are organized by the school. You will find more information on the school's web sites.

There are also other organizations and institutions that offer different types of activities, tutoring, etc.¹⁴

If you don't agree with the school's approach, you can talk to the teachers or the principals during their office hours (available on the web sites) about the problematic situation and try to find some solution. It is always better to make an arrangement in advance by phone or email. It is also good to regularly attend the teacher-parents meetings, where you can discuss if your child thrives at school.

I feel so awkward. I have nobody to talk to (and the language is not the problem!). I don't like going there at all.



The school principal is fully responsible for the grade placement. The principal usually proceeds on the basis of previous history of education of the pupil, but if the pupil doesn't understand the language he/she is supposed to be taught in, a language barrier influences the decision making.

Try to avoid your child being placed in a lower grade than what is his/her age only to get rid of the language barrier. In most cases it turns out to be a bad decision. The child's best interest in this case is to be placed among peers and to be provided support in the form of Czech as a second language course.

Look at www.inkluzivniskola.cz/organizace-integrace-cizincu/zarazeni-do-rocniku.

Beware: Teaching Czech as a second language is very different from teaching Czech to native speakers. More about Czech language in Chapter 4.

While making a decision, take into consideration that pupils must leave the elementary school when they reach 17 years of age (maximum 18 years¹³). More about completing elementary school in Chapter 9.

A significant age difference is possible to be minimized by enrolling the pupil into voluntary activities, or getting the peers involved, recommending after-school activities attended by older pupils, etc.
You can find some tips at www.inkluzivniskola.cz/pedagogicka-prace-s-diverzitou/prace-s-kolektivem

In the beginning it was ok that she was in first grade – because of the Czech language, writing, other subjects, but now the age difference is starting to be problematic.

WHAT THE CONVENTION STATES:

Article 22: Refugee children

If children have been forced to leave their home (and live in another country) because of war or persecution, they get the refugee status. These children have the same rights as other children and shall receive assistance and protection.

WHAT THE EDUCATION ACT STATES:

§ 16

This law considers people who were granted asylum, subsidiary protection and asylum seekers socially disadvantaged. People with this status have the right to receive supportive measures.

¹³) Conditions of termination of the elementary education are stated in the Education Act in § 55.

¹⁴) More in the Chapter CONTACTS

4. Learning the language is crucial

When it turned out that 11 year old Pham from Vietnam, who started attending the school a few months ago, doesn't understand the teacher's explanation, is very passive and inattentive, the teacher told him to sit at the desk in the back of the classroom. The teacher was satisfied, she didn't know what to do with a pupil who doesn't speak almost any Czech and now she didn't have to worry about it or his visible inattention during her lessons. Pham was glad, because he could keep a low profile. He was not evaluated at the end of the school year.

WHO DOES IT ACTUALLY BENEFIT IF THE PROBLEMS ARE STASHED AT THE BACK OF THE CLASSROOM?

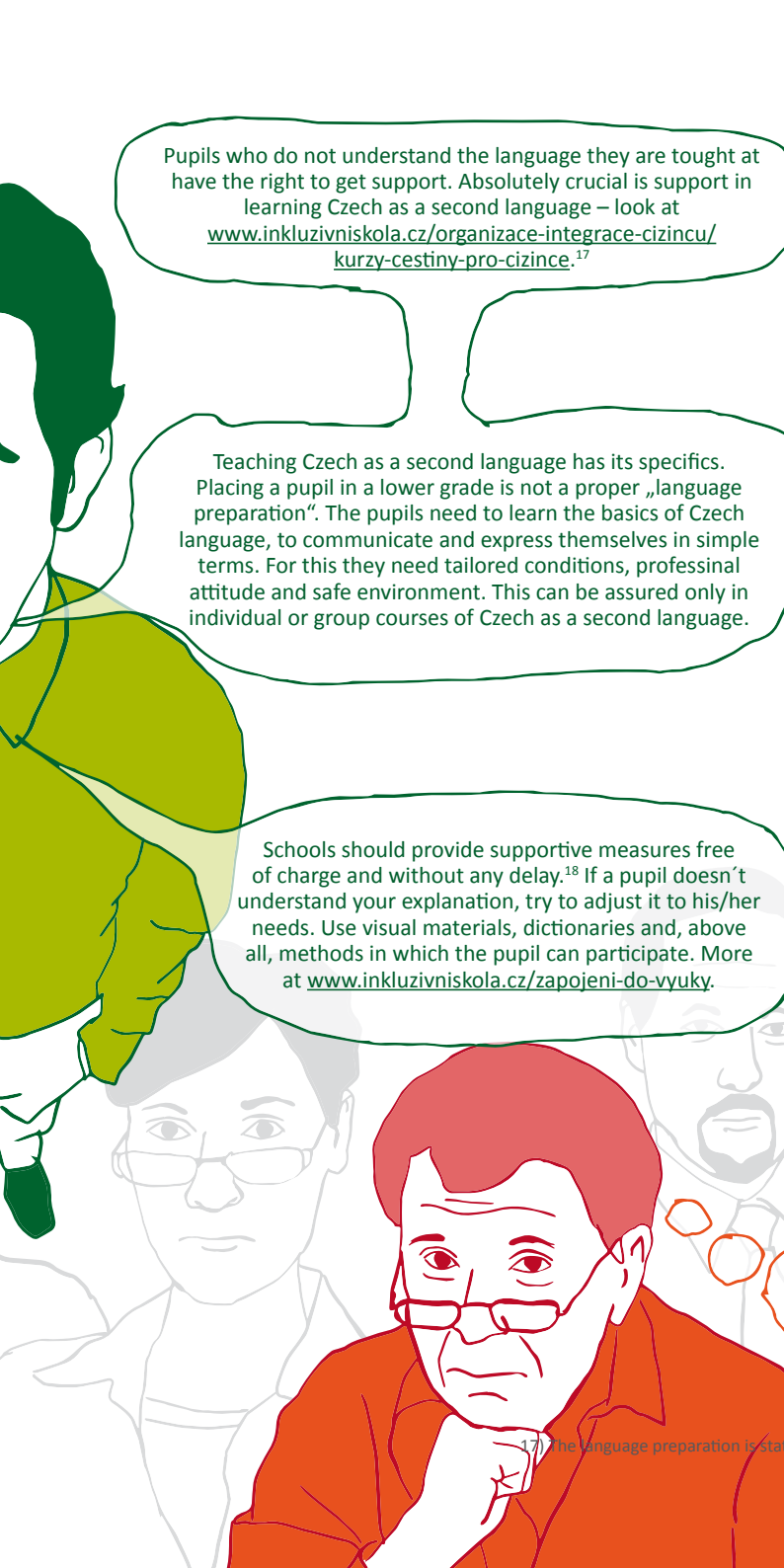
Knowledge of the language of education is the essential condition for the child to be successful at school, so to solve this specific need must be a priority. The pupil is entitled to 70 lessons of language training¹⁵. Preparatory classes should be established by school authorized by the Regional Office. List of schools should be found on the website of the Regional Office.

Visit the Educational and psychological counselling centre where you will be issued a confirmation that your child needs a language support. Educational and psychological counselling is part of the school counselling facilities and you are entitled to its free services¹⁶. Visiting this institution is nothing unusual. More information about this in Chapter 11.

The Education Act says that all foreigners attending primary education should have, regardless their status or even the legality of their state in the Czech republic, opportunity to learn Czech. We have to take in consideration though, that some procedures work differently in reality from what is defined by law. This is wrong and it is good to bring attention to these problems. The pupils do not always have access to 70 lessons of Czech courses, the preparatory classes are not always available or functional.

This is ok, but I won't probably learn much. I don't even know what she is talking about up front.

The principal must give you details about the Czech language lessons within one week from the time your child was officially accepted to the school.



Pupils who do not understand the language they are taught at have the right to get support. Absolutely crucial is support in learning Czech as a second language – look at www.inkluzivniskola.cz/organizace-integrace-cizincu/kurzy-cestiny-pro-cizince.¹⁷

Teaching Czech as a second language has its specifics. Placing a pupil in a lower grade is not a proper „language preparation“. The pupils need to learn the basics of Czech language, to communicate and express themselves in simple terms. For this they need tailored conditions, professional attitude and safe environment. This can be assured only in individual or group courses of Czech as a second language.

Schools should provide supportive measures free of charge and without any delay.¹⁸ If a pupil doesn't understand your explanation, try to adjust it to his/her needs. Use visual materials, dictionaries and, above all, methods in which the pupil can participate. More at www.inkluzivniskola.cz/zapojeni-do-vyuky.

It was impossible to put up with, I have no clue what to do with him.

THE EDUCATION ACT

§ 16

School counseling facilities detect special educational needs of children, pupils and students.

Children, pupils and students with special educational needs have the right to education. The content, form and methods of this education must correspond with their educational needs and capacities. The schools must prepare the necessary conditions which will enable such education. The pupils have the right to counselling services of the school and other school counselling facilities. Appropriate conditions are set for students with disabilities and disadvantages before starting and upon completing education according to their needs.

DECREE 48/2005 OF MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AND SPORTS

The Regional Office in cooperation with the school founders designate schools where language preparation for pupils-foreigners during compulsory primary education will take place. This language training is free of charge.

A list of such schools will be made public by the Regional Office.

The principals of these designated schools are in charge of organizing language preparation class/classes. The duration of these classes is at least 70 lessons over a maximum period of 6 consecutive months.

Sitting the pupil in the back of the classroom is obviously not a supportive measure. Neither is having the pupil look up words in a dictionary for the entire lesson. The pupils need tasks which help them develop and at the same time correspond with their actual capacity. Give feedback for every task, it should also be a base for the final evaluation. Watch the progress closely. Using portfolio or more sophisticated compensation plan can be helpful to see the progress of the pupil.

More at www.inkluzivniskola.cz/organizace-integrace-cizincu/vyrovnavaci-plan.

¹⁵⁾ The number of lessons is supposed to be increased in the near future.

¹⁶⁾ You will find some counselling facilities in the Chapter CONTACTS.

¹⁷⁾ The language preparation is stated in the Ministerial Decree of the Ministry of Education no. 48/2005 a Education Act § 20.

¹⁸⁾ Stated in Education Act § 16.

5. Parents have their responsibilities as well


The teacher has been trying for some time to figure out what would help make Olha from Ukraine more involved in her learning. Olha (13) learnt Czech quite quickly, but she comes to school unprepared, tired, her results have worsened lately, she has several unexcused absences. It is impossible to get in contact with her parents – they don't respond to messages in the „pupil's diary“ (žakovská knížka), they do not attend the parents-teacher meetings. The teacher is concerned if everything is alright at home.

All parents with school attending children have responsibilities¹⁹. You must send your child to school, you should take part in the meetings at school if you are invited by a teacher or the school principal. You must inform the school about important matters related to your child's school attendance and give reasons for his/her absence.

If you don't have time to go to school, it is possible to communicate with the teacher via email or telephone. Always excuse yourself if you can't attend an arranged appointment or meeting.

Make inquiries about your child's coping at school and his/her feelings. Your child can be in a difficult situation and in need of your support.





It is good if parents get information about their obligations and school rules in writing and preferably in a translated version when the child is accepted to the school. If possible, meet the parents in person. It is not always easy to have the translation made, you can look here for inspiration: www.inkluzivniskola.cz/organizace-integrace-cizincu/informace-pro-rodice-jazykove-verze.

WHAT THE CONVENTION STATES:

Article 18 Parental responsibilities

Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their children, and should always consider what is best for each child. Governments must respect the responsibility of parents for providing appropriate guidance for their children. The government shall take appropriate measures to ensure that children of working parents have the right to benefit from child-care services and facilities for which they are eligible.

Article 27: The right to adequate standard of living

Parents or others responsible for the child have the primary responsibility to secure, within their abilities and financial capacities, the conditions of living necessary for child's development.

Call a meeting with the parents in the presence of the school principal, educational counselor etc. It is also possible to invite a member of an NGO which provides services to foreigners and interpreters.

If the violations of the responsibilities continue, proceed according to the Education Act and common practice for these situations in your school.

These documents may help you prepare for the communication www.cicpraha.org/upload/soubory/Komunikace/Komunikace-prirucka-2015_WEB.pdf.

I really don't know how to make the parents communicate with me. How to make them realize they have responsibilities?

6. Repeating a grade is not a solution

Even though Hung spent two years in a preparatory class in a local school, he did not receive any special support. The main problem was the lack of knowledge of the Czech language. In 1st grade, when he was already 8 years old, he did not manage to „catch up“. The school was in contact almost exclusively with his mother, who can speak only a few words in Czech. Other than basic communication concerning her son's education was impossible without an interpreter. Hung understands only few Czech phrases, has very little vocabulary and only he can't barely put a sentence together in Czech. He was quite good at mathematics though, but nobody helped him develop this ability any further. He started to act up during the school year, other behavioral problems occurred, by the end of the year he is rather lethargic and sleeps during the lessons. He will repeat the first grade.


GENERALLY SPEAKING, REPEATING A GRADE, AND NOT ONLY IN THE PREPARATORY CLASS, DOES NOT SOLVE ANYTHING! PUPILS WITH DIFFERENT MOTHER'S TONGUE MUST BE EVALUATED FOR THE PROGRESS THEY MAKE, NOT IN COMPARISON WITH OTHERS.

Every pupil has a right to be evaluated and promoted to the next grade level. In case a pupil could not be evaluated or failed a subject, he/she can be retained in the same grade. It is possible to be retained in the same grade once between grade 1 and 5 and twice from grade 6 to grade 9.²⁰

If your school wants your child to repeat a grade, find out more about how they worked with your child and if he/she received all the available support (modified tasks, extra time for school tasks, visual aids, the possibility to use a dictionary, Czech language course etc.) Inquire about your child's school results in time so that you have space to solve arising problems. If you do not agree with the evaluation of your child, you can ask the principal or the Regional Office to reassess the results²¹ within 3 business days from the date of issue of the school results report card.

If you are interested in getting an assistant teacher for your child in order to improve his school results, you must pay a visit to the educational-psychological counseling centre, where they will issue a recommendation to assign an assistant teacher.

I thought that if he is in Czech school, they can help him with the language there. We know only the basics of Czech, we don't know how to motivate him to learn Czech. I can't actually help him with the school preparation, I don't understand.

A stylized illustration featuring a teacher on the left, wearing a green shirt and a green headscarf, with a speech bubble. In the background, there are faint line drawings of four students. In the foreground on the right, there is a woman with red hair and glasses, wearing a red top. The entire page is framed by a light green border.

Can the reason of a failure to learn be the pupil's persisting language barrier? Have you decided not to evaluate him/her, because you are not able to assess his/her knowledge and skills, his/her progress? Keep in mind that if the school did not provide necessary support to a pupil, repeating a grade means delaying his/her development. The fact that a pupil spends one more year in the same grade does not mean that he/she will finally „catch up“ and pick up Czech and other subjects. Try to evaluate the pupil for what he/she accomplished. Look at www.inkluzivniskola.cz/organizace-integrace-cizincu/klasifikace.

The supportive measures mentioned above, especially providing lessons of Czech as a foreign language, are always and under any given circumstances crucial for success at school.

You can ask for an assistant teacher, you will find here how to proceed: www.inkluzivniskola.cz/organizace-integrace-cizincu/asistent-pedagoga.

WHAT IS STATED IN THE EDUCATION ACT

§ 16

(6) When evaluating pupils and students with special educational needs, the nature of the disability or disadvantage must be taken in account.

MINISTERIAL DECREE 48/2005 COLL.

§ 15 article 6

When evaluating the pupils foreigners in the compulsory elementary education, the level of Czech language knowledge is considered an important factor which influences their performance.

For teaching materials, lists of textbooks and useful links, visit out portal at www.inkluzivniskola.cz/cestina-jazyk-komunikace.

20) The system of evaluation at Elementary School stated in § 51-53 of the Education Act
21) Education Act, § 52, Article 4

7. The elementary school should not be the end of education!

When Oliver started a Czech school, he had already completed 7th grade in the country of his origin. In Czech school, he was placed to 7th grade again. Because he did not do well and his Czech language skills did not improve, he had to repeat 7th grade once again (three times in total!). He didn't receive any support from the school, except for being retained in a grade. In the midterm the school informed the surprised parents that their son will have completed 9 years of compulsory school attendance and cannot continue. He was recommended to continue in a vocational school where completing the elementary school was not required, or start working. Even though he is a bright boy, he did not receive sufficient support to help him make progress and develop and now he will be forced to leave the educational system prematurely.

DIDN'T THE SCHOOL WASTE TWO YEARS OF THIS PUPIL'S LIFE BY HAVING HIM REPEAT A GRADE AND NOT PROVIDING SUFFICIENT SUPPORT?! CAN WE TALK ABOUT ADEQUATE 9 YEAR ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN THIS CASE? IS IT REALLY IN THE INTEREST OF THE PUPIL TO LEAVE SCHOOL AFTER COMPLETING THE 7TH GRADE? WHAT CHANCES WILL HE HAVE?


The choice of schools for pupils who didn't complete elementary school is limited. There are mostly two or three year programs leading to a certificate of apprenticeship which prepare for basic manual work and work in services. Consult with school counselor or with a professional from the pedagogical and psychological centre what to do next. Discuss with your child what he/she would like to do and what are his/her reasons.

Completing the elementary school attendance, resp. completing the elementary school is the main condition for admission to grammar school according to the Education Act. What is really important though are the requirements of the secondary school. And every single secondary school, which is completed with a recognized school leaving exam (maturita), requires submission of school reports from 8th and 9th grade.

I don't understand how this is possible. We thought that he would improve after repeating the grade, that the main problem was his Czech language. The school never warned us that this might be the end of his education.

You have the option to apply for an extension of compulsory education in your school. If your application is not succesful, make an appeal addressed to the Regional Office through your school²². In case you are not succesful with the appeal and you do not want your child to go to a vocational school, you can sign to a year course to complete elementary education.²³ This course is free of charge. You will be given more information about this course in the Regional Office.

3x in the 7th grade and then what? Nobody helped me and now they are kicking me out.

A stylized illustration of a teacher and students. The teacher, on the left, is shown from the chest up, wearing a green shirt and a green tie. He has dark hair and is looking towards the right. Behind him, several students are visible, some with their faces partially obscured by speech bubbles. The background is a light green color.

The actions of the teacher and the principal must follow the best interest of the child! Secondary education is nowadays considered fundamental and it should be also in our interest to provide it to every single pupil.

From the time the pupil starts attending school, it is necessary to keep in mind, that a pupil must complete elementary school the same year he/she reaches 18 years of age at the latest (longer in case of exceptional medical reasons).

It is always better for a child to complete elementary education in a regular way – among peers in a classroom where he/she can have structured life and also the essential social contact.

Bad academic results and apparent lack of motivation do not always have to be caused by the pupil's unwillingness to learn and work. The causes can be deeper (experienced trauma, problematic situation in the family, feeling of isolation...) or the failure can be blamed on the school's bad attitude from the start of the pupil's school attendance (mostly the lack of Czech language training).

The pupil must be evaluated in all subjects at the end of the year in order to be promoted to the next grade.²² Always take into consideration during the evaluation that the main key for success is the knowledge of the language the child is being educated in and the lack of the knowledge influences the child's results. You can find examples of valuable evaluation at www.inkluzivniskola.cz/organizace-integrace-cizincu/slovni-hodnoceni and www.inkluzivniskola.cz/organizace-integrace-cizincu/vyrovnavaci-plan.

WHAT THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD STATES:

Article 28: Right to education

All children have right to education and they should be encouraged to reach the highest level of education of which they are capable.

WHAT THE EDUCATION ACT STATES:

§ 55

The school principal may permit a pupil who completed compulsory school attendance and has not acquired basic education to continue elementary education, but not longer than by the end of the school year in which the pupil reaches 18 years of age.

Primary and secondary schools together with the school founders and the Regional Authority can organize courses for people who have not acquired elementary education.

§ 59

Applicants who have completed the compulsory school attendance or successfully completed elementary education prior to finishing compulsory school attendance and who met all the conditions to be admitted by proving adequate abilities, knowledge, interests and health conditions may be admitted to a secondary school.

The principal of the secondary school decides about the admission.

22) The extension of the compulsory elementary school attendance is stated Education Act §55

23) Education Act §55

24) More in Education Act §52, 53, 54 for elementary schools and §69 for secondary schools

8. Xenophobic atmosphere in the classroom

13 year old boy called Muslim came to the Czech Republic with his mother from Chechnya. They fled Chechnya after the Second Chechen-Russian war in 2003, when Muslim was a very little boy. They were granted asylum in the Czech Republic and Muslim started attending Czech kindergartens and school. He practically grew up here, so Czech became his second native language. He was an average pupil, had friends among his classmates and apparently no different problems than an ordinary teenage boy. It all changed in 8th grade, when Europe was shattered with several terrorist attacks and at the same time flooded with huge wave of migrants trying to flee a war, Islamic state and other inhumane conditions. Some classmates started bullying him because of his name, even though he had nothing in common with Islam except for the name, his family were not practicing muslims. Schoolmates called him „terrorist“ and started avoiding him. The school failed to find a way how to change the schoolmates' behavior and discuss the issue properly with his mother. Muslim's mother was very worried about his mental and physical health and she chose a radical solution: she applied for a change of her son's name and started homeschooling him.


IS LEAVING THE SCHOOL AND CHANGING THE CHILD'S NAME REALLY IN HIS BEST INTEREST!? WHO IS THE CAUSE OF THE PROBLEM – MUSLIM OR THE PEOPLE AROUND HIM?

To isolate your child from a group of peers should be the very last radical solution. Teachers, school counselors or school psychologist should help you with the first steps towards a solution. Next step is using the services of other professional and institutions²⁵

Don't feel left alone with your problems, many Czech parents have similar problems.

I never expected that I would fear about my child's life here too.

What have I done?!
I am scared.



It is the school's duty to ensure that each pupil feels comfortable and safe. If there are children who don't feel this way, the school must take effective action. To prevent these things from happening, there must be (among other things) clearly defined rules which include the topic of xenophobia, racism, prejudice etc. Working with prejudice should also be an integral part of the curriculum in every school. Measures against bullying and discrimination should have a firm place in the minimal preventive program of the school. What are the responsibilities of the school, how to deal with bullying, how to recognize it and who to contact can be found in the Methodological instructions of the Ministry of Education. You can find it here: www.inkluzivniskola.cz/zdroje-inspirace/metodicky-pokyn-k-sikane.

WHAT THE CONVENTION STATES:

Article 19: Protection from all forms of violence

Children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically or mentally.

METHODOLOGICAL INSTRUCTION OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

The school has a clear responsibility for children and students, it is obliged to ensure security of the children, protect their health and create conditions for their healthy development and prevent risky behavior. The staff must prevent bullying, immediately deal with its manifestations and provide instantaneous assistance to a victim of bullying.

In specific situations, it is good to contact a so called preventist of the school advisory facility.

The school staff should establish rules what to do when confronted with manifestations of intolerance and be familiar with these rules. For inspiration look at www.inkluzivniskola.cz/organizace-integrace-cizincu/pravidla-pro-zamestnance-skoly.

Keep in mind that ostracism and rejection in teenage years can lead to behavior when the young person becomes a danger to him/herself or others.

9. Informal education is also important

9 year old Tan had been attending a Czech elementary school for almost the entire year, but he still had big difficulties with Czech. It was the time of the school trips. The class teacher discussed the trip with Tan's mother. First, it seemed that the main problem in the way of Tan's taking part in this trip was the fact that he didn't own a sleeping bag and other equipment. Tan's mother managed to put everything together in the end and she was happy that her son can leave with the class, because it was important to him to spend time with his schoolmates and friends. Unfortunately, everything turned out differently, the class teacher and the principal dismissed his participation, because they were concerned about the language barrier and other possible complications.


WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE SCHOOL TRIPS, INFORMAL EDUCATION, EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND AFTER-SCHOOL CLUBS? TO DEVELOP THE POTENTIAL OF CHILDREN, STAY IN FRESH AIR, TO SOCIALIZE AND LEARN NEW COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL SKILLS. IS IT POSSIBLE TO DENY THIS TO A CHILD JUST BECAUSE OF A LANGUAGE BARRIER?

Children's participation in leisure activities is mainly the parents decision and is in the interest of children. Encourage your children to learn how to spend time doing various and meaningful activities.

For inspiration look at www.inkluzivniskola.cz/zdroje-inspirace/nabidka-volnocasovych-aktivit.

I borrowed money for the equipment, I went to school to discuss the trip several times and then this? I can't provide anything like this for him, I am at work all the time.

Now I am going to lose all my friends...



Leisure activities help to integrate children into a group of peers, develop the language and teach the child a meaningful way how to spend his/her free time.

To facilitate communication with parents and children, you can use these instruments (www.inkluzivniskola.cz/organizace-integrace-cizincu/informace-pro-rodice-jazykove-verze) or you can create your own communication cards – there are many pictographs available (www.inkluzivniskola.cz/content/komunikacni-karticky).

Here www.inkluzivniskola.cz/organizace-integrace-cizincu/volnocasove-aktivita you can read few brief reasons and tips why to involve children-foreigners in leisure activities even if they don't speak Czech. They can help as arguments to advocate why children foreigners should participate in leisure activities even if they don't speak Czech. You will need these arguments in communication with the parents and maybe with the leisure activities coaches.

What if he needs something and I won't be able to understand him? How will we communicate if there is an emergency? Does he have medical insurance at all????

WHAT THE CONVENTION STATES:

Article 31: Leisure, play and culture

Children have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities.

10. It all starts in the kindergarten


Spiro started attending kindergarten when he was 5. He doesn't have any brothers or sisters, his father is in Greece quite often and his mother is frequently alone with the boy. They speak Greek at home. When he started kindergarten, he didn't speak almost any Czech. The boy's integration in the class was not very successful, he doesn't communicate with the children or play with them, he actually doesn't play by himself either. He just roams around the classroom. The situation is not improving in time. His school enrolment was postponed for a year, at the age of seven he is among younger children and he is significantly taller than everybody else. Even though he has been attending kindergarten for two years, his level of Czech is very low. Unfortunately, his mother didn't agree with him attending a Czech course in the kindergarten twice a week. She is convinced that Spiro is alright, he is managing everything and she considers the recommendation to attend the Czech course or visiting a psychologist in the counselling centre doubting the child's potential. Just a few months before the beginning of the elementary school attendance, after two years in kindergarten, he is not able to form a short sentence in Czech.

There is just one case-study concerning a kindergarten child in this brochure, nevertheless, the preschool education is as important as elementary or secondary school. The teacher's attitude influences the self-perception of the children, their desire to integrate, their feeling of acceptance by others and their perception of the whole (Czech) society. That is why we think it is very important to mention these examples of bad practice that we experienced. Situations like these that do not contribute to integration at all:

„Kids, go wash your hands and you Vietnamese, stay here!“ This was a common expression of a kindergarten teacher when giving instructions to the class. One of the children was asked what was his name and the answer was: „My name is Vietnamese“.


„I changed his name to Venca – and he reacts to it just fine.“

A kindergarten teacher changed a boy's name after he was attending the preschool for half a year so that she could pronounce it easily. His real name was not really difficult to pronounce.



Children – EU citizens have the same access to kindergartens as Czech children, children – citizens of countries outside the EU must provide a confirmation of their legal residence on the territory of the Czech Republic.²⁶ This must be submitted in the kindergarten on the first day of the child's attendance at the latest.

Inquire about the attitude of the kindergarten teacher towards a child who doesn't speak Czech. Watch if the child is involved in activities, if he/she is not unhappy and isolated. Kindergarten experience determines what your child's relationship to peers and school is going to be like in the future.



The attendance of Czech courses or counselling facility is not a disgrace. Visits to pedagogical-psychological counselling centre is quite a common practice between Czech parents. Psychologists cooperate with kindergarten on a regular basis. A list of counselling facilities can be found at: www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/socialni-programy/pedagogicko-psychologicke-poradny. Unfortunately, pedagogical-psychological counselling centres currently don't have any materials which would help them to identify readiness to start school of children whose first language is not Czech. It is advisable to have an interpreter when visiting pedagogical-psychological counselling centre and find out in advance if this centre is experienced in communication with children who do not speak Czech.

WHAT THE CONVENTION STATES:

Article 8: Right to preservation of identity

Every child has a right to preserve his/her identity, including nationality, name and family relations.

Children in the kindergarten have rights to similar support as during elementary school (assistent teacher, counselling services, language courses, individual plan etc.) It is not good to assume automatically, that children will learn the language just by spending time with Czech speaking peers. Children, who do not socialize easily, need more intense support and activities which will help them to develop language skills and enable participation in the classroom.

Small children perceive even the slightest signs of rejection, scolding, they accept the behavioral patterns of the teacher. Your attitude should emphasise tolerance, decency and personal example. Keep in mind that even a small child has his/her dignity.

It is not appropriate to address children by a generalization based on their differences. The more you remind children that they are different, the more difficult it is for them to integrate among their peers, the more difficult it will be for them to be accepted.

Name is somethin given to a child by his/her parents and it is an important part of his/her identity. Consider if it is appropriate to call the child by a different name or nickname. The experts recommend to call children by their real names, or you can agree with the child and his/her parents on using a short form of it.

It is not the responsibility of the kindergarten to provide Czech courses, but if everybody is interested it is possible to organize them and obtain finances.
Look for inspiration here www.inkluzivniskola.cz/organizace-aneb-cizinci-ve-skole/jazykovy-rozvoj-v-kurzu.

For more information and support, see the methodological text „Children with a different mother tongue in the kindergartens“ at www.inkluzivniskola.cz/zdroje-inspirace/metodika-deti-s-odlisnym-materskym-jazykem-v-materskych-skolach. This text contains practical suggestions how to prepare for an arrival of a child with different mother tongue, how to communicate with him/her and his/her parents, tips about how to integrate the child into the class, how to support the language development and information on the legislative framework.

11. Special needs child (more about the role of the school counselling facilities)

Linh was failing at school and she was diagnosed with an intellectual disability by pedagogical-psychological counselling centre. The report said the only solution was practical school. The parents could speak only Vietnamese and so the counselling centre decided to send the report only to school. Thus, the parents were not properly informed either about the results of the examination or about their rights and other possibilities of support. The parents did not want to change schools, but nobody informed them about their options.

Six year old Boris suffered from cerebral palsy. He was immobile without help and couldn't walk by himself. Even though he was at the age to start school attendance, his mother, who had too many other things to worry about and didn't know the procedure, ignored the school enrollment and did not even visit a pediatrician with the boy. Boris, although he was a bright boy and eager to learn, was forced to stay at home instead of starting attending school.

Hana has visual impairment. The school principal refused to admit her to school until she speaks fluent Czech. The girl attended Czech courses in Meta, her parents were homeschooling her.

EVEN IN A SITUATION, WHEN THE COUNSELLING FACILITY HAS NO EXPERIENCE WITH FOREIGNERS AND THE SITUATION IS EXTRAORDINARY BECAUSE THE PARTIES DON'T UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER, THEY MUST PROCEED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE APPLICABLE PROCEDURES AND THE LAW. IN ORDER TO DO THAT, SOMETIMES IT IS NECESSARY TO INVITE OTHER PROFESSIONALS, FOR EXAMPLE INTERPRETERS.


Even children with disabilities must fulfil the mandatory school attendance and there are ways how to make it easier for them.

The counselling centre assesses school readiness, detects learning disabilities, suggests supporting measures. They can qualify the lack of Czech language knowledge as a barrier and handicap and can suggest supporting measures.

The purpose of the school counselling facilities is to find a better solution for your child. Visiting them is nothing to be ashamed of, many Czech parents do as well. Don't be afraid to visit pedagogical-psychological counseling centre – the professionals there can recommend implementation of support measures (assistant teacher, individual plan etc.) in case there is a language barrier or disability.

The services of the counseling facilities are free of charge. There are no interpreters available, you will make everything easier if you arrange for one.

You have the right to be informed about the results of the psychological examination prior to everybody else and in a comprehensible way! You have the right to inspect your child's file in the counseling centre. The examination report should be handed to you – the parents – with a clear explanation, you pass it to the school. The school needs to know the recommendations about how to educate your child, not personal information from the examination.



Cultural differences and particularities can play an important role – for parents from some countries can be very difficult to accept that their children may have a disability and visiting counselling services may be unacceptable for them. It is necessary to explain everything very well and rid the visits in the centers of the overtone of something pathological and shocking.

Not all the counselling facilities and centres are prepared for the language barrier. Their diagnostic methods are functional only if Czech is the language of communication during the examination. If not, it may cause distortion of the results of the examination or some disorders may stay unrecognized.

Every child has the right to support at school. The Czech educational system moved towards inclusion, which means the individual integration should have priority to group integration. It means the child should remain in his/her current school and should be given every possible support.

WHAT THE CONVENTION SAYS:

Article 5: Parental guidance

Everyone should respect the rights and responsibilities of parents to provide assistance and guidance, to ensure their children's development and education.

Article 23: Children with disabilities

Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support, as well as all the rights stated in the Convention, so that they can live full and independent lives in conditions which ensure dignity, self-reliance and active participation in the community.

WHAT THE EDUCATION ACT STATES²⁷:

Pedagogical-psychological counseling centre (Poradna)

- helps with behavioral and educational problems of children and pupils
- provides counselling services to parents and schools
- focuses on the individual challenges of personal and social development of children, matters of choice of further education and future profession

Special Educational Centre (Centrum)

- provides counselling services to pupils with medical disabilities and disadvantages
- provides special educational, psychological and other necessary care to clients with disabilities, provides professional assistance in the process of educational and social integration in cooperation with the family, school, school counselling facilities and experts

§ 16 Education of pupils with special educational needs

Paragraph 6) Conditions modified to their needs are arranged for pupils with medical disabilities and disadvantages during the admission to education and upon its completion. The evaluation takes into account the nature of the disability. Lengths of the secondary and higher vocational education can be extended, but no more than for 2 years.

Paragraph 7) Pupils with medical disadvantage have the right to freely use special textbooks and compensation aids provided by school. Pupils with hearing and combination of visual and hearing impairment should be educated with the help of special communication systems, pupils with visual impairment should be able to use writing in Braille, pupils with speech impediments should be able to use alternative forms of communication.

²⁷ Education Act / § 116 about school counselling facilities / Ministerial Decree n. 72/2005 Col., on providing counselling services in schools and school counselling facilities / Ministerial Decree n. 73/2005 Col., on education of children, pupils and students with special educational needs and exceptionally gifted children

Contacts

META, o.p.s. **Association for Opportunities of Young Migrants**

www.meta-ops.cz
www.inkluzivniskola.cz

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AND SPORTS, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION 21

www.msmt.cz/ministerstvo/skupina-pro-vzdelavani

CZECH SCHOOL INSPECTORATE

www.csicr.cz

OMBUDSMAN FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

tel.: 234 812 211, e-mail: ombudsman@msmt.cz

PUBLIC DEFENDER OF RIGHTS (OMBUDSMAN)

tel.: 542 542 888, e-mail: podatelna@ochrance.cz

REGIONAL OFFICES: DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION

www.statnisprava.cz/rstsp/ciselniky.nsf/i/d0049

PEDAGOGICAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNCELLING SERVICES IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

[www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/socialni-programy/
pedagogicko-psychologicke-poradny](http://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/socialni-programy/pedagogicko-psychologicke-poradny)

CZECH COUNCIL OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

<http://crdm.cz/>

LEISURE TIME CENTRES – HOUSES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

http://spddm.org/Clenove_SP_DDM_seznam.html

COUNCELLING AND INFORMATION SERVICES FOR FOREIGNERS

- Consortium of Migrants Assisting Organizations in the Czech Republic
www.konsorcium-nno.cz
- Support Centers for the Integration of Foreigners
www.integracnicentra.cz
- CIC – Center for the Integration of Foreigners, Prague
www.cicpraha.org
- Association for Intercultural Work
<http://interkulturniprace.cz/>
potrebuji-interkulturniho-pracovnika
- Information Portal of the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Interior for foreigners and about foreigners
www.cizinci.cz

INTERPRETING SERVICES

- Community Interpreters
www.meta-ops.cz/kontakty-na-komunitni-tlumocniky
- Czech Caritas Helpline
[www.charita.cz/jak-pomahame/pomoc-cizincum-v-cr/
infolinka/](http://www.charita.cz/jak-pomahame/pomoc-cizincum-v-cr/infolinka/)

EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS AND RESOURCES FOR WORK WITH THE CLASS

- People in Need „They’ve got what it takes!“
www.majinato.cz
- Czechkid
www.czechkid.cz
- European Commission - Manual on Human Rights Education
www.coe.int/en/web/compass
- META materials
www.meta-ops.cz/metodicke-a-vyukove-materialy

PORTALS ABOUT EDUCATION

- www.ceskaskola.cz
- www.eduin.cz
- www.inkluzce.cz

CHILDREN RIGHTS

- Information portal of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs “Right to Childhood”
www.pravonadetstvi.cz

VOLUNTEERS

- Volunteer Program SP
www.hest.cz/cs-CZ/co-delame/program-pet-p
- National Database of Volunteers for Refugees
www.idobrovolnik.cz
- LATA – programs for youth and families
www.lata.cz

LEGISLATION

- Education Act No. 561/2004 Coll., on pre-school, basic, secondary, tertiary, professional and other education
- Decree No. 48/2005 Coll., on basic education and some requirements for compulsory school attendance
- Decree No. 72/2005 Coll., resp. No. 116/2011 Coll., on providing counseling services in schools and in school facilities
- Decree No. 73/2005 Coll., resp. No. 147/2011 Coll., on education of children, students and pupils with special needs and exceptionally gifted students
- Administrative Procedure Act, No. 500/2004 Coll.
- Anti-Discrimination Act, No. 198/2009 Coll.

