

## Offering Scouting to Ukrainian refugee children – Junak Cesky Skaut

# Offering Scouting to Ukrainian refugee children



It is clear that the consequences of the war conflict in Ukraine will not disappear in a few days, and that the people fleeing to us are not coming for a short time. A large part of them are children and young people who were torn from their homes, from their security, from the life they knew, often also from part of their family. They have often experienced things that we only watch on screens and it makes us feel uncomfortable.

Scouting's mission is to support the development of the personality of young people so that in the future they will be good people and help make the world a better place. We are convinced that the way in which we can fulfil this mission very well in the current situation is to offer scouting to child refugees as well. We can invite them to our clubs, offer them a joint activity in the clubhouse twice a month, prepare a city tour or a nature trip for them. Ideally, together with Czech

girls and boys, we can offer them suburban camps. Paths may vary. **Why should we do this?**

- Because our departments can offer them a **friendly and safe environment** .
- **Because they can quickly find friends** in a group similar to a scout group .
- Because scouting will allow them to **experience joy and recover from wartime experiences** .
- Because the friendly approach and experience of our leaders can help them gain **confidence and trust in a new environment** .
- Because **learning activities will help them with faster integration** into Czech society.
- Because the traditions and values of scouting can also be trusted by their parents **in an unfamiliar environment** .
- Because accepting Ukrainian children among themselves is **a great school of solidarity and help for our girls and boys** . We can also enrich their education with key life experience.

We will be very happy if you decide to accept this challenge. **We will not leave you without support** . In the next week, we will provide you with a comprehensive methodology that will offer you support that can be used both for involving girls and boys directly in the sections, and for organizing other types of events for them. We are also preparing an offer of leaflets in Ukrainian for you, which you will be able to add your own information and use at the location as needed. You can find more support tips in the April Scout magazines. We will collect and share with you stories from places where they already have first-hand experience. As needed, we will continue to develop methodological support in the future.



What it might look like

Inviting Ukrainian girls and boys directly to our club activity is only one of the possible ways. It can be interesting for those departments where they have enough more experienced leaders who could take care of newcomers. Throwing this challenge at younger, for example 14-year-old counselors of scout groups, would certainly not be the most appropriate at first.

However, we can offer a certain form of scouting experiences, however narrowed and limited. The organization of low-threshold (meaning one-off, short-term, freely organized) events is offered, which can take the form of a game afternoon in the clubhouse, walks through the city, where you can introduce Ukrainian girls and boys to important places, perhaps even with the rest of the family, meetings focused on practicing the Czech language in the form of games, half-day trips around the city and more. Some centers have experience with suburban camps, and opening them to Ukrainian children is another possible way.

We consider the offer of similar activities to be an important support for Ukrainian children and their families in their integration into Czech society. However, it can also be a precursor to the fact that after getting to know each other and rubbing shoulders, you can agree on full entry into the section,

And what if not?

Of course, there can be good reasons why you don't decide to invite Ukrainian girls and boys. Perhaps you are dealing with a difficult situation in the department on which you need to concentrate. Maybe you don't have enough more experienced members of the section council in the section, at the center, who could work with them. No one will blame you and your decision should be respected.

In the discussions in Skautfór and elsewhere, there were questions about how to deal with the fact that Czech girls and boys are waiting for a place in our section, because we are full. How to explain to them or their parents that we will prioritize children from Ukraine. Here too, the decision whether to offer the section preferentially to Ukrainian children is entirely up to you and no one will force you to do so.

However, we believe that Czech society is also aware of the importance of a relatively quick and high-quality integration of refugee children for their recovery in a challenging life situation, and that parents on waiting lists will understand your steps. In a similar spirit, we will also communicate from our side towards the public who follow us as scouts.