










“Selected socio-economic aspects of the integration of Ukrainians: Evidence from the Czech Republic”

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SELECTED SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF THE INTEGRATION OF UKRAINIANS: EVIDENCE FROM THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Abstract

The war against Ukraine has led to a substantial influx of Ukrainian migrants into many countries, including the Czech Republic. As these migrants navigate the integration process, a key aspect of their journey is often their entry into the Czech labor market. The paper aims to identify and analyze selected socio-economic aspects associated with the integration of Ukrainian immigrants, with a specific focus on their Czech language fluency, length of stay in the Czech Republic, and the underlying reasons for their migration. This quantitative research was conducted using a self-designed questionnaire. Data collection took place in the first half of 2023. The sample consisted of 158 Ukrainian immigrants. The results showed statistically significant connections between the subjective assessment of how the respondents communicate in the Czech language with the field in which they work ($p < 0.05$), the perception of economic status ($p < 0.001$), the subjective assessment of the difficulty of finding a job ($p < 0.001$), satisfaction with work ($p < 0.005$), and intention to change jobs ($p < 0.005$). Additionally, there are correlations between length of stay and use of original qualification ($p < 0.01$), reasons for migration and difficulty finding work ($p < 0.05$), and between subjective evaluation of the difficulty of finding a job in the Czech Republic in relation to coming to the Czech Republic ($p < 0.01$). The results can be used by counseling centers for foreigners and potential employers to improve Ukrainian employment opportunities in the Czech labor market.

Keywords

migration, Ukrainian minority, employment, labor market, integration

JEL Classification

J50, J61, M54

INTRODUCTION

Thanks to its geographical, cultural, and historical proximity to Ukraine, more than 170,000 Ukrainian nationals lived in the Czech Republic before the outbreak of war against Ukraine. In the past, migrants came to the Czech Republic primarily for economic reasons, thanks to the opportunities available in the Czech labor market. However, the current conflict with the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine has caused a significant number of Ukrainian citizens to flee as refugees to the Czech Republic. The increase in the number of foreigners in the Czech Republic is mainly due to the issuance of temporary protection to Ukrainian nationals fleeing the war (Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, 2022). The Quarterly Report on Migration (Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, 2022) also states that a total of 412,618 long-term visas for temporary protection had been issued by the Czech Republic by the end of June 2022. In the Czech Republic, since March 21, 2022, Lex Ukraine laws, which simplify the residence and employment of Ukrainian refugees, have been in force (Administration of Industry and Transport of the Czech Republic, 2023). The number of Ukrainian refugees exceeded

five million across all EU countries by June 2022; however, the number is not evenly distributed (Welfens, 2023). As of March 31, 2023, a total of 1,010,692 persons with a foreign nationality were registered in the Czech Republic. In 2024, the number of Ukrainian nationals decreased to 550,836 people (Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, 2024). A survey by PAQ Research (2022) showed that Ukrainians arriving in the Czech Republic since February 2022 have relatively good job qualifications and skills. Nonetheless, many are underemployed in the Czech Republic and work in less skilled positions than in Ukraine. Research focused on the socio-economic factors (affecting their social and economic status) influencing the successful integration of migrants from Ukraine and the efficiency of their application on the labor market as essential for an effective strategy for the development of the migration policy in the Czech Republic.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term migration comes from the Latin term *migratio*, which means resettlement (Oiarzabal & Reips, 2012); it can also mean the movement of people from one territory to another (Porsche, 2019). This mobility is not merely a physical relocation but also encompasses social and economic dimensions that affect individuals' opportunities and life trajectories (Salazar, 2019). Migration is a phenomenon that, together with birth and death rates, influences social and cultural changes in populations and is part of population development (Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, 2023). Today, migration is an integral part of the globalized world (Jungwirth, 2019; Solga & Tereszkievicz, 2020). The studies on migration and mobility are critical to understanding population growth, change, and the consequent societal challenges associated with the social integration of foreigners (Clark, 2020; Vasile, 2020; Cristea & Grabara, 2019). Social integration is a natural process of integrating a person into society (Slowik, 2012). The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic (2023) considers the full integration of foreigners into Czech society essential to achieve conflict-free coexistence between the majority society and foreigners. Zi and Yu (2022) showed that successful integration involves active participation in social and cultural life, which can be hindered by barriers such as discrimination and lack of access to resources.

Stojanov et al. (2011) and Bilan and Strielkowski (2016) suggest that labor migration can have positive effects on the host economy. Migration can lead to demographic changes, influence labor supply, and affect economic growth (Anghelache et al., 2017; Mihai & Novo-Corti, 2019). Foreigners

contribute to the development of the labor market, but at the same time, they face various obstacles that can affect their economic situation and cause difficulties in integration (Ilinitchi, 2010). The effort of social systems, thanks to their effective coordination, should aim to facilitate the integration of migrants and improve their economic status (Tepperová & Klazar, 2012; Stojanov et al., 2016). Vacková and Prokešová (2017) emphasize the importance of social support networks in facilitating integration, noting that active participation in the labor market and fluency in the Czech language is essential for successful social inclusion.

The largest group of foreigners (53%) in the Czech Republic is Ukrainian nationals (Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, 2024). According to data from a sociological survey by PAQ Research (2022), the employment of Ukrainian refugees is steadily increasing. Language skills, particularly fluency in Czech, have been identified as a significant factor influencing employment opportunities (Sousa et al., 2020; Vacková & Prokešová, 2017; Isphording & Otten, 2014). Furthermore, the socio-cultural integration of Ukrainian migrants is influenced by various pre- and post-migration factors (Strielkowski & Sanderson, 2013; Bernard & Mikešová, 2014; Čada & Hoření, 2021). The integration of these migrants is complicated by the existing socio-economic disparities within the Czech Republic, which can hinder their ability to assimilate and thrive in their new environment (Janská & Bernard, 2018; Stojarová, 2019; Vavrek & Kovářová, 2021).

The study by PAQ Research (2022) found that those fluent in Czech were significantly more likely to find work quickly and in professions better suited to their qualifications and skills. Prokop

(2022) also highlighted the importance of learning Czech for immigrants seeking suitable employment. Migrant problems on the Czech labor market are also caused by other factors, including non-recognition of foreign qualifications and limited language skills (Valenta & Drbohlav, 2018; Preiss et al., 2024).

The evolving migration policies in the Czech Republic have implications for the future of Ukrainian migrants (Prát & Bui, 2018; Jelínková & Valenta, 2022; Lintner et al., 2023). This migration flow has been facilitated by structural channels, particularly in sectors like construction, where prior work experience in Ukraine enhances the likelihood of employment in the Czech labor market (Prát & Bui, 2018; Strielkowski & Sanderson, 2013). Integration is crucial as many Ukrainian migrants face significant barriers, including language difficulties and cultural differences, which complicate their adaptation to the new environment (Dombinskaya, 2023). These language barriers severely hinder the ability of Ukrainian refugees to engage with public services, including healthcare and education, which are critical for their successful integration (Dombinskaya, 2023). Ongoing research focusing on socio-economic conditions and other factors of integration of Ukrainian nationals in the Czech Republic can influence the evolving migration policy and facilitate the successful entry of foreigners into the labor market and their integration into mainstream society.

The aim of this paper was to identify and analyze selected socio-economic aspects associated with the integration of Ukrainian immigrants living in the Czech Republic. The reason for gathering this information was to determine what socio-economic factors affect the integration of Ukrainians into Czech society. To date, no detailed research has been conducted on this issue.

2. METHOD

The analysis was conducted using a quantitative research strategy. A self-designed questionnaire was used to obtain the data. The questionnaire consisted of 130 questions and was divided into seven sections: demographic data, language fluency, work, unemployment, housing, socio-cultural

issues, and health issues. For this study, only questions related to language fluency, the length of stay in the Czech Republic, and the reasons for migration were analyzed.

Statistical data processing was done using the Statistical Analysis of Social Data (SASD) program version 1.4.10 and the Statistic Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program version 28.0. In the data analysis, the first and second stages of sorting were used. In the first stage of sorting, frequency tables were constructed for individual indicators, which contain calculated absolute frequencies, relative frequencies, and mean values (mode, median, mean, variance, standard deviation, range, estimate variance, standard deviation, interval estimate of mean value and variance at the 0.05 level).

In the second stage of classification, contingency tables containing absolute and relative frequencies and a sign scheme were constructed. As part of the correlation analysis, the Chi-square goodness-of-fit test – χ^2 (Pearson Chi-Square) and the Independence Test were applied based on the nature of the characters and the number of observations, the values of which are standardly given in the description of the analyzed statistically significant links. Furthermore, at this level of classification, the calculations of the Pearson contingency coefficient, the Normalized Person contingency coefficient, the Čuprov coefficient, the Cramer coefficient, the Wals coefficient, the Spearman coefficient, and the Correlation coefficient were performed, and in the case of an insufficient number of observations, the Yates correction was applied. The strength of the relationship was measured at three levels of significance level ($\alpha = 0.05, 0.01, \text{ and } 0.001$).

The study collected 158 questionnaires from the research participants (Table 1), i.e., Ukrainian immigrants living in the Czech Republic over the age of 18 registered by the Czech authorities who migrated to the Czech Republic either before or after the outbreak of war (February 24, 2022). Data collection started in mid-February 2023 and continued until May 2023. Data were collected by interviewers working with respondents at two Caritas Czech Republic offices (Center for Support of Integration of Foreigners (CPIC) Prague and the Center for Support of Integration of Foreigners in the South Bohemian Region).

Table 1. Sample characteristics

Variable	N	%
Age (N = 158)		
18–29 years inclusive	46	29.1
30–44 years	63	39.9
45 years and older	44	27.8
Did not answer	5	3.2
Gender (N = 158)		
Males	47	29.7
Females	109	69.0
Other	2	1.3
Did not answer	0	0
The main reason for migration to the Czech Republic (N = 158)		
Study	7	4.4
War (temporary protection)	81	51.3
Scientific research	2	1.3
Employment	29	18.4
Business	5	3.2
For employment in special cases (green and blue cards)	8	5.1
Extended residence (applicant for international protection)	1	0.6
Family reunification	10	6.3
Asylum	0	0
Did not answer	15	9.5

The study was approved by the University of South Bohemia Ethics Committee in České Budějovice, Faculty of Health and Social Sciences, on December 3, 2022; additionally, the study was designed per the Declaration of Helsinki. Personal data were processed following EU Regulation 2016/679 of the European Parliament and the

Council on April 27, 2016, regarding the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and the free movement of such data, as well as repealing Directive 95/46/EC. Anonymity was ensured during data collection, and the survey did not put any of the study participants at risk. Participation was completely voluntary and respondents confirmed their willingness to participate in the survey.

3. RESULTS

Participants were asked to assess their Czech language fluency and what effect they think their fluency had in getting employment that utilized their former qualifications and skill set in the Czech Republic, how it affected their current field of employment, and their perception of their economic status. The results of the assessment of these three items are presented in Table 2.

This study found no statistical significance between the subjective evaluation of respondents' Czech language fluency and the utilization of their previous qualifications and skill set in their current employment in the Czech Republic.

A statistically significant correlation was identified between respondents' Czech language fluency and the current field in which the respondent works.

Table 2. Respondents' self-evaluation of Czech language fluency and its impact on (1) getting employment that utilized their previous qualifications and skill set, (2) their current field of employment, and (3) their perception of their economic status

Self-evaluation of Czech language fluency	Utilization of original qualifications and skill set in current employment in the Czech Republic			Current field of employment			Economic status			
	Yes	No	Relative frequency in %	Manager, supervisor, and academics	Services and trades	Laborer and craftsmen	Relative frequency in %	Economically active	Economically inactive	Relative frequency in %
Very poor	3	15	11.9	2	0	4	6.1	5	13	11.8
Poor	5	20	16.6	3	1	14	18.2	20	5	16.4
Average	8	33	27.2	5	8	15	28.3	30	11	27.0
Good	13	35	31.8	9	8	17	34.3	42	6	31.6
Very good	6	13	12.6	1	8	4	13.1	18	2	13.2
Relative frequency in %	23.2	76.8	100	20.2	25.3	54.5	100	75.7	24.3	100

Table 3. Respondents' self-evaluation of Czech language fluency and its impact on (1) job satisfaction, (2) difficulty in changing jobs, and (3) the desire to change jobs

Self-evaluation of Czech language fluency	Job satisfaction						Difficulty finding a job (i.e., time needed)			Desire to change jobs		
	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (average)	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Relative frequency in %	Less than one month	One month or more	Relative frequency in %	No	Yes	Relative frequency in %
Very poor	0	0	3	3	0	4.8	5	3	5.9	3	3	5.4
Poor	2	4	9	4	1	16.1	8	15	17.0	3	12	13.4
Average	3	4	15	6	4	25.8	9	27	26.7	15	15	26.8
Good	1	0	13	26	5	36.3	22	26	35.6	30	12	37.5
Very good	0	3	8	7	3	16.9	10	10	14.8	9	10	17.0
Relative frequency in %	4.8	8.9	38.7	37.1	10.5	100	40.0	60.0	100	53.6	46.4	100

Respondents who described their Czech language fluency as poor were significantly more likely to work in blue-collar professions (the chi-square characteristic of the independence test was 17.013 with 8 degrees of freedom, $p < 0.05$).

Further, respondents reported a statistically significant connection between Czech language fluency and economic status. Respondents who described their Czech language fluency as good or very good were significantly more likely to report that they were economically active, i.e., employed (the chi-square characteristic of the independence test was 28.689 with 4 degrees of freedom, $p < 0.001$).

In addition to assessing their Czech language fluency, participants were also asked about their current job satisfaction, if they desired to change jobs, and their opinion on the difficulty of finding a job, i.e., the time needed to find a job (Table 3).

A statistically significant correlation was identified between Czech language fluency and work satisfaction. Respondents who described their Czech language fluency as good were significantly more likely to be satisfied with their current job (the chi-square characteristic of the independence test was 26.618 with 16 degrees of freedom, $p < 0.05$).

A statistically significant correlation was also identified between Czech language fluency and the intention to change jobs. Respondents describing their Czech language fluency as good or very good were significantly more likely to report no interest in changing jobs, while respondents

describing their Czech language fluency as poor were significantly more likely to report an interest in changing jobs (the chi-square characteristic of the independence test was 12.660 with 4 degrees of freedom, $p < 0.05$).

This study found a significant statistical correlation between Czech language fluency and respondents' opinions regarding the difficulty of finding a job in the Czech Republic. Respondents describing their Czech language fluency as good or very good were significantly more likely to report that finding a job in the Czech Republic was easy. In contrast, respondents describing their Czech language fluency as poor were significantly more likely to report that finding a job in the Czech Republic was difficult (the chi-square characteristic of the independence test was 38.313 with 16 degrees of freedom, $p < 0.01$).

Participants were also asked about the difficulty of finding a job. The answers were evaluated in relation to respondents who had the main reason for migrating to the Czech Republic, i.e., war-related, not war-related (Table 4).

A statistically significant correlation was found between the reasons for migration and the reported difficulty finding work in the Czech Republic. Respondents who reported a war-related reason for their migration were significantly more likely to also report that finding a job in the Czech Republic was very difficult (the chi-square characteristic of the independence test was 10.503 with 4 degrees of freedom, $p < 0.05$).

Table 4. The relationship between the difficulty of finding a job and the respondent's reason for migrating to the Czech Republic

Difficulty of finding a job in the Czech Republic	Very difficult	Difficult	Easy	Very easy	I do not know; I have not looked for a job yet	Relative frequency vs. %
The reason for migration to the Czech Republic was war-related	13	29	18	3	13	76
The reason for migration to the Czech Republic was not war-related	4	29	34	7	14	88
Relative frequency vs. %	10.4	35.4	31.7	6.1	16.5	100

Table 5. Relation between the length of respondents' stay in the Czech Republic and the utilization of their original qualifications and skill set in their employment

Length of stay in the Czech Republic	Up to 3 years	From 3 to 9 years	More than 9 years	Relative frequency vs. %
I use my original qualifications and skill set in my current job in the Czech Republic	13	17	4	24.3
I do not use my original qualifications and skill set in my current job in the Czech Republic	74	22	10	75.7
Relative frequency vs. %	62.1	27.9	10.0	100

Participants were also asked about the utilization of their original qualifications and skills in their current employment in the Czech Republic. Responses were evaluated in relation to the length of respondents' stay in the Czech Republic (Table 5).

The results showed a statistically significant connection between the length of stay in the Czech Republic and the use of the original qualification in employment in the Czech Republic. Respondents who have been living in the Czech Republic for a shorter period of time (less than three years) were significantly less likely to utilize their original qualifications and skill set in their employment in the Czech Republic. In comparison, respondents who have lived in the Czech Republic for more than three years were significantly more likely to utilize their original qualifications and skill set in their employment in the Czech Republic (the chi-square characteristics of the independence test was 12.174 with 2 degrees of freedom, $p < 0.01$).

Participants were also asked about the difficulty of finding a job, which was then evaluated relative

to whether the respondent had come to the Czech Republic before or after the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war (Table 6).

A statistically significant correlation was identified between whether the respondent came to the Czech Republic before or after the outbreak of the war against Ukraine and the difficulty of finding a job in the Czech Republic. Respondents who came to the Czech Republic after the outbreak of the war against Ukraine (February 24, 2022) were significantly more likely to report that it was very difficult for them to find a job in the Czech Republic (the chi-square characteristic of the independence test was 16.602 with 4 degrees of freedom, $p < 0.01$).

4. DISCUSSION

This study focused on selected socio-economic aspects of the integration of Ukrainians into the Czech Republic.

The findings show a statistically significant connection between the self-evaluation of respondent

Table 6. The difficulty of finding work relative to whether respondents came to the Czech Republic before or after the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war

Difficulty of finding a job in the Czech Republic	Very difficult	Difficult	Easy	Very easy	I do not know; I have not looked for a job yet	Relative frequency vs. %
Arrived in the Czech Republic before the outbreak of war	3	32	31	5	12	58.9
Arrived in the Czech Republic after the outbreak of war	15	14	16	3	10	41.1
Relative frequency vs. %	12.8	32.6	33.3	5.7	15.6	100

Czech language fluency and their perception of their economic status ($p < 0.001$). Respondents who described their Czech language fluency as good or very good were significantly more likely to report that they were economically active (i.e., employed). The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic (2023) states that knowledge of the Czech language (i.e., fluency) is one of the basic prerequisites for successful integration since the level of Czech language fluency directly impacts access to social and work opportunities for foreigners. Bilingualism, or knowledge of several languages, dramatically opens the labor market and increases job opportunities (European Commission, 2021). Language fluency is one of the key competencies for entering the labor market (Liwiński, 2019).

Participants who described their Czech language fluency as poor were statistically significantly more likely to work in blue-collar professions ($p < 0.05$). Ruschka (2022) states that Ukrainian citizens working in the Czech Republic are currently working in less-skilled occupations. Immigrants often lack the level of Czech fluency needed to perform highly skilled or professionally demanding occupations, particularly those that require a mastery of written Czech (Tollarová, 2020). Ruschka (2022) further states that newly arrived citizens of Ukraine initially look for jobs similar to those of their compatriots. However, the job qualifications of newly arrived Ukrainians should gradually increase the average qualification of the Ukrainian population involved in the Czech labor market and thus increase wages (Ruschka, 2022).

Participants who described their Czech language fluency as good were statistically significantly more likely to report that they were satisfied with their current work ($p < 0.05$). According to Leontiyeva et al. (2013), the working environment of immigrants was critical for the development of language competencies. Respondents who described their Czech language fluency as good or very good were statistically more likely to report that they did not want to change jobs. In contrast, participants in the survey who described their Czech language fluency as poor were significantly more likely to want to change jobs ($p < 0.05$). PAQ Research (2022) shows that despite having worked skilled jobs in Ukraine, such as an executive or

specialist, the majority of Ukrainians coming to the Czech Republic work in the least-qualified and lowest-paid sector of the labor market.

Participants who described their Czech language fluency as good or very good were statistically significantly more likely to report that they did not want to change their job, in contrast to respondents who described their Czech language fluency as poor ($p < 0.05$). Newly arrived Ukrainians often want to have their foreign higher education credentials recognized in the Czech Republic. For this to happen, their original qualifications must undergo a nostrification process (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and National Pedagogical Institute of the Czech Republic, 2023). Nostrification, i.e., the procedure for recognizing foreign diplomas and credentials obtained from a university in another country, is an administrative procedure conducted based on applications submitted by the applicant pursuant to Sections 89 and 90 of Act No. 111/1998 Coll., on Higher Education Institutions and the Amendment and Amendment of Other Acts, as amended, and in conjunction with Act No. 500/2004 Coll., the Code of Administrative Procedure, as amended. The applicant is obliged to pay an administrative fee of CZK 3,000 (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and National Pedagogical Institute of the Czech Republic, 2023). For holders of “temporary protection” pursuant to Section 3 of Act No. 65/2022 Coll., on Certain Measures in Connection with the Armed Conflict in the Territory of Ukraine Caused by the Invasion of the Troops of the Russian Federation, pursuant to the provisions of Section 9 of Act No. 67/2022 Coll., on Measures in the Field of Education, in connection with the armed conflict in the territory of Ukraine caused by the invasion of the Russian Federation, the following applies: Applicants are exempt from the fee associated with the submission of an application for recognition of foreign higher education and qualifications, which is set by the state (Europass, 2023).

Another important result was the subjective assessment of the difficulty of finding a job in the Czech Republic relative to the reason for coming to the Czech Republic ($p < 0.01$). Ukrainians who came to the Czech Republic after the outbreak of the war against Ukraine, i.e., February 24, 2022, were significantly more likely to report that finding work in

the Czech Republic was very difficult. According to PAQ Research (2022), language fluency was critical to finding a suitable job. According to Prokop (2022), learning the Czech language is one of the most crucial factors for employing refugees in suitable positions, which can be supported by free Czech language lessons and the introduction of obligations for employers to provide time off to their employees pursuing language courses during working hours.

As part of this investigation, a statistical significance was identified between the length of stay in the Czech Republic and the utilization of their original qualifications and skill set in their current employment in the Czech Republic ($p < 0.01$). Respondents living in the Czech Republic for a shorter period of time (less than three years) were significantly less likely to utilize their original qualification and skill set in their current em-

ployment in the Czech Republic compared to respondents living in the Czech Republic for more than three years. PAQ Research (2022) states that people who can communicate in everyday situations are significantly more likely to work in professions that correspond to their original qualifications. According to Čižinský et al. (2014), various conditions are a prerequisite for granting a long-term residence. One of these conditions is often employment or academic study (Čižinský et al., 2014). According to the Labor Office of the Czech Republic (2023), foreigners have the opportunity to apply for the following types of residence: short-term residence, visa for a stay of over 90 days, long-term residence, employee card, blue card, permanent residence, seasonal employment, intra-company employee transfer card and intra-company employee card of another EU member state.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to identify and analyze selected socio-economic aspects associated with the integration of Ukrainian immigrants living in the Czech Republic using a quantitative research strategy and a questionnaire. The findings reveal statistically significant correlations that illuminate the complexities of the integration process. This showed a statistically significant connection between the respondents' self-assessment of their proficiency in the Czech language and various socio-economic indicators, including their utilization of original qualifications, perceived economic status, challenges encountered in job searching, job satisfaction, and intentions regarding employment changes. A statistically significant connection was also found between the length of stay and the use of the original qualification, the reasons for migration and the difficulty of finding a job, and also between the subjective assessment of the difficulty of finding a job in the Czech Republic in relation to the arrival to the Czech Republic.

These results can be used by employers employing Ukrainian migrants. These employers could, for example, arrange Czech language courses for their employees, which, according to the results, is a main factor affecting access, quality, and satisfaction with employment. The insights gained from this study can inform policy-making and employer practices that foster a more inclusive labor market, ultimately benefiting the immigrant population and the broader socio-economic landscape of the Czech Republic.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: Linda Danielová, Radka Prokešová, Jitka Vacková, Lesia Shuranová.

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