

THE SCHOOL NUTRITION REFORM TEAM DIGEST

JANUARY-JUNE 2026



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Welcome! We are pleased to present the sixth Digest by the School Nutrition Reform Team – covering the key developments that took place in January–June 2026.

In the first half of 2026, the financial capacity of communities was strengthened, approaches to funding were updated, and resources were expanded thanks to the support of international partners. At the same time, projects were selected for the modernization of school canteens and food blocks.

A separate focus remained on communication – through educational initiatives, community engagement in events, and practical guides.

Today, about **2 million** pupils are covered by hot meals, and all steps and decisions taken within the reform are aimed at moving to the next stage – ensuring that, starting from September 2026, all schoolchildren receive free hot meals, which is about **3 million** children.

In this issue, we have gathered the most important updates – decisions, events and opportunities that support the implementation of the reform and help develop a modern school nutrition system in Ukraine.

Enjoy reading!



SECTION I. STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY CAPACITY



School Meals Funding in 2026

In 2026, **UAH 14.4 billion** from the state budget has been allocated to provide meals for pupils. As of the end of May 2026, **UAH 5.9 billion** had already been allocated among local budgets. Communities can also use **UAH 76.8 million** in remaining funds from the 2025 educational subvention.

Separately, school meals funding is being strengthened with support from the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP). In 2026, **UAH 183.1 million** was allocated for frontline and border regions. Of this amount:

- **UAH 93.3 million** – remaining funds from the previous year;
- **UAH 89.8 million** – new funding that has already been distributed.

In addition, on April 1, 2026, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine allocated an additional **UAH 59.5 million** for hot meals and food provision for primary school pupils. Of this amount:

- **UAH 54.9 million** – WFP funds received in 2026;
- **UAH 4.6 million** – unused remaining funds from 2025.

This funding is aimed at providing meals for primary school pupils in Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Sumy, Kharkiv, Kherson and Chernihiv regions during April–May 2026.

Thus, in 2026, school meals funding is being strengthened both through the state subvention and additional support from WFP.

April 1 – Change in the Approach to School Meals Funding

The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine updated the mechanism for using the state subvention for school meals, making it more flexible for communities.

The mandatory 70/30 co-financing ratio has now been cancelled. Local self-government bodies will independently determine the part of their own contribution, which allows the cost of meals to be better adapted to the real conditions in communities.

The key restriction remains unchanged: subvention funds are directed exclusively to food products. Other expenses will be covered through co-financing from local budgets.

This approach allows state funding to focus specifically on the quality and sufficiency of food products, while providing communities with greater management flexibility. It is expected to strengthen the stability of the system, improve the quality of meals and help expand children's access to free lunches.

Currently, about **2 million** pupils are covered by hot meals, including more than **1.5 million** through the state subvention. In 2026, **UAH 14.4 billion** has been allocated for the programme. Starting from September, it is planned to provide free meals to all pupils studying offline or in a blended format – approximately up to **3 million** children.

Grant Competition «VARTO: RECIPE OF CARE» for Veteran Businesses in School Meals



As the school meal reform expands, the need for modern solutions for organizing meals in educational institutions is growing. This opens up new opportunities for veteran businesses as well — particularly in catering, outsourcing and the provision of meal services for schools.

In May, a new grant program **«VARTO: RECIPE OF CARE»** was presented in the Kyiv region. It is aimed at supporting veterans who are starting or developing their own businesses in the field of school meals.

The program is implemented by the **Ukrainian Veterans Fund of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs** in partnership with the **School Nutrition Reform Team**, with the support of the **MHP – Community Charitable Foundation** within the **MHP Poruch** programme.

The program provides grant support ranging from **UAH 500,000** to **UAH 3 million** for veteran business projects related to organizing meals in educational institutions.

The presentation of the program took place during the introductory and discussion event **«VARTO: Recipe of Care. Veteran Entrepreneurship and School**

Meals: A Practical Case of a Kitchen-Factory». Participants gained knowledge about three technological models of meals organization — **«basic kitchen»**, **«support kitchen»** and **«kitchen-factory»**.

A separate visit was organized for the participants to the municipal enterprise «HOTUIMO Kitchen-Factory» in Bucha. During the visit, practical experience in organizing the centralized meals model was demonstrated: from production processes to logistics and the delivery of ready meals to educational institutions.

The **«VARTO: Recipe of Care»** program combines social and economic impact. For the school meals system, it is a practical tool for strengthening the capacity of communities and finding new solutions at the local level.

For veterans it is an opportunity to enter a new or familiar field through work and entrepreneurship.

For children and parents, it means, above all, high-quality, safe and modernly organized meals.



SECTION II. MODERNIZATION OF FOOD BLOCKS



State Funding for the Renovation of School Blocks



The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine announced the selection of projects to receive a state subvention for the modernization of school canteens and food blocks.

The funding is intended for the purchase of equipment, reconstruction and capital repairs of food blocks in educational institutions. Projects may be implemented under different technological models of meals organization, including «basic kitchen», «support kitchen» or in cooperation with «kitchen-factories». This year, the state subvention amounts to **UAH 1 billion**.

Local self-government bodies and regional administrations may participate in the selection by submitting project applications through the DREAM electronic system. Mandatory requirements include co-financing from the local budget and the availability of prepared project documentation.

The subvention may be directed to different types of educational institutions, including hub schools, special educational institutions, as well as military lyceums. Ensuring a safe educational process is also an important requirement, in particular the availability or arrangement of a shelter. After the regional selection, the projects will be reviewed

by a commission of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, which will form the list of facilities to receive funding.

Infrastructure renewal is also continuing in parallel: in 2026, **UAH 1 billion** has been allocated for the modernization of food blocks. In total, over the past three years, more than **170** school canteens have been renovated using subvention funds.

Second kitchen-factory in Ukraine preparing to open in Kharkiv region



Kharkiv region is preparing to open the second kitchen-factory in Ukraine with the support of The Howard G. Buffett Foundation.

The facility is expected to start operating in September and will be able to provide hot meals for **14,500** pupils. For a region that has been severely affected by Russian aggression, this is an important step in developing school meals and creating better conditions for children.

The kitchen-factory will work as a centralized facility: meals will be cooked at the factory and then delivered to educational institutions in communities.

At the same time, Kharkiv region is restoring its educational infrastructure and creat-

ing safe conditions for learning. The region is building underground schools and modern shelters, including five with the support of Howard Buffett. This is expected to help more than **40,000** pupils return to in-person or blended learning.

February 28 – Completion of Project Submissions under the «Kusanone» Programme of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan

Expanding international cooperation remains one of the important areas of development of the School Nutrition Reform. In particular, Ukraine continues active cooperation with the Government and the Embassy of Japan under the «Kusanone» programme.

The **«Kusanone»** programme is a grant aid tool aimed at supporting local community development projects in developing countries. It focuses on initiatives that improve living conditions, health and the safety of the population. Both local self-government bodies and non-governmental and non-profit organizations, including educational institutions, can take part in the programme.

As of February 28, Ukrainian communities completed the submission of applications for the programme. In total, **93 projects** were submitted, which shows a high level of interest among communities in attracting international support for the development of food block infrastructure.

After submission, projects are evaluated by the staff of the Embassy of Japan. The selection takes into account how the project meets the basic needs of the community, its social and economic impact, as well as the applicant's capacity to implement the initiative properly.

Participation in the «Kusanone» programme opens up additional opportunities for communities to develop the educational environment, in particular by modernizing infrastructure and improving conditions for organizing meals in educational institutions.



WFP supported 298 schools with modern kitchen equipment

In the first half of 2026, the United Nations World Food Programme, as part of its school meals programme, procured modern energy-efficient equipment for **298** schools. Support was provided to schools in Chernihiv, Sumy, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv and Kherson regions, as well as in the city of Kharkiv.

The schools received electric stoves, combi steam ovens, hood-type dishwashers and cooking kettles. This will help make meal preparation more convenient, safer and more energy-efficient.

In addition, **79** schools received fuel cards for generators and school transport to support the uninterrupted operation of food blocks during winter power outages.



Enabel helps modernize food blocks in Kyiv and Chernihiv regions

Enabel is Belgium's federal development agency, which supports international development projects. As part of the School Nutrition Reform, the organization helps modernize food blocks in selected educational institutions in Kyiv and Chernihiv regions.

In Kyiv region, the food block at Novopetrivskyi Lyceum has already been modernized. Three more educational institutions are at the final stages of renovation. In Chernihiv region, modernization is also ongoing in two more institutions and is at earlier stages.

This support is especially important for communities, as it helps gradually modernize food blocks and improve conditions for organizing school meals.



Final Distribution of the Subvention in 2026



In 2026, communities continued to receive state support for the modernization of school canteens and food blocks. Subvention funds were directed toward the purchase of modern equipment, capital repairs of premises and the creation of proper conditions for organizing hot meals in educational institutions.

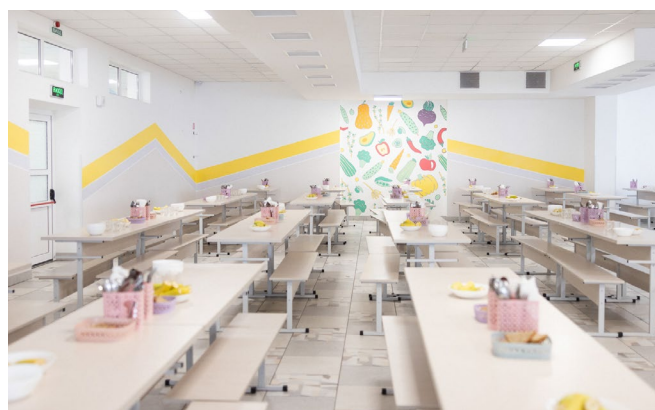
The Government approved several funding distributions. In particular, funds were received by educational institutions in Vinnytsia, Volyn, Dnipropetrovsk, Zhytomyr, Zaporizhzhia, Kyiv, Kirovohrad, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Poltava, Rivne, Sumy, Kharkiv, Kherson, Khmelnytskyi, Cherkasy, Chernihiv

and other regions.

In total, in 2026, the state subvention for the modernization of school canteens amounted to **UAH 1 billion**. These funds financed **52** competitive projects in **19** regions, as well as the completion of **21** facilities where works had started earlier. The implementation of all approved projects will help improve the conditions for organizing meals for approximately **50,000** pupils.

Project selection was carried out through the DREAM and AIKOM digital systems. Final decisions were made by a commission of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine with the participation of independent experts, including representatives of the European Union Anti-Corruption Initiative in Ukraine. This approach helps make the selection process more transparent and prioritized for communities that have prepared projects and are ready to implement changes.

Currently, around **20%** of food blocks in Ukraine have been modernized out of the total need. Some facilities were renovated using state subvention funds, some are still at the implementation stage, and more than **1,500** canteens have been repaired thanks to local budgets and the support of international partners.



SECTION III. COMMUNICATION OF HEALTHY NUTRITION

Practical Tools for Communities on Healthy Nutrition



January 20 – Release of a Guide on Healthy Nutrition Communication and Thematic Festivals



Even without a separate school subject, the topic of healthy nutrition can already be integrated into the educational process today. It connects with different school subjects – from natural sciences to mathematics, art or project activities. For example, in mathematics lessons, these can be percentage problems related to diet; in biology, topics about the human body and the impact of nutrition on health; and in art classes, the creation of visual works and projects about a balanced diet.

To support communities and educational institutions in systematic work on this topic, the School Nutrition Reform Team prepared a practical guide. It brings together tools that will help integrate the topic of healthy nutrition into the educational and communication space of schools.

The guide was developed as a practical tool for communities and educational institutions – it can be used when planning communication campaigns, preparing educational events or integrating the topic of healthy nutrition into the learning process.



The guide can be
downloaded via the [link](#)

Healthy Nutrition Festivals as a New Communication Tool in 2026



As part of the implementation of the School Nutrition Reform Strategy until 2027, one of the key focuses is creating a culture of conscious healthy nutrition choices. In 2026, this area receives an increased focus through communication: work with children, parents and educators on daily eating habits and the principles of a balanced diet.

As part of this approach, communities are recommended to hold at least one thematic event during the year – in particular, in the format of a healthy nutrition festival.

To support communities in preparing such events, the School Nutrition Reform Team developed a separate collection of **recommendations**. The document offers practical solutions for local self-government bodies, educational institutions and managers who plan to organize an event in a systematic and meaningful way.

In particular, the recommendations include:

- possible formats for holding festivals;
- examples of interactive activities for children;
- approaches to communication with different audiences;

- practical implementation cases;
- a selection of useful resources for preparation.

Festivals are viewed not only as events, but as a platform for interaction between different participants: educational institutions, parents, local producers and communities. Such events can combine culinary master classes, tastings of the school menu, educational workshops and interactive formats for children.

February 19 – The First Major Healthy Nutrition Festival in Khmelnytskyi Region



This year, within the School Nutrition Reform, special attention is being paid to healthy nutrition communication. Festivals in communities have become one of the important formats – they help talk with children, parents and educators about a balanced diet through practice, tastings, master classes and joint cooking.

One of the first major festivals this year was **School Food Fest: Healthy with Roots**, which took place in Khmelnytskyi Region.

The festival was held in the culinary hub of the Khmelnytskyi Centre for Vocational Education in the Service Sector – one of the learning spaces created within the reform to train school cooks.

Although the hub has been operating for less than a year, **310** school food blocks cooks and **220** engineering and pedagogical staff have already completed training there. In addition to professional training for cooks, such spaces become platforms for educational and awareness-raising events that help create a culture of healthy nutrition in communities.

During the event, participants learned about modern approaches to the school menu, took part in master classes and tastings, and discovered a new interpretation of traditional dishes from the Podillia area.



The festival was attended by the First Lady of Ukraine, Olena Zelenska, as part of her working visit to Khmelnytskyi Region. During the visit, she also visited educational institutions where school canteens and food blocks had been modernized in line with the standards of the School Nutrition Reform.

During a meeting with community leaders, the further implementation of the reform at the local level was discussed. The discussion focused not only on infrastructure modernization, but also on the importance of creating a culture of healthy nutrition among children and their families – one of the key objectives of the reform.

The festival became an example of how local initiatives can turn the reform into a

living social process – when healthy nutrition is discussed not only at the policy level, but also in the everyday life of schools and communities.



March 12 – International School Meals Day: How Ukraine Marked It at the National Level



On the second Thursday of March, the world marks International School Meals Day – an initiative that brings countries together around the topic of quality and balanced nutrition for children. This day is intended to pay attention to the role of school meals in pupils' health, development and successful learning, as well as to promote best international practices in this area.

The idea of marking International School Meals Day emerged as a result of coopera-

tion between the United Kingdom and the United States, which had been exchanging experience in school meals policies since 2010. In 2013, this cooperation grew into an international campaign that today brings together countries from around the world – pupils, teachers, governments, cooks, nutrition specialists and communities.

For Ukraine, this date became one more opportunity to talk about the systemic changes taking place within the School Nutrition Reform, initiated in 2020 by the First Lady of Ukraine, Olena Zelenska. The reform provides for comprehensive transformations – from updating menus in line with modern nutritional standards and modernizing food blocks to training cooks and creating a new culture of nutrition among children.

One of the key areas of these changes is the **fourth strategic goal of the reform** – communication of conscious choice, which involves systematic work with pupils, parents and educators to form healthy eating habits.

On the occasion of International School Meals Day, a nationwide communication campaign took place in Ukraine, joined by the reform's initiator Olena Zelenska, representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, the Public Health Center, regional military administrations and communities.

In total, more than **30** organizations and institutions took part in the campaign, and more than **40** publications and video materials were prepared.

Schools across the country joined the **#SchoolsMealsUA** challenge, sharing photos and posts on social media about the activities they held: thematic lessons, tastings of healthy dishes, culinary master classes, interactive sessions and discussions about the principles of a balanced diet.

The initiative became a valuable opportunity to bring together educators, children, parents and communities in a shared dialogue about healthy nutrition, as well as to show how systemic changes in school nutrition are gradually shaping a new culture of daily choices in favour of health.

A total of **264** participants registered for the webinar, and the recording received **2,165** views.



The webinar recording
can be viewed via the [link](#)



May 6 – Webinar «School Nutrition Reform as a Foundation for Health»

On May 6, the webinar «School Nutrition Reform as a Foundation for Health» took place. It was dedicated to the role of school nutrition in forming healthy habits among children and the further development of the reform in Ukraine.

The event was held by the NGO 'National Foodservice Association' together with the Public Health Center, with the support of WHO. Parents, educators and everyone working with the topic of children's nutrition and health joined the event.

During the webinar, participants discussed the scaling of the School Nutrition Reform, the challenges caused by the war, as well as practical advice on healthy nutrition in everyday life. Special attention was paid to how to talk with children about the importance of a balanced diet in a simple, clear and pressure-free way.

Among the speakers were representatives of the School Nutrition Reform Team: Orest Stepanyak, Oleksandr Bondar, Anastasiia Shevchenko and Olha Zaliznytska. They shared their vision for the further implementation of the reform, practical approaches to organizing meals in educational institutions, as well as advice on communicating the topic of healthy nutrition to different audiences.

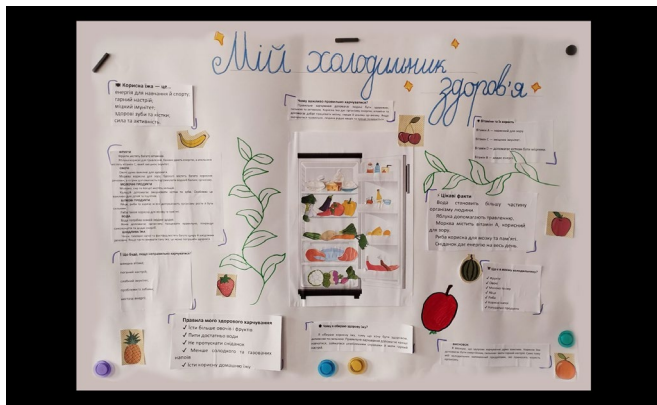
Healthy Nutrition in Communities: Activities for Children, Parents and Educators

In 2026-2027 special attention is being paid to healthy nutrition communication within the School Nutrition Reform. As part of the fourth goal of the Strategy, communities are holding thematic events for children, parents and educators – including healthy nutrition festivals.

This year, communities are expected to hold at least one thematic event that will help talk with children, parents and educators about healthy nutrition in a simple and engaging format.

Some communities are already actively implementing this area in practice – interactive games, team tasks, tastings, excursions, thematic lessons and discussions about healthy nutrition are taking place in different oblasts.

Communities from Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Odesa, Zakarpattia and other regions have joined the initiatives.



In particular, in the Dnipropetrovsk region, the healthy nutrition festival «Toloka Smaku» was held in several stages. In early April, one of the district stages was hosted by Lyceum No. 20 in Kamianske: teams from Kamianske, Bozhedarivka and Verkhnodniprovsk competed there.



The winners of the qualifying rounds later met in the final, which brought together teams of schoolchildren from six districts of the region.



In the final, pupils of grades 8–9 completed thematic tests, logical thinking exercises, identified healthy products and prepared a nutritious burger. The team of Ternivskyi Lyceum No. 7 won. This format showed how the topic of healthy nutrition can be combined with games, teamwork and practical tasks.

In Zakarpattia, in educational institutions of the Khust City Council, the healthy nutrition festival brought together various activities for pupils. Schoolchildren learned about natural products, local production, regional traditions and the role of quality food in the daily diet.



Such examples show that festivals can be a lively and understandable format for healthy nutrition communication. They help children talk about food through experience, play and participation, while helping communities show their own solutions and motivate other communities to join this area of the reform.

June 16 – Working Session on Healthy Nutrition Communication



In 2026-2027 healthy nutrition communication remains one of the important areas of the reform. This is not only about informing, but also about how to speak clearly and appropriately with children and Ukrainian families about food, its impact on health and the formation of daily eating habits.

This topic was the focus of a working session held on June 16 by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine together with the School Nutrition Reform Team for communities and educational institutions. The event was held with the support of the European Union Anti-Corruption Initiative in Ukraine (EUACI).



The key topic of the meeting was creating a conscious attitude toward food, as quality nutrition requires not only implementation in schools, but also a clear explanation for children and parents. This was emphasized by

the First Lady of Ukraine, Olena Zelenska, in her opening remarks, noting that it is important to explain why this particular food is healthy and how it affects children's health.



This idea was further developed by Deputy Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine Viktor Mykyta and Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine Nadiia Kuzmychova, who spoke about the further implementation of the reform and the importance of coordinated communication at all levels – from state policy to the daily work of communities and educational institutions.

The practical part of the session was opened by Orest Stepanyak, Head of the School Nutrition Reform Team. He explained why changes within the reform need to be communicated simply and consistently so that they are understandable for communities, schools, children and parents.



Then, Olha Zaliznytska, Lead Communication Manager of the School Nutrition Reform Team, presented communication activities and practical tools that will help communities and educational institutions work more systematically with the topic of healthy eating habits.



A separate block by EUACI partners was dedicated to integrity within the reform, in particular how to explain to communities the importance of transparent and accountable processes. The session ended with questions and a discussion of practical aspects of the work.



A joint calendar of community activities was also presented during the session. It is meant to help see in advance which lessons, festivals, excursions, meetings and other healthy nutrition activities communities are planning, as well as to better coordinate them at the level of regions, ministries and the School Nutrition Reform Team.

This approach will help strengthen community initiatives, in particular by joining events, supporting their coverage or helping with them locally. After the session, the prepared information was sent to regional military administrations and communities.



The presentations and materials of the working session are available via the [link](#)

SECTION IV. INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT OF THE REFORM TEAM



January 21 – Partnership with the EU: support and expansion of the nutrition programme



The European Union remains one of the key partners in the implementation of the School Nutrition Reform in Ukraine. EU support is strategically important not only for the development of healthy nutrition policies, but also for the practical scaling of changes – primarily in providing children with free hot meals.

Two EU support tranches of **EUR 65 million** and **EUR 200 million** have made an important contribution to the sustainability of the reform. This support is aimed at providing Ukrainian pupils with quality hot meals and is part of broader assistance to Ukraine's education sector during the full-scale war. Thanks to this support, the state and communities have additional opportunities to implement the free nutrition programme and gradually expand it.

In this context, the School Nutrition Reform **Team held a working meeting with Stefan Schleuning, Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to Ukraine**, as well as members of the Delegation. During the meeting, the parties discussed further support for the free meals programme, which is one of the key tools for ensuring children's equal access to hot lunches at school.

Special attention was paid to the prospects of expanding cooperation to other areas of the reform as well. The discussion focused not only on financial support, but also on a broader partnership to strengthen systemic changes that help build a modern, sustainable and child-centred school nutrition system.

January 22 – Finnish Experience as a Guide for System Development: Meeting with Finland's School Meals Ambassador Anu Saarela

Back in 1948, Finland became the first country in the world to introduce free meals for all pupils and remains one of the global leaders in school nutrition to this day.

Finnish schools use the buffet principle, and their menus are based on healthy and balanced dishes. Frying is almost never used – food is mostly baked or stewed. Great attention is paid to vegetables, salads and vegetarian dishes. Sweets and drinks with added sugar are not allowed in schools.

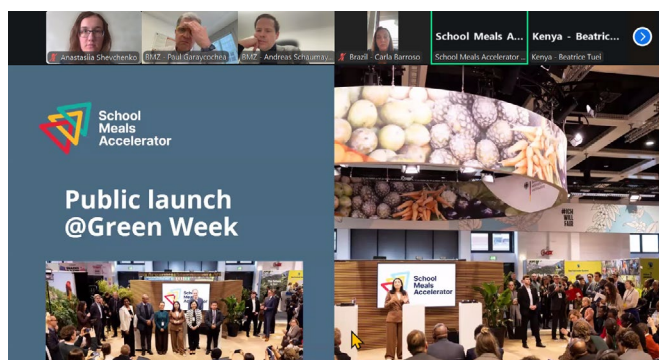
The school nutrition system in Finland, which has been free for all students for decades, is one of the key examples for Ukraine in implementing the reform.

That is why the School Nutrition Reform Team continues to study the Finnish experience and develop cooperation with partners from Finland. In particular, a meeting was held with **Anu Saarela – Ambassador for School Meals and Multilateral Cooperation** at the Unit for Humanitarian Assistance and Policy of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, as well as with representatives of the Ministry, the Finnish National Agency for Education and organizations supporting the private sector.

During the meeting, the participants discussed opportunities to implement joint

programmes to support Ukraine's recovery. In particular, the discussion focused on possible areas of cooperation that could help modernize school food blocks and strengthen human capacity in the field of school nutrition.

January 27 – School Meals Coalition: Discussion on the Development of School Nutrition



On January 27, 2026, a working meeting was held with representatives of member states and partner organizations of the School Meals Coalition – an international platform that brings together more than **100** countries and over **150** partners to develop and expand school nutrition programmes around the world.

Ukraine joined the Coalition in 2023 and is actively involved in its work. During the first working meeting of 2026, updates to the School Nutrition Reform Strategy until 2027 were presented, including the approval of a new operational plan. Key achievements and challenges at the implementation stage were also outlined.

Participation in such international events allows Ukraine not only to present its progress, but also to integrate the best global practices into the national school nutrition system. This is an important step toward improving the quality of children's nutrition and shaping long-term solutions in the field of health.

February 20 – Visit of the JICA Delegation to the Kitchen-Factory in Bucha



The first kitchen-factory in Ukraine, located in Bucha, welcomed a delegation from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The purpose of the visit was to learn about the Ukrainian model of centralized school nutrition and the practical results of the reform implementation.

During the visit, Orest Stepanyak, Head of the School Nutrition Reform Team, together with representatives of the enterprise, presented the full production cycle of the kitchen-factory – from quality control of raw materials to cooking and delivering ready meals to schools. The delegation also learned about the logistics system, which makes it possible to provide thousands of pupils with hot, balanced lunches every day.



A separate part of the programme was a tasting of the menu of the day – the same dishes that schoolchildren received that

day: fish with vegetables and rice, carrot and dried apricot salad, cheesecake balls with berry coulis, and uzvar.

The visit also became an opportunity to discuss international experience in organizing school nutrition. Japan is one of the countries where the culture of nutrition in schools has a systematic educational dimension, in particular through the concept of Shokuiku – an approach to education through food that combines eating habits, local products and educational practices.

Such meetings support the exchange of experience and the development of international partnerships in the field of school nutrition.

February 26 – Meeting with Representatives of ACTED France and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine

France is one of the reliable partners in the implementation of the School Nutrition Reform, supporting its different areas. In particular, ACTED - the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development, actively contributed to the implementation of the infrastructure component of the reform in 2023–2025, with a focus on energy efficiency.

On February 26, a working meeting was held with representatives of ACTED and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. During the meeting, the parties discussed the further continuation of cooperation in developing the infrastructure of educational institutions. In particular, the discussion focused on supporting the modernization of food blocks, including through the introduction of energy-efficient technological equipment.

March 3 – Memorandum of Cooperation Signed between the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and the European Union Anti-Corruption Initiative in Ukraine (EUACI)



On March 3, 2026, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and the European Union Anti-Corruption Initiative in Ukraine (EUACI) strengthened their cooperation at a new level by signing a Memorandum that defines joint priorities for increasing transparency, accountability and integrity in the education sector. The document formalizes the partnership and creates a basis for the systematic implementation of joint initiatives.

Joint work began in 2024 with a pilot project within the School Nutrition Reform. Its aim was to reduce corruption risks during the use of the state subvention for the modernization of food blocks. As part of this cooperation, a comprehensive control approach was introduced – from the analysis of project documentation to remote monitoring of work implementation.

The tools used made it possible to identify more than **UAH 320 million** in potentially inefficient spending at the project selection stage. This allowed resources to be redirected and additional funding to be provided for **36** additional food blocks.

This approach shows the effectiveness of preventive control and strengthens trust in the management processes of infrastructure projects.

In 2026–2027, the partnership will be expanded. Key areas include the creation of a digital tool to monitor the cost of food products and nutrition services in educational institutions, which will help increase procurement transparency.

At the same time, the cooperation also covers a broader context – creating a culture of integrity in education. This includes the implementation of the relevant strategy until 2030, which provides for updating educational content, developing teachers' professional competencies and introducing more transparent management approaches.



The signing of the Memorandum lays the foundation for long-term changes and strengthens the systematic transformation of Ukraine's education sector.

March 26 – meeting of representatives of the UN World Food Program and the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine on continuing cooperation



The topic of further development of the school nutrition reform was discussed during a working meeting between the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and the World Food Programme.

Thanks to the joint work of the state and international partners, a systematic approach to organizing school meals has been formed in Ukraine. Today, about **2 million** pupils receive free hot meals, with special attention to communities in front-line regions.

The contribution of the World Food Programme is one of the defining ones in this process. Starting with support for individual schools in the Kyiv region in the 2022–2023 academic year, the initiative has gradually been expanded to the national level: it currently covers primary school pupils in 16 regions, and in the 2025–2026 academic year – already about **2,500** schools in front-line regions.

In parallel, infrastructure solutions are being implemented with the support of the World Food Programme: partners provide schools with the necessary energy-efficient equipment and kitchen utensils, which allows

to increase the quality and sustainability of the nutrition organization.

The next step is a full-scale expansion of the program. From September 2026, the state plans to provide free meals to all pupils in grades 1–11 – about **3 million** children.

The discussion focused on the resources and tools needed for this transition: additional funding, modernization of food blocks, development of a network of kitchen-factories, as well as strengthening the capacity of the team coordinating the reform at the national level and interacting with communities.

Following the meeting, the parties confirmed their readiness to continue cooperation and agreed on further steps to expand support and effective coordination with international investors.

May 27 – Presentation of the Ukrainian school nutrition reform at Rome Nutrition Week 2026

Rome Nutrition Week 2026, an annual event dedicated to coordinated actions in the field of nutrition, took place in Rome on May 25–28. As part of the fifth goal of the Reform Strategy, which involves the development of international cooperation and the presentation of Ukrainian experience abroad, on May 27, Dmytro Kokhan, Deputy Director of the Department of Economic Diplomacy and Reconstruction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, spoke at the plenary session «Local Food Solutions for Global Nutrition Impact».

He spoke about the Ukrainian school meals model, which continues to operate during the war and at the same time develops as a sustainable system. Local purchases from Ukrainian producers, stable production and

supply, the development of kitchen-factories and cook & chill technology were discussed separately.

The Ukrainian experience was also noted by the moderator of the session, Matthew Hollingworth, Deputy Executive Director for Program Operations of the UN World Food Program: during his visits to the frontline regions of Ukraine, he saw how, despite the shelling, children continue to receive hot meals.

Talking about the reform at the international level is important. This helps to show the Ukrainian experience and increase attention to the changes taking place in the school feeding system.

June 8–13 – Experiences of Finland, Denmark and Sweden for school nutrition reform

In June, the School Nutrition Reform Team visited Finland, Denmark, and Sweden to learn more about different approaches to school nutrition, nutrition education, procurement, sustainable consumption, and community engagement.

Finland. A country that has been providing free hot school meals to pupils for over 75 years. This experience is particularly close to Ukraine: Finland was the first in the world to pass a law on free school meals in 1943, during the war. Today, Ukraine is also developing reform during a full-scale war, so the Finnish example is important not only as a successful model, but also as an experience of a long-term solution laid down in a difficult period for the country.

In Finland, meetings were held with representatives of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Agriculture

and Forestry, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Education Agency, the Finnish Institute of Health and Welfare, the University of Helsinki, and the Finnish Society for Food Education. Puistola Comprehensive School in Helsinki and catering company Compass Group were also on the program.



In Finland, the team saw how the system works from the inside: in schools, in kitchens, and in companies that provide catering services. Among the interesting practices in schools is the subject Home Economics, which is mandatory for seventh-graders and optional in grades 8–9. In such lessons, children prepare healthy meals themselves, learn to plan a budget, make informed choices, and care for the environment.

Denmark. Although Denmark only started a pilot project for a school meals program a year ago, the School Nutrition Reform Team in Copenhagen studied municipal approaches to food organization: they visited

the central kitchen, the city hall and spoke with representatives of the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration and the non-governmental organization Madkulturen. They examined in detail the work of the central kitchen, the online lunch ordering system, approaches to subventions and the role of organic products in the menu.

They paid special attention to how Denmark works with culinary teams: they involve experts, recognize chefs and maintain high standards in school nutrition. Another important direction that the team saw in the Lindevang and Ellebjerg Food School Copenhagen is food education, gardening and an ecological approach. Children can grow vegetables, study the impact of food on the environment, plan menus and learn a responsible attitude to food. In some schools, they also interact with animals, including geese and bees, making food education part of a broader hands-on learning experience.



While in Denmark, the team also participated in Folkemødet, the country's largest annual democracy festival. On June 13, the festival hosted a panel discussion «Ukraine and Denmark: School Food as a Cultural Builder», where Ukraine was represented by Orest Stepanyak, Head of the School Nutrition Reform Team. Panelists discussed the experiences of both countries, the exchange of approaches and joint solutions in the field of

school nutrition, as well as how this topic can strengthen cultural and social ties between Ukraine and Denmark. The event was organized by the University of Copenhagen and Lund University



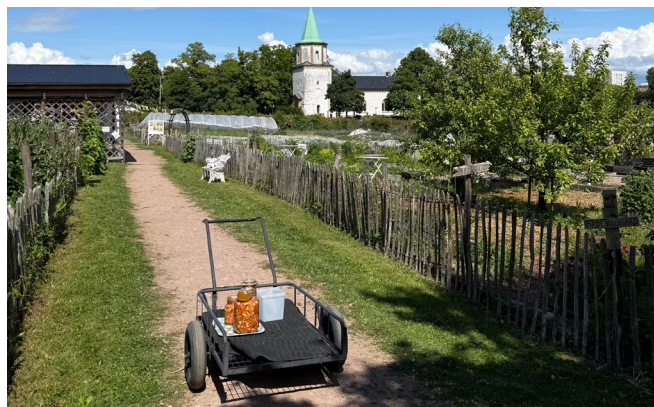
Sweden showed another interesting approach – combining school meals with climate goals and sustainable consumption. In Malmö, a single menu is for all schools, and in one of the schools visited by the team, they strive for 85% of products to be organic – now this figure is already 84%.



Special attention is paid there to the participation of children in processes related to nutrition. Pupils can help in the kitchen during practical classes, participate in meetings about nutrition, and teachers eat together with the children. After lunch, food waste is weighed in schools to better understand pupils' preferences and adjust approaches to the menu. The team also got

acquainted with agricultural education: children are involved in growing plants, farming, and the path of food from the garden to the plate.

The study tour provided an opportunity to see the approaches of the Nordic countries to school meals and share the Ukrainian experience.



June 15 – closing of applications for the SlovakAid small grants program

In June, the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation **SlovakAid/SAMRS** closed call for applications for the Small Grants Program. The program was aimed at supporting projects in Ukraine in the areas of education, health, food security, community development, infrastructure, and sustainable resource use.

Within the program, applicants could receive up to **10,000 euros** for the implementation of a project lasting from 6 to 12 months. Applications could be submitted by public organizations, non-profit legal entities, including educational institutions, as well as local and regional governments.

This opportunity is important for school nutrition reform, as the program's priorities include the development of educational infrastructure, support for nutrition systems, sustainability of solutions, and benefits for communities. About **40 applications** were submitted in the area related to improving school nutrition.

Such grant opportunities help communities and educational institutions attract additional resources for practical changes: improving the material and technical base and creating more sustainable conditions for organizing children's nutrition.

June 17 – Agreement with the Irish government to support food security and school meals in Ukraine

The UN World Food Programme and the Government of Ireland have signed an agreement for 2 million euros. The document was signed by the Director of the UN World Food Programme in Ukraine, Richard Ragan, and the Ambassador of Ireland to Ukraine, Jonathan Conlan. The signing was attended by the Head of the School Nutrition Reform Team, Orest Stepanyak.

The funds are to support food security in Ukraine and beyond. The agreement covers two areas: school nutrition in Ukraine and the Food From Ukraine initiative.

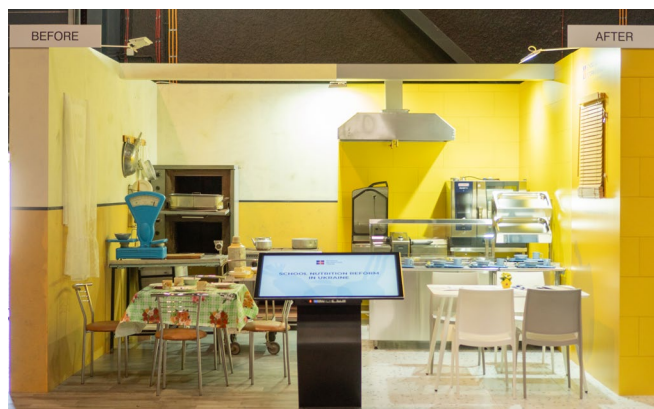
In particular, about 1 million euros are provided for the purchase of lunches for pupils in front-line regions within the frame-

work of the UN World Food Programme School Nutrition Programme. The remaining funding is for the supply of Ukrainian products to countries in need of food aid.

The UN World Food Programme is one of Ukraine's key international partners in the field of school nutrition. In cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, the organization supports the provision of hot lunches to pupils helps communities improve the conditions for organizing children's nutrition.

June 25–26 – Ukraine Recovery Conference in Gdansk

On June 25–26, the **Ukraine Recovery Conference**, an international conference on the recovery of Ukraine, was held in Gdansk. The School Nutrition Reform Team took part in the event to present the reform as part of the country's recovery and to show the practical results of the changes that are already taking place in schools and communities.



Especially for this year's participation in the conference, the Team prepared a special stand that clearly showed the result of the reform implementation, in particular the modernization of school food blocks. This is an exhibition stand – «Before – After» where conference guests could see how Ukrainian school food

blocks are changing: from outdated food blocks to modern spaces where high-quality and safe food is prepared for children. The stand gathered a very large number of reactions. Some recalled their own school food blocks, some compared what they saw with their own experience, and some noted with surprise how much school spaces can change. It was this contrast between the familiar past and what Ukrainian school cafeterias are gradually becoming that attracted the most attention.



Next to the stand was a **Kitchen-show**. This is a practical part of the reform presentation. Conference guests could taste dishes from the school menu, which are already being prepared in Ukrainian educational institutions. In two days, the chefs prepared about **1,000** portions: borscht, pork buckwheat pancakes, potatoes baked with turmeric, bulgur, fishballs, berry compote, and for dessert – banana casserole. The team of chefs made their best, because there were always queues at the distribution, and some guests returned for additional servings.



The presentation of the School Nutrition Reform at the Ukraine Recovery Conference was made possible with the support of partners: the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), the EU Anti-Corruption Initiative in Ukraine (EUACI), and the Swiss-Ukrainian DECIDE project. This made it possible to show conference participants the practical results of changes in school nutrition and draw more attention to the role of the reform in Ukraine's recovery.



Interest in the reform was evident throughout both days of the conference. Representatives of international organizations, partner projects and institutions came to the stand to learn more about changes in school nutrition, see practical results and discuss possible areas of further cooperation. Among the guests were our regular partners: representatives of Enabel, the Swiss-Ukrainian DECIDE project, the European Investment Bank, EUACI with Danish partners, the Ministry of Education of Finland, representatives of a Finnish company for cooperation with equipment manufacturers, the UN World Food Program, as well as other URC participants.

A separate focus on school nutrition was also in the workshop program «Without security, there is no education – without education, there will be no reconstruction». The Head of the School Nutrition Reform Team, Orest Stepanyak, spoke about how the reform is moving forward in war conditions and why a modern canteen is more than a place for lunch. It was discussed that it is part of a safe educational environment that affects children's well-being, their energy, and their ability to learn.



Thus, participation in the URC became an opportunity for the team to show the reform from different directions: through the updated infrastructure, the modern school menu, the professional work of the cooks, and a conversation about why children's nutrition is an important part of the restoration of education, which contributed to the establishment of valuable partnerships



June 25 – Cooperation agreements for the development of school meals



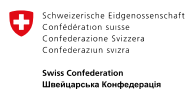
During the Ukraine Recovery Conference 2026 in Gdansk, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and the UN World Food Program signed an agreement that will help continue providing free lunches to pupils in grades 1-4 in frontline communities.

This involves almost UAH 350 million in funding for schools in eight regions: Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhia, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Sumy, Kharkiv, Kherson and Chernihiv. Thanks to this support, children will be able to receive free meals throughout the 2026/2027 academic year.

Also at the conference, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, UN World Food Program and the NGO «National Foodservice Association» signed a memorandum on the further development of the school nutrition reform. The cooperation will cover not only the provision of food, but also the modernization of school food blocks and the training of cooks to work according to new standards.

The program was supported by the UN World Food Program, the governments of France, Sweden, Finland, and Ireland, as well as the Bestseller Foundation.

PARTNERSHIP



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interest in our work and
for your support!**

Let's Reform together!

