



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

APPLYING FOR ASYLUM IN CZECHIA

**Information leaflet
for asylum seekers**



You have the right to **apply for asylum** (also called **International Protection**) if you left your country because you are afraid of **persecution, violence, serious human rights violations**, or **armed conflict**, and cannot return there.

As an asylum seeker, you **cannot be returned to a country where your life or freedom would be in danger**.

If you **do not apply for asylum**, you will be treated as any other foreigner. If you do not have a valid passport or visa, you may be returned to the country you came from.

1. Where and how can I apply for Asylum in Czechia?

You can apply for asylum at an international airport or inside Czechia.

A. Applying for asylum at the airport

If you arrived at an **international airport** (esp. **Václav Havel Airport Prague**) and want to apply for asylum, **you should inform the police officer at the passport control immediately**. Explain clearly why you want to apply for asylum. It is important to tell the truth. Police officers should give you information about next steps so you can formally apply. You can ask for an interpreter if you need one.

After you apply for asylum and complete the first checks, you will be taken to a **reception centre in the airport transit area**. Your asylum application will be completed there.



Applying for asylum does not always mean you can enter Czechia immediately. In some cases, your application will be examined in the **reception centre at the airport**. This is a **closed centre**. You have the right to legal counselling.

B. Applying for asylum inside Czechia (if you have already entered the country)

If you are **already in Czechia**, you can make an asylum application at the Foreign Police office at the **Reception Centre in Zastávka u Brna**, which is located at the address Havířská 514, Zastávka, at the back entrance of the Centre.

You can also apply at any **Foreign Police office**. The police will then refer you to the Reception Centre in Zastávka u Brna to continue the asylum procedure.

If the police stop you and you **do not have a valid passport or visa**, you may be placed in a **detention facility for foreigners**. In this case, you can apply for asylum **within 7 days after you are apprehended**.

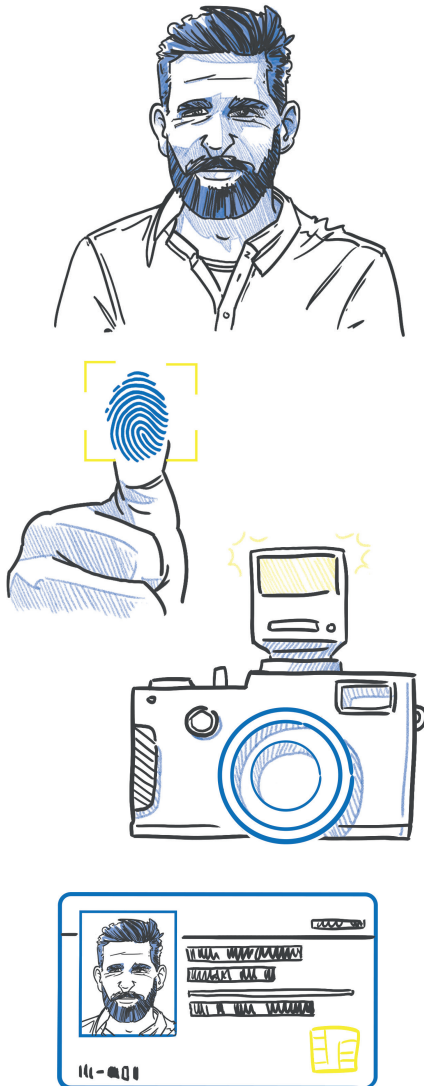
Applying for asylum **does not automatically mean you will be released from detention**. The authorities will first look into your reasons for seeking asylum. You have the right to challenge the detention decision in court.

2. What if I want to apply for asylum in another EU country?

In the European Union (EU) you usually cannot choose the country where you apply for asylum. There are rules that decide which EU country is responsible for your asylum application.

Family unity is important. If you have close family members in another EU country, tell the authorities. Also inform the authorities if you lived in or travelled through another EU country before. If another EU country is responsible for your case, you may be **transferred to that country**.

3. What are the first steps of the asylum procedure?



1.

The police will first verify your identity, for instance will take your fingerprints and your picture.

2.

You will go to the reception centre to complete the first steps of the asylum procedure. You will complete the application form and undergo identification and medical examination. The authorities will make a copy of your passport, if you hold one.

3.

You will receive an identification card for asylum seekers.

4.

Later, you will be invited to an asylum interview. You can bring documents that support your case. You will have an interpreter during these steps.

| 4. Can I get help during the asylum procedure?

You have the right to receive **free legal counselling** at any point of the asylum procedure. Lawyers regularly visit reception and accommodation centres. You can find contacts of our partner organizations and other useful contacts below or in the centre.

Lawyers can explain the asylum procedure, your rights, and answer your questions. They can help you prepare for the interview. They can assist you in writing an appeal if your application is rejected. In some cases, they can also accompany you for your asylum interview or represent you at court.

| 5. How can UNHCR help me?

UNHCR is mandated to protect refugees and stateless persons around the world. UNHCR monitors asylum procedures to make sure asylum seekers receive a fair and proper examination of their case. In Czechia, UNHCR works with the government to **provide information** to asylum seekers and with partner organisations who provide **free legal assistance** to asylum-seekers.

In some cases, UNHCR can be present during an asylum interview and look into the case file to see where the procedure stands (if you agree).

You can also contact UNHCR by e-mail at any time during the asylum procedure.

6. How can I prepare for my asylum interview?



The standard procedure includes two interviews, while an officer from the Department for Asylum and Migration Policy of the Ministry of the Interior will ask you questions:

- 1.** The first interview is short and serves to register your asylum application. You will be asked basic questions about your journey to Czechia and the reasons for leaving your country.
- 2.** The second interview can last several hours. You will be asked in more detail about your life and reasons why you left your country and why you cannot return. You may also be asked questions about your family, occupation, and other personal details.

The interview is very important. You can request the assistance of a lawyer to help you prepare. In some cases, the lawyer can be there with you. Sometimes additional interviews may take place.

It is important to give as many details as possible regarding the reasons and fears you have for leaving your country of origin. Be ready to provide any proof and documentation which can support your claim.

Everything you say is confidential so don't be afraid of disclosing your personal history and a story of your journey. The Czech authorities will not share any information with your country of origin.

You have the right to an interpreter during the interview. If you have difficulty understanding the interpreter, please say this immediately.

Your interview will be recorded by the officer and you can record it as well. You can ask for a break at any time during the interview.

At the end of the interview, you will be asked if you would like to review the written record. We recommend you do so, as it will allow you to clarify your answers. You also have the right to take a photo of the written record. This may be helpful to you and your lawyer.

| 7. Where can I stay during the asylum procedure?

Once you have been interviewed, you can decide whether you need to **be provided with accommodation or live elsewhere at your own expense**. If you need accommodation, you will be assigned to one of three Accommodation (Residential) Centres for asylum seekers across Czechia.

If you decide to live elsewhere, you will need to provide your address to the authorities for them to be able to contact you for the follow-up of your asylum procedure.

In some cases, you will be obliged to reside in an assigned centre by the Ministry of the Interior. You will receive the information on your rights and obligations.

| 8. What are my rights and obligations during the asylum procedure?

YOUR RIGHTS:

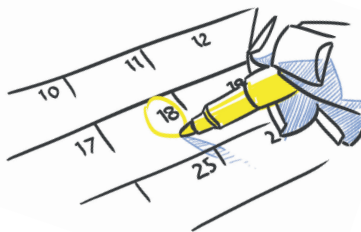
- stay in Czechia during the procedure
- receive basic accommodation, food and financial support, if needed
- receive basic medical care
- work after 6 months from submitting your application
- ask for an interpreter
- ask for free legal assistance
- communicate with UNHCR
- receive special support, if needed

YOUR OBLIGATIONS:

- cooperate fully with the authorities
- tell the truth as you remember it
- keep your appointments
- refrain from leaving Czechia during the asylum procedure or assigned place of residence (if applicable)
- provide correct contact details and inform the authorities about any changes (of place of residence etc.)
- present all documents to support your application
- follow the laws of Czechia
- ensure that children up to 15 years old attend school

9. How long will the decision take?

The Ministry of the Interior usually decides on your application within **6 months**. Sometimes the process takes longer. If this happens, the authorities should inform you. On the contrary, in some cases, the decision can come faster, for example if you are detained or reside at the airport reception centre, you should receive a decision within **12 weeks**.



10. What happens if I receive protection?

If the authorities find that your fear to return to your home country is justified, you will be granted asylum or subsidiary protection.

- If you are granted **asylum (recognized as a refugee)**, you will get a residence permit in Czechia for 3 years. Asylum status can be extended.
- If you are granted **subsidiary protection**, you will get a residence permit in Czechia for at least one year. Subsidiary protection can also be extended.

In both cases, you can benefit from integration support. This includes accommodation in Integration Centres for 12 months, support to learn the Czech language, finding employment, and receiving support from a social worker.

Your close family members have the right to apply for family reunification to join you in Czechia.

11. What if my application is rejected?

If your asylum application is rejected, you have the right to appeal the decision in court within 10 or 15 days (depending on the case). A lawyer can help you prepare the appeal.

USEFUL CONTACTS



Organisation for Aid to Refugees (OPU)

Offices in Prague, Brno, Plzen, Hradec Kralove, Ostrava

e-mail: pravni@opu.cz

tel: +420 730 158 781

www.opu.cz/en



Ombudsman (Public Defender of Rights)

e-mail: podatelna@ochrance.cz

tel: +420 542 542 888

www.ochrance.cz/en/



UNHCR in Czechia

e-mail: contact_czechia@unhcr.org

tel: 800 050 832 (free of charge)

www.help.unhcr.org/czech/

