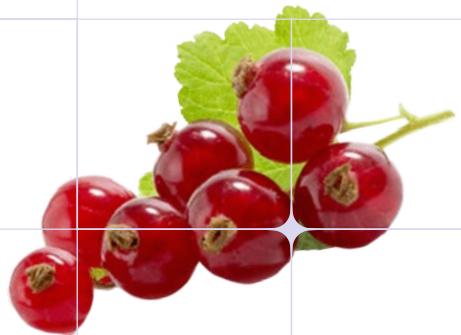


SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 2025

# THE SCHOOL NUTRITION REFORM TEAM DIGEST

**Midpoint of the Strategy Implementation**



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## Welcome!

We present the fifth Digest of the School Nutrition Reform Team, summarising the key developments and results achieved between September and December 2025.

The past year marked the midpoint of the reform, with tangible outcomes: **2 million** children receive free hot meals, more than **1,600** food blocks have been modernised, and more than **9,000** cooks have completed training in culinary hubs.

The dynamic progress of the reform required not only a new operational plan, but also an update of strategic priorities. In 2025, the Strategy – the core policy document guiding the implementation of the reform – was revised to consolidate achieved results, expand objectives, and adapt approaches to new challenges and the EU integration process.

This edition summarises the results of the year and highlights key achievements.

Over the four-month period, the Team strengthened the international dimension of the reform, expanded professional training for cooks, continued modernisation of food blocks, and advanced systematic communication of healthy eating as a daily practice.

Key events, analytical insights, and materials for reference and dissemination are brought together in the Digest. The school nutrition reform is a joint effort that transforms the system step by step. We continue moving forward together.

**Enjoy reading.**



# SECTION I. STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY CAPACITY



## Expansion of the Free School Meals Programme



Between 2023 and 2025, school meals in Ukraine evolved into a full-fledged national programme, providing free hot lunches for children, upgraded food blocks, and a clear vision for fostering a culture of healthy eating from an early age.

Today, approximately **2 million** pupils are covered by the free hot meals programme. The next step is to expand coverage to **3 million** pupils, ensuring that safe and nutritious food is available to every child, regardless of where they study.

### The programme is being scaled in phases:

- In 2024, free hot lunches were provided to more than 1 million primary school pupils nationwide.
- From September 2025, the programme was extended to approximately **500,000** pupils in grades 5–11 in frontline regions, including Donetsk, Sumy, Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Kherson, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Chernihiv regions.
- Overall, **1.5 million** children are covered through the state subvention, and in combination with support of international partners to local budgets, more than **2 million** pupils receive hot meals daily.

From 2026, the programme is planned to expand further to cover **3 million** pupils, with increased involvement of community co-financing mechanisms.

This is a story not only about food, but about care, sustainable solutions, and a healthy future for Ukrainian children.

## Analysis of the implementation of the free school meals programme in regions and communities

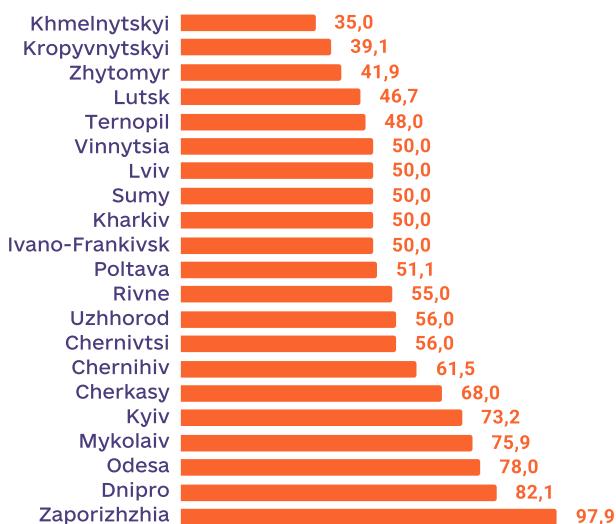
As part of a national coordination meeting, the School nutrition reform team conducted a comprehensive analysis of the implementation of the free school meals programme across regions and territorial communities. The analysis covered not only the status of programme delivery, but also related areas, including food blocks modernisation and development of human resource capacity at the local level.

Aggregated regional results prepared in the form of a presentation and an analytical brief were presented during the discussion. Particular attention was paid to the pace of food block infrastructure upgrades, the capacity of communities to effectively use state support, and workforce challenges – including the availability of trained specialists and competent management teams within educational institutions.

Based on the outcomes of the meeting, experts formulated practical recommendations for territorial communities. These recommendations are aimed at strengthening programme implementation at the local level, reducing risks associated with infrastructure projects, and ensuring the sustainability of human resource solutions as a key prerequisite for successful reform.

## REFORM IN BIG CITIES

Average amount of money spent on a single meal for a primary school student in October 2025 (UAH)



## Update the Resolution No. 305 dated 24 March 2021 “On Approval of Nutrition Standards and the Procedure for Organising Nutrition in Educational Institutions and Children’s Health and Recreation Facilities” by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine

The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine adopted Resolution No. 1280, introducing updates to the nutrition standards and the procedure for organising nutrition in educational institutions and children's health and recreation facilities. The amendments to Resolution No. 305 take into account updated legislation in the field of preschool education and adapt the school nutrition system to the conditions of martial law.

One of the key innovations is the regulatory framework governing nutrition for children and staff of educational institutions while staying in civil protection shelters.

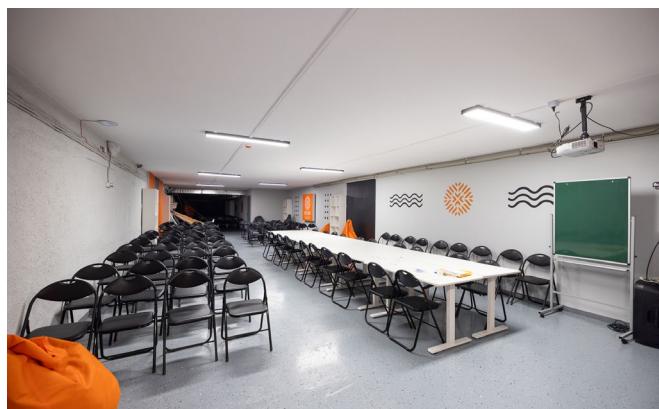
For the first time, permissible formats for organising nutrition in shelters have been defined – including ready-to-eat and chilled meals, buffet products, and products with long-shelf-life. The Resolution also provides for the possibility of creating reserves of water and food for at least 48 hours of continuous stay, enabling educational institutions to meet children's basic needs even during prolonged air raid alerts.

At the same time, the updated framework introduces greater flexibility in applying nutrition standards in emergency conditions. In cases of power outages, air raid alerts, or the inability to maintain standard nutrition schedules, temporary deviations from approved menus and intervals between meals are permitted. The amendments also regulate the write-off of food products and prepared meals that cannot be used due to martial law circumstances, reducing operational risks for educational institutions and service providers.

The nutrition standards were also revised. For children aged 11-18, the recommended intake of vegetables increased, the frequency of consumption of grains, cereals, and legumes was expanded, and the overall approach to menu planning was improved. Special attention was paid to pupils with specific dietary needs based on medical indications: requirements for nutrition for children with milk allergies and lactose intolerance were clarified, including the possibility of using lactose-free products and fortified plant-based beverages.

The amendments further strengthen the systemic organisation of nutrition in educational institutions. They introduce a requirement to develop indicative four-week seasonal menus depending on the number of daily meals, clarify the timing of hot lunches in schools, and expand oppor-

tunities to organise a second hot meal by decision of the founders. Approaches to the design and equipment of food blocks were also updated in line with modern models of school nutrition organisation.



Overall, the adopted changes establish a more resilient, safe, and adaptive school nutrition system capable of operating under crisis conditions, while maintaining a clear focus on children's health, nutrition quality, and community responsibility for implementation.

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### **Update of the Strategy and approval of the operational plan for 2025–2027**

The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved a decision defining the further trajectory of the School nutrition reform by 2027. By Resolution dated 7 November 2025 No. 1216-r, the Operational plan of measures for 2025–2027 was approved and the Strategy for reforming the school nutrition system was updated.

The updated Strategy is based on the results of reform implementation in 2023–2024 and reflects the new operating conditions of the education system during the full-scale war. The revised provisions outline the next stages of the reform with a focus on quality,

efficiency, and resilience in the organisation of nutrition for pupils.

The objectives of the reform, its strategic and operational goals, as well as the expected outcomes of implementation are clarified in the document. Particular emphasis is placed on strengthening the role of regions and communities in expanding school nutrition programme, developing cooperation between educational institutions, local producers and service providers, and deepening international partnerships and Ukraine's participation in global school nutrition initiatives.

The approved Operational plan for 2025–2027 contain a comprehensive set of legal, organisational, institutional, and investment measures required for further implementation of the Strategy. Its execution is expected to ensure coordinated action among central and local authorities, educational institutions, communities, and partners, creating a unified framework for systematic implementation of the reform at all levels.

The updated Strategy is expected to contribute to the establishment of a sustainable system for providing pupils with high-quality and safe nutrition, promoting healthy eating habits, modernising school food blocks infrastructure, and supporting local communities, small and medium-sized businesses as an integral part of regional economies.

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### **Coordination meeting on the implementation of the School nutrition reform Strategy**

On 3 December 2025, an online coordination meeting was held to ensure the implementation of the Operational plan of measures for 2025–2027 and the Strategy for reforming the school nutrition system by 2027. The meeting was opened by Andrii Stashkiv, Deputy

Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine, who outlined the critical role of coordinated action between the state and communities in implementation of the reform.

During the meeting, the School nutrition reform team presented the key updates to the Strategy and the revised Operational plan for 2025–2027. Special attention was paid to priority areas and tasks for the regional and local levels aimed at ensuring the effective transformation of policy decisions into practice.

To conclude, Andrii Stashkiv emphasised the importance of consistent implementation of the Plan and the shared responsibility of all stakeholders for achieving sustainable reform outcomes.

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## Access to healthy nutrition in educational institutions as a priority of the national plan for implementing the European Child Guarantee in Ukraine until 2030



The Government of Ukraine approved the National plan for implementing the European Child Guarantee until 2030 – a key policy document defining a set of measures to ensure equal access for children to essential services, including healthy nutrition in educational institutions.

The European Child Guarantee is an initiative of the Council of the European Union aimed at addressing child poverty and social exclusion by ensuring that every child at risk of poverty or social disadvantage has access to quality education, healthcare, social services, healthy nutrition, and adequate housing.

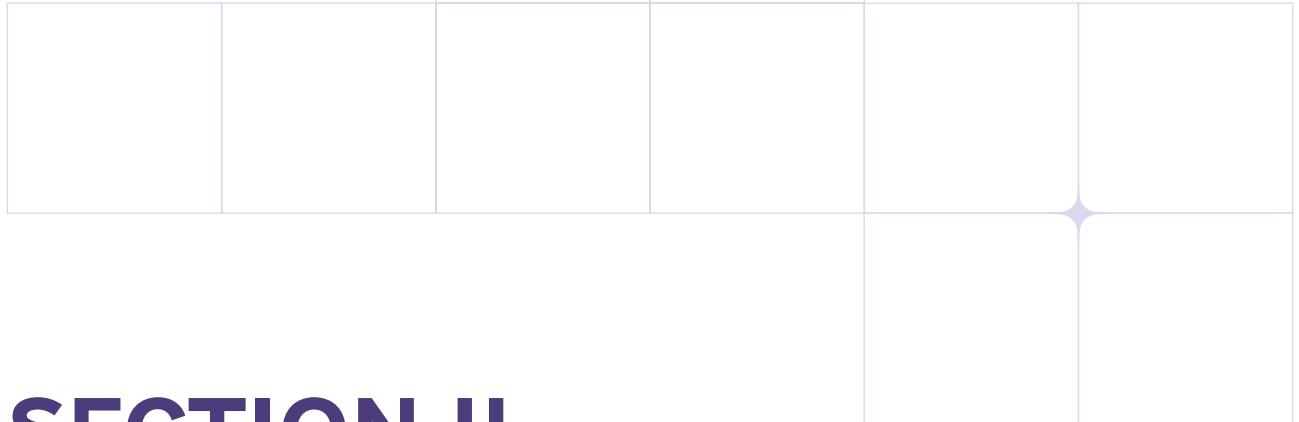
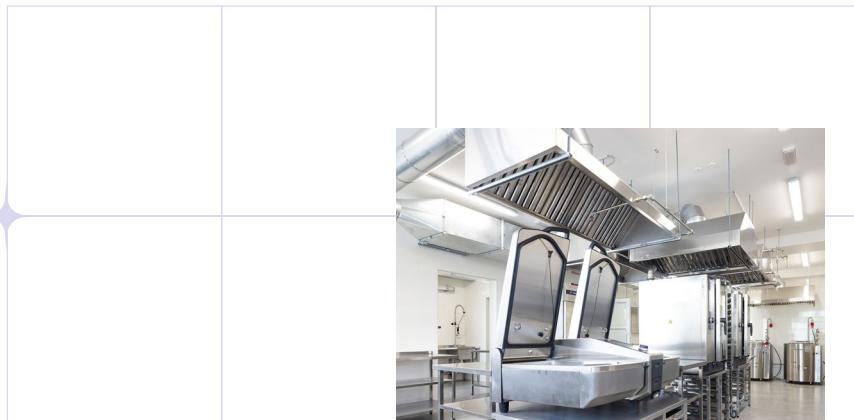
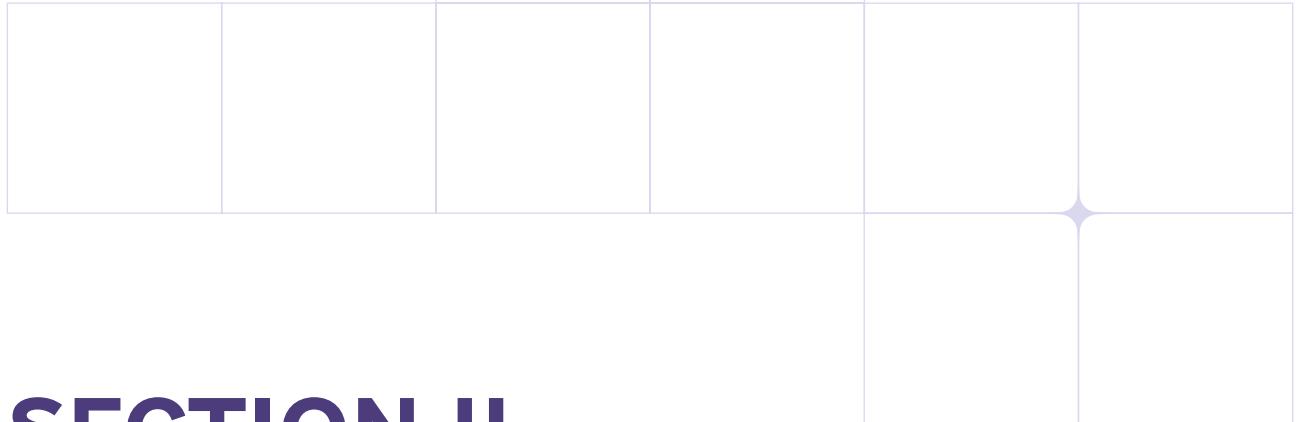


Within the National plan, access to healthy nutrition in educational institutions is clearly identified as one of the priority areas of state policy to support children – particularly those from vulnerable families. This approach implies systematic coordination among public authorities, communities, educational institutions, and partners to establish a sustainable mechanism for providing school nutrition that meets European standards and principles of inclusion.

The approval of the National plan also provides for the establishment of the position of National coordinator for the implementation of the European Child Guarantee. This role will ensure strategic coordination among all stakeholders and regular monitoring of progress in implementing the initiative.

Integrating access to healthy nutrition in educational institutions into such a strategic framework strengthens its role as an essential element of child rights protection, contributes to more effective reduction of child poverty, and creates conditions for long-term improvements in the quality of life of pupils in Ukraine.

## SECTION II. MODERNIZATION OF FOOD BLOCKS



## 2 September – Working visit of First Lady Olena Zelenska together with representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and the School nutrition reform team to Chernihiv

First Lady of Ukraine Olena Zelenska, together with an official delegation, visited border communities in the Chernihiv region to review the progress of the School nutrition reform and the conditions of its implementation amid constant security challenges.



Despite its border status, **96%** of general secondary education institutions in the region operated in either offline or distance formats during the 2024/2025 academic year (compared to **84%** in 2022–2023). This ensured continuity of the educational process and sustained access for children to essential services, including school nutrition.

As part of the visit, the delegation visited educational institutions and a culinary hub built at the Chernihiv Centre for vocational education, where cooks involved in the reform receive training and professional development. **48** cooks from **16** communities in the region have already been trained in this hub, created with the support of the Swiss-Ukrainian DECIDE project. They studied modern approaches to organising healthy nutrition in schools and kindergartens.

In the region, the School nutrition reform is viewed as an element of food security, family support, and the formation of healthy eating habits for children, even in wartime conditions.

## 17 September – Visit of First Lady Olena Zelenska and President of the European Parliament Roberta Metsola to a school in the Bilohorodka community



First Lady Olena Zelenska, together with Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament, and the School nutrition reform team, visited a school in the Bilohorodka community (Kyiv region), where the canteen and food block were modernised with EU support.

Together with Ms. Metsola and representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and EUACI, the delegation discussed the mechanism for using the EU subvention within the Ukraine Facility framework and the practical implementation of the School nutrition reform at the local level.

The Ukrainian representatives expressed gratitude to the European Union for its support of this important reform. For the second consecutive year, provided subventions have enabled the renovation and modernisation of hundreds of school food blocks and canteens.

across the country. Starting next year, with the support of international partners, the state plans to ensure free hot meals for all Ukrainian pupils – both primary, secondary and upper secondary levels.

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## Selection of kitchen-factory construction projects due to the Ukraine Recovery Programme III



As part of Ukraine's recovery programmes, a regular meeting of the Expert working group on the selection of joint projects with the European Investment Bank was held, chaired by Oleksii Riabykin, Deputy Minister for communities and territories development of Ukraine.

Following the review of community applications, six projects in the Dnipropetrovsk region were recommended for implementation. These include capital repairs of medical facilities in Dnipro and Kryvyi Rih, reconstruction and construction of civil protection shelters in Dnipro and the Hrechany Pody community, as well as the construction of a modular shelter in the city of Samar.

Overall, **18** projects in different regions of Ukraine have been selected under the Ukraine Recovery Programme III (Tranche B). Key priorities include barrier-free infra-

structure, the development of the school nutrition system through the construction of kitchen-factories, strengthening energy resilience, modernisation of healthcare facilities, and the creation of civil protection infrastructure.

Project financing is provided within a joint programme of the Government of Ukraine and the European Investment Bank, with a total budget of **EUR 100 million**, aimed at restoring social infrastructure and supporting communities most affected by the war.

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## Financing of recovery and regional development projects through the State Fund for Regional Development (SFRD)

The Government of Ukraine approved a list of public investment projects to be financed through the State Fund for Regional Development (SFRD) in 2025. The total funding amounts about **UAH 1 billion** and covers **48** projects in **16** regions of the country.

The approved initiatives include projects in education, healthcare, civil protection, and basic infrastructure. In particular, the programme provides for the implementation of **10** projects in general secondary education institutions and **6** projects in preschool education institutions, which are critical for restoring and modernising educational media in communities.

Funding allocation follows a territorially balanced approach: **50%** is directed to front-line regions, **30%** to central regions, and **20%** to western regions of Ukraine. The largest volumes of support will be provided to Kharkiv, Kherson, Kyiv, and Lviv regions.

According to Oleksii Kuleba, Deputy Prime Minister for Ukraine's Recovery and Minister

for communities and territories development, the selected projects are aimed to strengthen safety, restore social infrastructure, and enhance community resilience.



## 28 October – Training webinar for communities on compliance of public procurement with Ukraine Facility requirements



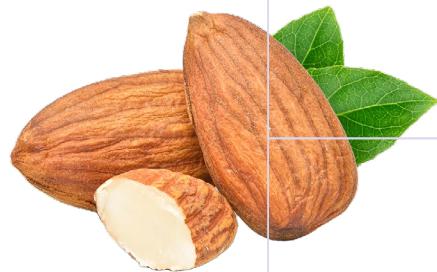
Within the School nutrition reform, the state allocates subvention funding for the comprehensive modernisation of school food blocks. This is one of the most resource-intensive components of the reform and requires strict adherence to procedures and transparent use of funds.

The School nutrition reform is an integral part of the Ukraine Facility, the European Union's framework programme for financial and technical support to Ukraine for 2024–2027.

To strengthen community capacity, EUACI, together with the School nutrition reform team, conducted a training webinar titled "Specifics of public procurement under the Ukraine Facility instrument". Representatives of local self-government bodies participated in the online event.

During the training, participants reviewed practical aspects of procurement organisation, incorporation of framework agreement requirements into tender documentation, and preparation for monitoring by the State Audit Service of Ukraine.

Systematic training and methodological support for communities are a critical prerequisite for the high-quality implementation of the infrastructure component of the School nutrition reform at the local level.



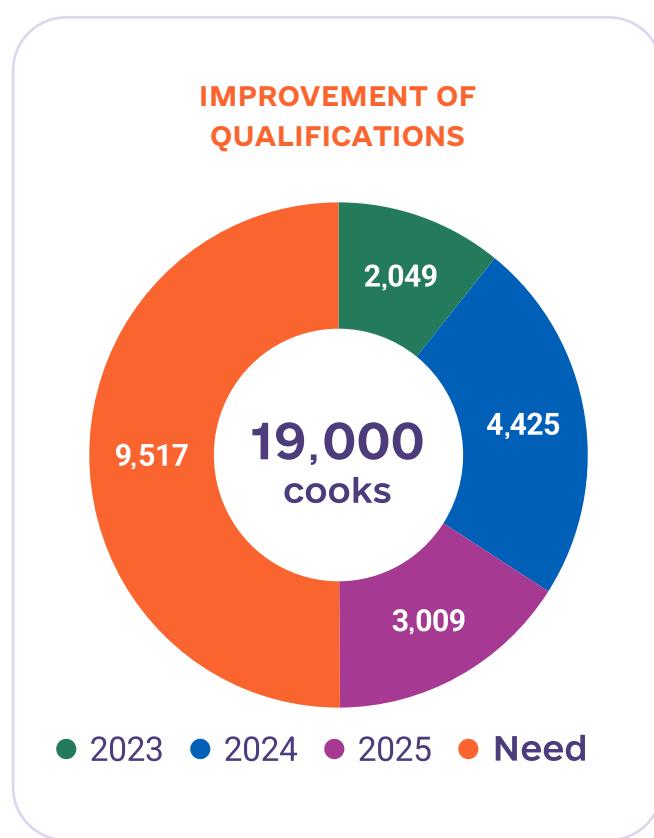
## SECTION III. HUMAN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT



Human capacity is one of the key drivers of School nutrition reform. The quality, safety, and nutritional value of daily school meals depend directly on the professional training of cooks. The introduction of updated menus, modern equipment, and new standards is possible only with the availability of qualified specialists capable of working in line with current technological and professional requirements.

The reform provides for systematic investment in the training and professional development of school food block staff.

By the end of 2025, **3,009** cooks completed professional training programmes. Overall, during 2023–2025, **9,483** specialists from different regions of Ukraine were trained. At the same time, workforce needs remain significant: to fully staff food blocks nationwide, approximately **9,500** additional cooks still need to be trained to work with updated standards and sanitary requirements.



An important element of developing human capacity is the network of culinary hubs – modern training spaces equipped with professional kitchens where cooks acquire practical skills, learn new recipes and cooking technologies, and obtain knowledge about the principles of healthy nutrition. These hubs serve as centres for disseminating modern nutrition culture for children and for developing a professional community.

In 2025, **EUR 1.05 million** of state subvention funding was allocated for the building of **8** new culinary hubs. To date, **38** projects have either been completed or are currently under implementation in regions of Ukraine.



## SECTION IV. COMMUNICATION OF HEALTHY NUTRITION



## The new communication channel: Instagram

The School nutrition reform engages with diverse audiences – from communities and educators to parents and children. To remain accessible and relevant, the reform continues to expand its digital presence.

The reform is now also in  [Instagram](#)



### The platform features:

- updates on reform progress;
- success stories from schools and communities;
- practical advice on healthy nutrition;
- guidance on building healthy eating habits;
- announcements of upcoming events;
- useful educational materials and other resources

Following the official Instagram account allows audiences to stay informed and engage with the reform in an accessible and practical format.

## Media coverage of the reform

### Analytical article on Rubryka: “Modernisation of school canteens as a tool for national recovery”

An analytical article published on the Rubryka media platform explores the modernisation of school canteens as one of the instruments of Ukraine's recovery. School nutrition reform is presented not only as an educational or social initiative, but as a systemic solution that combines infrastructure renewal, safety, energy efficiency, community development, and support for local economies.

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Колонка

### Модернізація шкільних їдальнь як один з інструментів відновлення країни



Орест Степаняк  
Тимілд Команди реформи шкільного харчування в Україні. Підприємець і менеджер суспільних змін

In the article, Orest Stepaniak, Head of the School nutrition reform team, discusses how modernised food blocks improve the quality of life for children and families, contribute to stability in war-affected communities, and drive long-term change in public investment approaches. Particular attention is paid to the role of state subventions, community involvement in project preparation, and the importance of transparent procedures in implementing infrastructure solutions.

It is demonstrated in the article how the School nutrition reform is increasingly moving beyond the narrow scope of education and becoming part of a broader conversation on recovery, community resilience, and investment in human capital.

## December – Launch of the practical communication guide for communities

The communications team has developed a practical guide for communities and educational institutions on effectively communicating the topic of healthy nutrition.



The guide was developed to systematise practical communication tools created within the framework of the School nutrition reform and to consolidate them into a single, user-friendly resource for local-level use. It supports communities and educational institutions in creating consistent, clear, and accurate communication about changes in school nutrition.

### The guide is intended for practical application and is particularly useful for those who:

- communicate changes to parents and local communities;
- work with children on forming healthy eating habits;
- organise thematic events and educational activities;
- manage social media pages of schools or communities;
- integrate healthy nutrition topics into the educational process.

### The guide includes:

- a clear explanation of the logic and objectives of the School nutrition reform;
- examples of communication formats and activities for different target audiences;
- recommendations on how to communicate about healthy nutrition in a non-judgmental and accessible way;
- guidance on communication in social media;
- examples of topics, messages, and approaches already used within the reform.

The guide can be used as a foundation for planning communication activities, preparing events, educational sessions, or information campaigns in communities and educational institutions.

The School nutrition reform is not only about infrastructure upgrades and standards. It is also about consistent and clear communication, which directly shapes how changes are perceived by children, parents, and the education community.



The guide is available  
[via the link](#) and can be freely  
used and shared

## Joint communication activities

School nutrition reform team also systematically developed joint communication initiatives with the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and Science, the bookstore 'Knyharnia Ye', and the "How Are You?" initiative.



Together with the First Lady Olena Zelenska, we highlighted the key events, achievements, and milestones of the reform to ensure that as wide an audience as possible could follow and understand the progress of the changes.



Such cross-sectoral cooperation strengthens public awareness of the reform and highlights sustained societal interest in healthy nutrition. In partnership with the bookstore 'Knyharnia Ye', joint communications promoted books that popularise healthy eating culture among children, parents, and educators. Cooperation with the "How Are You?" initiative was focused on the connection between psychological well-being and eating habits, emphasising the importance of a mindful approach to nutrition.



Collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education and Science ensured alignment of messages with national health and education policies and expanded outreach to key target audiences.

## 18 December – Webinar for educators and parents

The School nutrition reform team participated in an online meeting dedicated to the impact of nutrition on children's health. The webinar "School nutrition reform as a foundation for health", organised by the NGO 'National Foodservice Association' in partnership with the Public Health Centre of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine and with the support of the World Health Organization, brought together parents, educators, and professionals involved in organising nutrition in educational institutions.



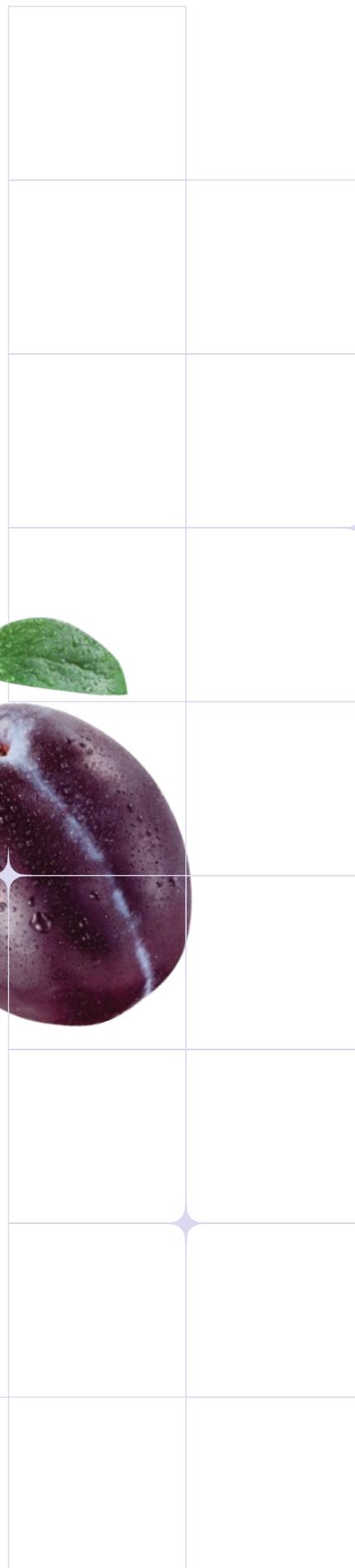
During the discussion, participants obtained knowledge of how the School nutrition reform is currently being implemented and scaled, the challenges the system faces in wartime conditions, and which governance and practical solutions have already demonstrated effectiveness at both national and local levels.

A particular focus was placed on healthy nutrition as part of daily choices for children and adults. Speakers discussed core principles of a healthy diet and approaches to communicating the benefits of healthy food to children in a respectful and accessible way – without pressure, prohibitions, or moralising.

Speakers included representatives of the School nutrition reform team:

- Orest Stepanyak – Head of the School nutrition reform team, Chair of the Board of the NNGO 'National Foodservice Association';
- Oleksandr Bondar – Coordinator for the implementation of the School nutrition reform Strategy;
- Anastasiia Shevchenko – Doctor of engineering sciences, Nutrition expert and International cooperation manager of the School nutrition reform team; Associate professor at the National university of food technologies;
- Olha Zaliznytska – Head of communications of the School nutrition reform team.

The webinar served as a platform for professional dialogue among parents, educators, and experts, and as another step towards creating a sustainable culture of healthy nutrition in educational institutions.



# SECTION V. INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT OF THE REFORM TEAM



## 14 September – Fifth Summit of First Ladies and Gentlemen

During the Fifth Summit of First Ladies and Gentlemen – an international initiative launched by Olena Zelenska – Ukraine presented School nutrition reform as an essential component of modern education policy.



This year's Summit was focused on education and its role in shaping values, resilience, and the culture of future generations. The discussions brought together First Ladies and Gentlemen, government representatives, international organisations and members of the education community. Key topics included access to education, innovation, the role of teachers, and the importance of education for reaching sustainable peace.

The School nutrition reform was presented as an integral part of the educational process, directly affecting pupils' health, concentration, and learning outcomes. Currently, approximately **2 million** Ukrainian children have access to balanced school lunches, while the strategic goal of the reform is to ensure access to quality meals for all pupils across the country.

As part of the Summit programme, the School nutrition reform team introduced updated standards and organisational models for school meals to participants. During breaks between panel discussions, guests were offered dishes from the school menu prepared by cooks

from the kitchen-factory 'Hotulmo', with the support of the NGO 'National Foodservice Association'. This provided a practical demonstration of the quality, nutritional value, and taste of modern school meals.

Participation in the Summit offered an opportunity to demonstrate to an international audience that even in wartime conditions, Ukraine continues to invest systematically in children's health and the development of human resources.

## 18 September – Visit of the Lithuanian Central Project Management Agency delegation to the kitchen-factory in Bucha



Education and children's health form the basis of sustainable national development. These shared values unite Ukraine and Lithuania in their efforts to create a safe and high-quality medium for future generations. Within this context, the School nutrition reform team met with a delegation from the Lithuanian Central Project Management Agency (CPVA) to present the transformation of Ukraine's school nutrition system and outline potential areas for further cooperation.

The visit had a strong practical focus and included an overview of solutions already implemented at the local level.

The delegation visited Lyceum No. 3 in Bucha, where a refurbished canteen operates alongside a modernised food block, upgraded in line with modern requirements. The facility applies new approaches to food block organisation, including strict food safety principles, clear zoning of production processes, and the use of modern equipment.



Particular attention was given to the kitchen-factory in Bucha – an innovative model for organising school meals. The facility provides more than **7,500** portions daily to educational institutions in the community and has prepared over **2 million** meals during 2.5 years of operation. Delegation members observed the full production cycle, from product intake to the logistics of delivering prepared meals to schools.

During the working discussion, the School nutrition reform team presented key results of the reform, the vision for its next stages, and potential partnership formats. The meeting concluded with a tasting of the lunches that are usually provided to Ukrainian pupils, which received positive feedback from Lithuanian colleagues.

In the current context, international support is particularly important. Joint efforts between Ukraine and its partners contribute to the development of a modern school nutrition system that meets European standards and ensures children's basic needs – health

and dignified learning conditions. The School nutrition reform team expressed its gratitude to Lithuania for its support and openness to continued dialogue, as investments in school meals are investments in the future.

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## 18–20 September – School Nutrition Reform Team at the Second Global Summit of the School Meals Coalition

From 18 to 20 September, the Second Global Summit of the School Meals Coalition took place in Fortaleza (Brazil). The event brought together governments and international partners around a shared global objective: to ensure that every child in the world receives at least one nutritious meal per school day by 2030.



Ukraine participated in the Summit as an active member of the global community, presenting its experience in reforming the school nutrition system. The Ukrainian delegation included representatives of the Ministry of Health and the School nutrition reform team: Head of the Team Orest Stepanyak, Deputy Head Dmytro Sivak, and International Cooperation Manager and nutrition expert Dr. Anastasiia Shevchenko. The delegation's participation reaffirmed the state's strategic position: investment in children's health remains a national priority even in wartime conditions.

During a panel discussion dedicated to school meals as a component of security and human resources development, the Ukrainian side emphasised the role of nutrition in supporting children and communities in crisis contexts. Edem Adamanov, Deputy Minister of Health of Ukraine, presented the key directions of the reform, including the planned expansion of the free school meals programme from September 2026 to cover all pupils studying in offline or blended formats, the continued modernisation of food blocks, and the development of a nationwide network of culinary hubs.

An important element of the Summit was practical exposure to different models of school meals organisation. The Ukrainian delegation examined Brazil's approaches – from the operation of school kitchens and daily menu planning to educational media in schools serving Indigenous communities. This experience provided valuable insights into how nutrition policies can be integrated into broader social and cultural contexts.

For Ukraine, the Summit served as a platform to strengthen international cooperation and reaffirm the strategic direction of the reform. Participation in the School Meals Coalition, which Ukraine joined in 2023, confirms that the School nutrition reform is part of a global movement towards a healthy, sustainable, and equitable future for children.

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## 25 September – Meeting with representatives of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and partner countries delegations

Ukraine continues to consistently scale up the School nutrition reform, positioning it as part of the global agenda on child health and human resources development. The state's objective is to provide more than **3 million** pupils with free school lunches starting from September 2026.

The reform is viewed not only as a social support measure, but as a strategic investment in health, educational outcomes, and national resilience. Accordingly, Ukraine actively engages international partners who share these values and are willing to invest in the future of children.

The School nutrition reform team, together with the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, held a meeting with representatives of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and delegations from Northern European and Baltic countries. During the meeting the reform's key results and future cooperation plans were presented.

WFP remains one of Ukraine's core partners. Between 2022 and 2025, joint efforts ensured the provision of more than **44 million** meal portions for pupils and support for nearly **2,500** schools across **16** regions of Ukraine. This international support confirms that school meals are a crucial element of resilience and post-war recovery.



## 29 September – Meeting between the School nutrition reform team and representatives of the Embassy of Italy in Ukraine and the Italian Trade Agency



The School nutrition reform in Ukraine is developing not only at the national level, but also through close cooperation with international partners. This format of engagement allows for the alignment of shared values, expertise, and resources to achieve long-term results.

Within this context, a meeting took place between the School nutrition reform team, MFA of Ukraine and representatives of the Embassy of Italy in Ukraine and the Italian Trade Agency. The Ukrainian side presented the progress of the reform, key areas of systemic transformation, and the vision for the next stages of implementation.

Particular attention was paid to the prospects of win-win partnerships: for Ukraine, access to modern technologies and best practices; for international partners, opportunities to expand cooperation and develop new economic linkages.

The meeting confirmed the growing interest of international institutions in the reform and highlighted its potential as a platform for sustainable and mutually beneficial cooperation.

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## 13–17 October – Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP) Awards

Cities play a critical role in shaping modern food systems that affect public health, community well-being, and local development. With this goal in mind, more than **300** cities from six continents – including cities from Ukraine – have joined the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP) – a global initiative for sustainable food systems.

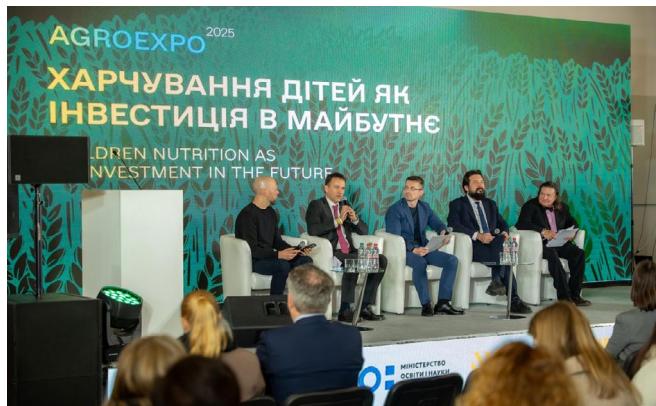
From 13 to 17 October, the MUFPP Global Forum marking the Pact's 10th anniversary was held in Milan. The Forum served as a platform for experience exchange, reflection on progress, and the establishment of new partnerships. As of today, six Ukrainian cities have joined MUFPP: Zhytomyr, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kropyvnytskyi, Sheptytskyi, Zaporizhzhia, and Brovary.

This year, the Forum was attended by Head of the School nutrition reform team Orest Stepanyak and representatives of Brovary city council. The case of Zaporizhzhia and Brovary was presented at the Milan Pact Awards in the category Sustainable Food Development. For Ukraine, this participation provided an opportunity to show national solutions while also learning from international experience – particularly in wartime conditions, when the School nutrition reform has become an example of resilience and systemic governance.

Ukraine continues to integrate into global food policy frameworks and encourages local communities to join MUFPP. A sustainable food system is not only about food – it is about children's health, local economic development, and partnerships among cities, education systems, businesses, and the state.



## 19 November – “Food from Ukraine”: an updated format of the “Grain from Ukraine” initiative



An international ‘Food from Ukraine’ Summit was held in Kyiv as an updated format of the ‘Grain from Ukraine’ initiative, focusing on global food security. The event brought together representatives of more than **40** countries and leading international organisations.

A dedicated plenary session of the Summit focused on child nutrition as one of the key determinants of global food security. Current challenges related to children’s health, including data from the WHO European Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative (COSI) were presented: nearly **23%** of Ukrainian children aged 6–8 are overweight, and more than **9%** live with obesity. Key contributing factors include insufficient physical activity, low consumption of vegetables and fruits, and excessive salt and sugar intake.

The discussions also highlighted the progress of the School nutrition reform and its strategic objectives. Currently, **2 million** pupils receive hot meals in educational institutions, while the reform aims to expand coverage to **3 million** children. To achieve this, the state invests in food block modernisation, the development of a network of kitchen-factories, and the training and upskilling of cooks.

The discussion featured representatives of the Government of Ukraine and international partners, including Ihor Kuzin, Deputy Minister of Health and Chief State Sanitary Doctor of Ukraine; Andrii Stashkiv, Deputy Minister of Education and Science; Robert Müller, Ambassador of Austria to Ukraine; Richard Ragan, WFP Country Director in Ukraine; Donald Bundy, Head of the Research Consortium for School Health and Nutrition; and Orest Stepanyak, Head of the School nutrition reform team.

Ukraine’s participation in the Summit reaffirmed that, even amid a full-scale war, the country remains an active contributor to international food policy while advancing a modern school nutrition system.

## 12 December 2025 – Visit of foreign diplomatic missions to the kitchen-factory



International partnership remains a key driver of the development of the School nutrition reform in Ukraine, opening access to expertise, technology, and investment. One of the examples of modern infrastructure solutions is the ‘Hotulmo’ kitchen-factory in Bucha, which was visited by representatives of diplomatic missions from more than ten countries across Europe, Asia, and America.

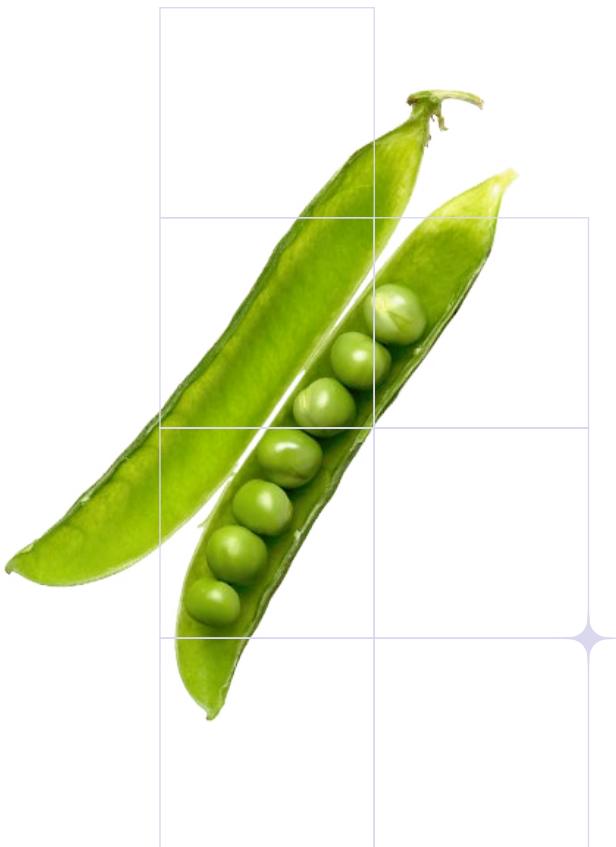
During the visit the operation process of the kitchen-factory, which provides meals daily to **16** schools in the community and serves approximately **7,500** pupils was shown to the diplomats. Guests observed the full operational cycle – from infrastructure and technological processes to compliance with sanitary and quality standards.

The School nutrition reform team also presented the strategic goals and priorities of the reform. These included the update of the Strategy till 2027, the scaling of the system to ensure quality meals for **3 million** children from autumn 2026, the development of infrastructure, human resources, and the regulatory framework, as well as the strengthening of international cooperation.

Participants discussed infrastructure solutions, particularly the development of the kitchen-factory network, and mechanisms to ensure the ethical and transparent use of public funds. A new strategic objective was highlighted: expanding international partnerships and coordinating donor support at the community level.



The visit concluded with a tasting of dishes from the school menu, allowing partners to assess the practical outcomes of the reform. School meals in Ukraine are increasingly recognised internationally as an example of systemic solutions and long-term investment in the health of future generations.





**Thank you for reading the Digest  
and for following the progress of  
the School nutrition reform.**

New solutions and the next stages  
of change lie ahead.

