

# The Centre for Foreigners is teaching 600 Ukrainians Czech



Photo: Centre for Foreigners JMK

Words like “dobrý den” (hello) or “pivo” (beer) are almost identical in Czech and Ukrainian. Both languages are Slavic; thus, they are similar. Even so, there are Czech words that can confuse Ukrainians coming to the Czech Republic. Ukrainians are enormously interested in Czech language lessons in Brno. They want to learn Czech not only to find a job but also to be able to communicate in everyday situations.

The Centre for Foreigners offers in Brno and the South Moravian region free Czech courses for adults and children coming from Ukraine. Thanks to these courses, Ukrainians learn basic Czech phrases, words and can communicate in everyday situations such as going to the shop, post office, or at the doctor. The Centre has already launched **40 language courses**

**in total for approximately 600 people** coming from Ukraine.

#### False friends

“I always try to create a pleasant ambience in my classes. In this sense, teaching courses for refugees is somewhat more difficult, due to the circumstances why they found themselves in the Czech Republic. Thanks to our shared Slavic language base we’re flying through the contents of the course,” says **Simona Michlová**, one of teachers from the courses.

Simona also laughs a lot during the courses, especially with clarifying false friends. For example, if you talk to an Ukrainian person about women, a funny situation can occur. “Holka” (girl, woman) means “jehla” (needle) in Ukrainian. “Žínka” (a washcloth) means “žena” (woman). And if you say

in Ukrainian “matka” (mother), that means “děloha” (uterus). More confusion occurs when one talks about **food**. If in Ukraine you say about bread that it is “čerstvý” (fresh), it would mean that it’s “tvrdý” (stale). “Ovoce” (fruit) in Ukrainian means “zelenina” (vegetable). If you say in Ukrainian that something “páchne” (smells bad), it means that it “voní” (smells good) and vice versa. Thus, Czech-Ukrainian discussions in class can sometimes cause bursts of laughter, but in the end all misunderstandings are solved.

#### Czech culture, traditions and customs

Thanks to Czech lessons students learn not only the language, but also are introduced to Czech culture, traditions and customs. “I’m glad, that there is laughter

in the lessons, and I can be someone who can help people who had to abandon their lives, family or friends, forget for a little while as well as open new doors of opportunity,” teacher Simona adds.

Lessons do not only take place in Brno, but **throughout the South Moravian region**. In response to demands for Czech language lessons, the Centre launched courses also in Blansko, Černá hora, Rosice and in Boskovice. Some courses are also online. The Organization for Aid to Refugees also finally helps in the creation of these courses. The Czech lessons are not only for adults, but also for children. Groups for preschool age, younger and older school age and for teenagers were created.

Czech language lessons  
Centre for Foreigners JMK

