

THE CZECH CENTRES FOR UKRAINE: WHAT WE DO TO HELP

Press Release, 1 April 2022, The Czech Centres' HQ

The Czech Centres (CC) have immediately responded to the Russian aggression against Ukraine by expressing support and providing direct assistance to colleagues from the Czech Centre Kyiv and their Ukrainian partners. The Czech Centres abroad have launched a number of events, such as fundraising auctions, readings, concerts, discussions and film screenings. Through the CC network, the appeal for help spreads to all continents. In cooperation with the J&T Foundation, the CC offer free intensive online Czech language courses aimed particularly at mothers and women in order to help them integrate into Czech society.

THE CZECH CENTRES' AID

Under the leadership of Ondřej Černý, Director General, and Radka Rubilina, Director of the Czech Centre Kyiv, the Czech Centres' assistance to people affected by the war in Ukraine was launched immediately on the day of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The aid is structured into two main levels. The first one translates into **comprehensive assistance to all employees** of the Czech Centre Kyiv and **Ukrainian artists coming to the Czech Republic**. Assistance has been provided in terms of administration, accommodation and financial support for the initial period of their working stay in the Czech Republic. The planned budget of the Czech Centre Kyiv is fully used to cover the costs of the scholarship and residency programme aimed at financial and professional support of Ukrainian artists. The second level focuses on **Czech language teaching for Ukrainians. Pilot courses for the general public started on 21 March 2022.**

"The Czech Centres have immediately launched rapid mechanisms to aid all colleagues and employees of the Czech Centre Kyiv. The programme activities of the Czech Centres' worldwide network were expanded. The Prague headquarters of the Czech Centres launched a residency programme for Ukrainian artists and, thanks to the J&T Foundation, Czech language adaptation courses," said **Ondřej Černý, Director General of the Czech Centres.**

FREE ONLINE CZECH LANGUAGE AND ADAPTATION COURSES

The Czech Centres provide free online Czech language courses for citizens of Ukraine who have been forced to leave their country and have found asylum in the Czech Republic. The participants are offered quality tuition under the guidance of experienced Czech language teachers. The pilot courses were launched on Monday 21 March 2022, with the official start scheduled for Monday 4 April 2022. The target group are mainly Ukrainian women and mothers who need to find their way in the Czech Republic and provide for their families. This project is implemented thanks to the significant financial support of the J&T Foundation. This foundation focuses its activities on individual assistance to families with children who are actively facing adversity. It provides financial and material assistance and counselling. Thanks to this targeted support, the language courses of the Czech Centres will be organised

until the end of October 2022. In addition to the adaptation of the course participants into Czech society, this project has another dimension – it is a job opportunity for the lecturers from the Czech Centre Kyiv.

"The Czech Centres have decided to focus their immediate help in a specific and targeted way. We are investing more energy in individuals, actively working to integrate them into the network of arts organisations and Czech society," says **Radka Rubilina, Director of the Czech Centre Kyiv.**

EVENTS WITHIN THE CZECH CENTRES' NETWORK

A series of events and charitable activities launched to support for Ukraine followed virtually immediately after the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

"BLOOD AND TEARS OF UKRAINE" IN TEL AVIV

The Czech Center Tel Aviv was the first cultural institute in Israel to respond to the crisis by organising the exhibition "Blood and Tears of Ukraine" at the Hasimta Theater. *"Czech photographers are among the world's best, including Lenka Klicperová and David Neff. I am glad that their photos depicting the atrocities of Putin's troops can be seen by the people of Israel. As a former journalist, I know all too well how brutal information warfare can be. That is why it is important for people around the world to see what is really happening in Ukraine,"* says **Robert Mikoláš, Director of the Czech Center Tel Aviv.** The exhibition is on until 14 April.

ART AUCTION AT THE CZECH CENTRE PARIS

On Thursday, 10 March, the **Czech Centre Paris** held a charity auction of artworks, the proceeds of which were donated to the People in Need's emergency appeal to support Ukraine. **Jiří Hnilica, Director of the Czech Centre Paris,** adds: *"The event was truly exceptional. We managed to organise it in less than a week thanks to the dedication of everyone involved. Over the course of just five days we gathered 160 works of art and we had to turn down more. It was not only the students or recent graduates of the Beaux-Arts in Paris who provided their works, but also their teachers, Ukrainian artists as well as Czech artists living in France, and even local Parisian gallerists."*

CHARITY CONCERTS AND OTHER EVENTS

Other Czech Centres have also joined in organising fundraisers and events. The **Czech Centre Budapest** launched a spontaneous fundraiser the very next day after Russia's attack on Ukraine. They are currently preparing a charity concert of the Giusto Orchestra, intended primarily for diplomatic circles, the proceeds of which will be donated to Migration Aid.

The Benefit Concert for Ukraine was organised by the **Czech Center Vienna** in cooperation with other European cultural institutes.

The **Czech Centre Tokyo** and the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Japan have jointly organised a concert **live streamed concert** in Japan. The concert is available to watch here: <https://youtu.be/Q9UwiPXImHc>. As of 1 April, the concert had over 75,000 views and

counting. **The Czech Centre Stockholm** is currently preparing a concert in cooperation with the Polish Institute, the Lithuanian Embassy, the local representation of the European Commission and Konserthuset Stockholm, which will also be filmed by the Swedish public broadcaster SVT. Through its Radiohjälpens Foundation, the SVT will gather contributions from viewers. The Swedish Royal Family will be attending the concert.

Together, the **Czech Centres have helped raise nearly 25,000 EUR** so far through events they have either organised or co-organised. The proceeds are transferred to the local branches of the Red Cross, Ukrainian Embassies and the People in Need. The Czech Centres have also been involved in sharing concerts in support of Ukraine, such as the Czech TV concert (1 March 2022) or the Czech Technical University Concert from the Bethlehem Chapel (9 March 2022).

CHILLING PHOTOS, DISCUSSIONS, FILM SCREENINGS across the Czech Centres' Network

The project We Stand with Ukraine: Women on the Frontline, an evening of debates, reflections and musical performances, was jointly organised by the **Czech Center New York**, the Consulate General of Estonia, the Consulate General of Switzerland and the Romanian Cultural Institute.

The Czech Centre London presented the panel discussion Ukraine at War: United We Stand, Divided We Fall hosted by a former editor of The Economist. Another panel discussion is currently being prepared, focusing on the refugee crisis and the humanitarian impact of the war.

The special film screening entitled Solidarity with Ukraine was organised by **the Czech Centre Bucharest** in cooperation with their Romanian partners *One World Romania* and *Kinedok Romania*. The screening of the documentary *The Earth is as Blue as an Orange* (2020) was followed by a debate. A screening of the film is also planned at the **Czech Centre Munich**. Currently, the website also links to the exhibition Different Beauty presenting photographs from Donbas, 2017. In the first week of March the **Czech Centre in Sofia** also organised a screening of the film The Earth is as Blue as an Orange. They have also organised another film programme dedicated to Ukraine in cooperation with the Balkan Documentary Center and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

In February, a special social media project called For Ukraine was initiated by the Czech Centres' headquarters. It introduces short video greetings of prominent Czech personalities who visited Ukraine in the past years at the invitation of the Czech Centre Kyiv. It can be accessed here: <https://www.czechcentres.cz/en/pro-ukrajinu>.

ČESKÁ CENTRA

The Czech Centres, a contributory organisation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, are the core instrument of public diplomacy of the Czech Republic's foreign policy. One of the objectives of the Czech Centres is to support the reputation of the Czech Republic across the globe. As a cultural institute, the Czech Centres are members of the network of European cultural institutes – EUNIC.

Česká centra

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The Czech Centres represent our country in a wide range of cultural and social areas: from art and creative industries to the achievements of Czech science and innovations. The Czech Centres also provide Czech language courses in foreign countries. They participate in international projects and operate as a platform for the development of international cultural dialogue.

At present, there are 26 Czech Centres across three continents – in addition to the Czech Centres, these also include the Czech Houses in Jerusalem and Bratislava. The activities of the Czech Center Moscow and the Czech House Moscow were suspended due to Russian aggression in Ukraine.

<https://www.czechcentres.cz/en/>

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