



Czech Republic at a glance

- Population: 11 094 850
- GDP (Per capita): 119 PPS (available for 2011 only)
- Population: 10 505 445
- GDP (per capita): 80 PPS (available for 2011)
PPS=Purchasing Power Standard, based on the EU 27 average of 100
- Asylum applications total: 740
- Total decisions reached in 2012: 720
- Positive decisions (refugee status, subsidiary protection and humanitarian reasons): 175

2012 data, published by Eurostat in May 2013

The Czech resettlement programme at a glance

Resettlement quota and actors

Start of ad-hoc or pilot programme: 2008

Current quota: 30

Main national actors: Department for Asylum and Migration Policy under the Ministry of Interior, Refugee Facilities Administration (RFA) (an agency of the Ministry of the Interior), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education, Czech municipalities, Burma Centre Prague (BCP), Association of Citizens Assisting Migrants (SOZE), the Organisation for Aid to Refugees (OPU) and other civil society actors.

Resettlement numbers

YEAR	ACCEPTED	ARRIVALS	NATIONALITY ⇄ COUNTRY OF ASYLUM OF LARGEST GROUPS	ETHNIC AND OTHER MINORITIES (IF APPLICABLE)
2013 <i>anticipated</i>	32	-	Burmese ⇄ Thailand and Malaysia	
2012	25	25	Burmese ⇄ Malaysia	
2010	19	19	Afghan ⇄ Ukraine (4)	

YEAR	ACCEPTED	ARRIVALS	NATIONALITY ↻ COUNTRY OF ASYLUM OF LARGEST GROUPS	ETHNIC AND OTHER MINORITIES (IF APPLICABLE)
2010	47	48 (baby born pre- arrival)	Burmese ↻ Thailand and Malaysia (40) Chechen ↻ Azerbaijan (5) Iranian ↻ Turkey (2) Uzbek ↻ Ukraine (1)	Chin, Karen, Kachin, Tavoyan
2011	16	17 (baby born pre- arrival)	Burmese ↻ Malaysia	Chin

UNHCR Submission categories considered for resettlement

- Legal and physical protection needs
- Survivors of violence and torture
- Medical needs
- Women and girls at risk
- Family reunification
- Children and adolescents at risk
- Lack of foreseeable alternative solutions

UNHCR Priority levels accepted (with sub-quota where applicable)

- Emergency** *max. 7 days between submission and resettlement*
- Urgent** *within 6 weeks between submission and resettlement*
No sub-quotas established. Urgent and emergency cases are accepted outside of the annual quota.
- Normal** *within 12 months between submission and resettlement*

Czech Republic's Resettlement Programme

Legal Basis & Background

In 2008, the Czech government officially adopted the 'National Resettlement Programme Strategy', which sets out

the framework for the implementation of resettlement activities in the Czech Republic. The Strategy defines the scope of resettlement activities, outlining the legal framework for resettlement activities, specifying selection criteria, and describing all stages of the resettlement process and the role of all stakeholders. The

Strategy was approved together with a pilot resettlement programme, designed to provide an opportunity to test and develop Czech approaches to resettlement. The initial programme focused on Burmese refugees in South East Asia, reflecting the historic importance of human rights in Burma within the Czech Republic's foreign policy priorities set during Vaclav Havel's presidential term. Subsequent programmes have continued to focus on Burmese refugees, and the Czech government now considers resettlement to be a regular and ongoing activity.

The national legal instrument that defines the criteria for granting refugee status on the territory of the Czech Republic is the **Asylum Act** (Act No. 325/1999 coll. on Asylum), the latest amendments to which entered into force on 1 January 2011. Under Section 90 of the Act, asylum can be granted to an alien recognised as a refugee under the mandate of UNHCR. This provision provides the legal basis for resettlement. The decision to resettle in a specific year is made via an annual governmental decision that regulates the geographical scope, quota and financing mechanism. Cooperation with UNHCR is further specified in a subsequent **bilateral international agreement** between the Czech government and UNHCR made on 10 April 2009. Amendments to the Asylum Act expected to enter in mid-2013 changed

some legal aspects of the resettlement process, mainly concerning the issue of travel documents for refugees to be resettled to the Czech Republic.

Resettlement Criteria

Basic criteria

- A refugee must be recognised as such according to the 1951 Convention on Refugee Status.⁷
- If the criteria for granting refugee status under 1951 Convention have not been met, granting asylum for humanitarian reasons or for the purposes of family reunification might be considered.

Criteria related to integration

- The willingness of individual refugees to be resettled to the Czech Republic and to take steps to integrate into Czech society are both considered in the selection process.

Identification and Selection

The National Resettlement Programme Strategy provides for the possibility to select refugees based on **dossier submissions** from UNHCR including urgent and emergency cases. For normal priority cases, selection missions are carried out

⁷ The requirement for refugee status may be waived in emergency cases where UNHCR has not finalised refugee status determination procedures due to conditions in the country of asylum. Those resettled under such conditions will go through the formal refugee status determination process in the Czech Republic.



by representatives from the Ministry of the Interior and Refugee Facilities Administration. Missions are composed of resettlement interviews, social interviews and cultural orientation training. Carried out by a representative from the RFA (an agency of the Ministry of the Interior), social interviews collect information on refugees' social and cultural backgrounds - social habits, family dynamics, languages spoken, level of literacy and so on - which is used to prepare targeted post-arrival assistance in the Czech Republic. Final decisions are taken by the Ministry of the Interior, and processing time from final selection decision to departure takes a minimum of 2-3 weeks and usually no longer than **3 months**.

Refugee Status, Permanent Residency & Citizenship

Czech authorities cannot grant asylum to persons outside of Czech territory, so resettled refugees must formally apply for international protection on arrival into the Czech Republic. Refugee status is granted to all resettled refugees within a week after their arrival. Resettled refugees, as those recognised as refugees via the asylum system, are then granted **permanent residence** in the Czech Republic.

Naturalisation as a Czech citizen generally requires 5 years legal permanent residence, payment of public health

insurance contributions, no criminal record and proficiency in the Czech language. The residency requirement can technically be waived for refugee applicants, although this does not happen uniformly. In June 2013, the Czech Republic passed a new citizenship law that makes several changes to the existing naturalisation process, including removing the bar on dual citizenship, introducing more stringent and formal tests on socio-political and historical aspects of the Czech Republic, and imposing new economic independence and 'good character' tests. Applicants are also required to demonstrate B1 level⁸ Czech language.

Family reunification

Besides the married partners, children under 18 and parents of children under 18, other family members who are eligible for family reunification include unmarried partners (including same-sex partners). No other conditions are imposed.

Resettlement in Practice

Linking Phases

How is information transferred between selection and reception of

⁸ Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

refugees in order to prepare for their arrival?

- ☑ Sharing of information gathered during Cultural Orientation (CO) Information on particular needs and vulnerabilities gathered during 'social interviews' is shared with actors at reception centres to support reception planning.
- ☑ Other: The majority of planning for reception in municipalities takes place post-arrival, when refugees are living in the IAS (see below).

Pre-departure

☑ Cultural Orientation

Prior to 2012, pre-departure CO was carried out by a representative of the Refugee Facilities Administration (RFA). In 2012, the Ministry of the Interior invited the NGO Burma Centre Prague (BCP) to provide a 2.5-day CO course (12-13 hours) on-site in Kuala Lumpur for Burmese refugees selected for resettlement to the Czech Republic. This pilot classroom-based programme covered information on refugees' legal status in the Czech Republic, housing and money management, Czech culture and customs, and opportunities to learn Czech and find employment. The pilot CO programme also included the screening of a film made by BCP about the integration experiences of previously resettled refugees from Burma in

the Czech Republic. The Czech government on the future approach for the CO programme according to the target group.

☑ Medical Exam: IOM

☑ Travel arrangements: IOM

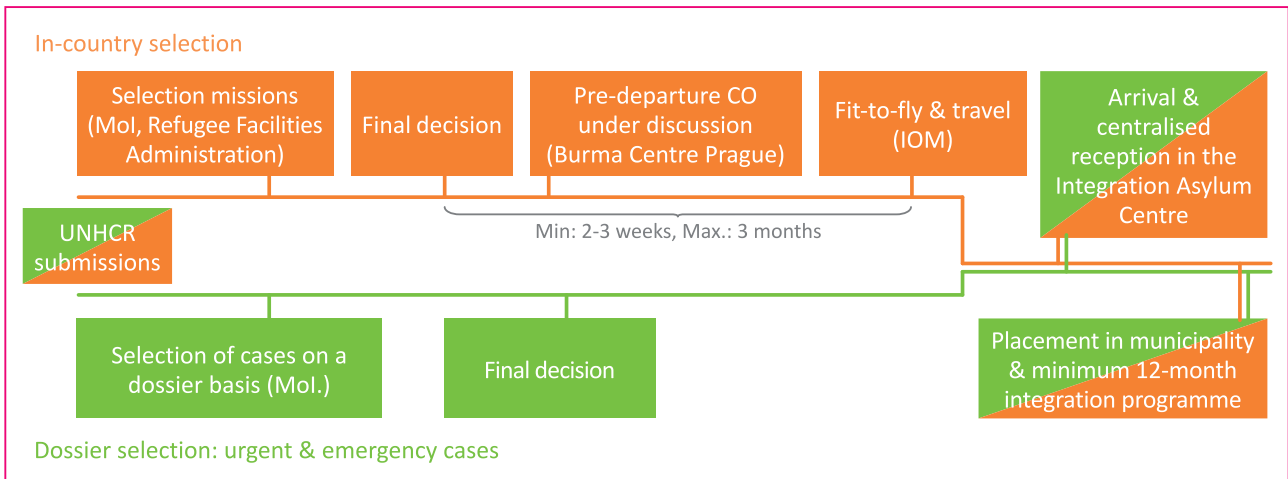
Integration in Practice

Reception

Upon arrival, refugees are welcomed by representatives from IOM, the section of the Czech Department for Asylum and Migration Policy responsible for entry procedures and the RFA. Refugees are directly accompanied to the **Integration Asylum Centre** (IAS) where they stay for approximately 6 months before moving to municipalities. The IAS is operated by the RFA.

Placement policies

Participation of municipalities in the resettlement programme is **voluntary**. While refugees are still in the IAS, the Ministry of the Interior approaches mayors and local councils, focusing on small to medium-sized municipalities. Municipalities that receive resettled refugees must provide them with municipality-owned housing (known as 'integration flats'), and receive a lump sum payment equivalent to €25-30,000



(final amount dependent on the size of the family that is received) to make investments that will benefit the local community, for example by improving public infrastructure. Additional funds are provided for basic furnishings and renovations for ‘**integration flats**’, and the provision of social assistance for refugees during the first 6 months after their arrival into the municipality. Coordination meetings involving the Ministry of the Interior, relevant NGOs, the chosen municipality, schools and other civil society stakeholders are held prior to refugees’ arrival to plan local reception and integration.

Integration services & support

Length: minimum 12 months.

The post-arrival integration programme begins during the refugees’ 6-month stay in the IAS, during which time adult refugees attend 400 hours of intensive Czech **language classes** and a cultural and **social orientation** course, and children attend **local schools**.

After this period, refugees travel directly to the ‘integration flat’ in their assigned municipality. ‘Integration flats’ are rented at a fixed rate and are guaranteed for a period of 5 years. Social guidance, including language-learning and employment assistance, is available for 6 months within the receiving municipality as part of the **mainstream State Integration Programme** (SIP) available to all migrants. Resettled refugees are eligible to receive the same financial welfare assistance as other Czech citizens and permanent residents.

The level and type of social guidance provided to resettled refugees varies considerably between municipalities. Receiving municipalities often designate ‘starter jobs’ for refugee adults within municipal services or functions that do not require advanced knowledge of the Czech language, and that enable some degree of economic self-sufficiency and participation for families early in the resettlement process.



Burmese refugees learning Czech in Ralsko/UNHCR/L.Taylor

Language tuition in municipalities is provided by specialist NGOs funded via the ERF, and is far less intensive than tuition in the IAS. Some municipalities have worked with NGOs to provide long-term language tuition (post-12 months) that responds to the needs of particular refugees, for example by providing home-based Czech language tuition for adults taking care of young children.

In organising integration assistance, municipalities work in partnership with national NGOs including the Association of **Citizens Assisting Migrants (SOZE)**, the **Organization for Aid to Refugees (OPU)** and **Burma Centre Prague (BCP)**. BCP also assists with interpreting, and acts as a ‘cultural mediator’ between the refugees and municipalities, NGOs and other service providers.

NGO assistance for resettled refugees may continue past the initial 12-month period provided for by the resettlement programme. Such activities are generally resourced via the ERF.

INTEGRATION IN FOCUS: Raising awareness in local schools

Brandýs nad Labem-Stará Boleslav, a municipality close to Prague, received a family of resettled refugees from Burma in 2009. The family included 2 girls of school age, and the local school decided to prepare its staff and pupils for the new pupils’ arrival. The school organised a series of lectures and workshops about the situation in Burma, including the violations of human rights that had prompted refugees to flee, information about



who refugees from Burma are, and refugees' lives and circumstances in countries neighbouring Burma. The pupils prepared invitation files for their new classmates containing useful information about the school. This information, and the awareness of staff and pupils about why the family had come to the Czech Republic, helped the Burmese girls to feel immediately welcome, oriented and respected in their new school environment. Today, both girls are fully integrated into school life and are amongst its highest achieving pupils.

Use of the European Refugee Fund (ERF)

Persons resettled using 2012 ERF funding

- Persons resettled from a country or region designated for the implementation of a Regional Protection Programme
- Unaccompanied minors
- Women and children at risk: particularly from psychological physical or sexual violence or exploitation
- Persons with serious medical needs that can only be addressed through resettlement

Pledges made to resettle under ERF specific categories for 2013

- Persons resettled from a country

or region designated for the implementation of a Regional Protection Programme

- Women and children at risk
- Unaccompanied minors
- Survivors of torture and violence
- Persons with serious medical needs that can only be addressed through resettlement
- Persons in need of emergency resettlement or urgent resettlement for legal or physical protection needs

Pledges made to resettle under new ERF resettlement common EU priorities for 2013

- Congolese refugees in the Great Lakes Region
- Refugees from Iraq in Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan
- Afghan refugees in Turkey, Pakistan, Iran
- Somali refugees in Ethiopia
- Burmese refugees in Bangladesh, Malaysia and Thailand
- Eritrean refugees in Eastern Sudan

Evaluations

No formal evaluation of the Czech Republic's resettlement programme has been carried out. In a 2012 presentation on the programme, the Czech government identified strong cooperation between local and national governmental actors and NGOs as a positive aspect of the programme,

and highlighted language-learning and employment as particular challenges in the Czech context.

Strengths and Challenges

Strengths

- The Czech government has heavily invested in developing and implementing the resettlement programme, and has positively influenced **public discourse** on resettlement by linking the programme to humanitarian aspects of both foreign and migration policy.
- **Local authorities and NGO stakeholders** are actively involved in the programme. The NGO Burma Centre Prague is one of the few ethnic associations that is directly involved in a national resettlement programme in Europe.
- **Municipalities** invest significant time and resources in offering a welcoming community and in building support for resettlement amongst local populations.

Challenges

- Learning Czech is challenging. Both resettled refugees and NGOs consider that the **language instruction** available to refugees after the 6-month stay in the IAS is insufficient,

particularly for those with low or no literacy in their first language, and a lack of Czech language proficiency has in some cases impacted negatively on the social and economic integration of resettled refugees.

- The availability of **housing** drives placement decisions, and refugees have subsequently been spread across fairly disparate locations across the country. Resettled families have therefore had few opportunities to meet up with one another.
- There is no strong culture of **volunteering** in the Czech Republic, and direct involvement of local communities in the integration of resettled refugees is therefore quite limited.

New Developments

At the time of writing, and after four years of involvement in refugee resettlement, the Czech government is drafting amendments to the 'National Resettlement Programme Strategy'.