



How not to Connect Immigration and the Fight against Terrorism. A Commentary on the Czech National Action Plan to Fight Terrorism

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The Czech Republic's National Action Plan to Fight Terrorism (updated 2007-2009 version) seems to presumptuously associate the threat of terrorism with the issue of immigration. The creation of a correlation between the more general problem of the integration of immigrants and the threat of terrorism legitimises the financing of some activities from the funds primarily allocated for aiding the integration of foreigners.

The Czech Ministry of the Interior asked both the general and the professional public to comment on the 2007-2009 National Action Plan targeted at the fight against terrorism. The effort of the Ministry of the Interior to involve the general public in this important discussion is certainly good news because some of the plans and framing of the fight seem to be based on weak arguments. In its document, the Ministry of the Interior put forth a list of several measures in four areas (communication and cooperation among partners, protection of population and of the critical infrastructure, the prevention of the formation of the closed immigrant communities and foreign-policy considerations) together with a short general introduction. A more thorough analysis of the current situation and of the potential threats is, however, missing.

The Ministry of the Interior's document alarmingly combines the problem of terrorism with the problem of immigration in the part entitled "the prevention of the formation of the closed immigrant communities and radicalization of its members". When the migrant population as a whole is regarded as a group of potential terrorists as the reading of this part might suggest, it makes their integration into the receiving society more difficult, and could lead to further cultural segregation. However, inter-cultural conflicts, and the issues of social, economic and political exclusion, which appear or may appear in the future in the Czech Republic, have very little in common with the problem of international terrorism. This is mainly due to the



nature of migration to the Czech Republic, which comes on the most part from Eastern Europe and Asia. There exists a relatively small Muslim community in the Czech Republic, which is, to a large extent, well integrated into Czech society.

It seems likely that the authors of the Ministry's document have some fundamentalist Islamic groups in mind when they refer to "the prevention of the formation of the closed immigrant communities and radicalization of its members" in the document. However, nowhere in the text is the Muslim community explicitly mentioned as being directly related with this problem. It can be expected, though, that those who read the National Action Plan will, given the context of the current climate of fear of international terrorism, naturally assume that the security forces will monitor those assumed threats to security coming from Muslims living in the Czech Republic. It is apparent that this document is mainly targeted towards Muslims, as there is one reference to the Muslim community in the part of the text related with research. The connection between terrorism, Islam and Muslim communities in the Czech Republic must further be clarified in the National Action Plan; otherwise, the National Action Plan may give rise to unnecessary speculation and unjustified fears of Czech Muslim immigrants and Islam as such. At the same time, the National Action Plan lacks information about whether there is information if certain individuals or groups living in the Czech Republic do actually pose any security threats.

While the document only generally hints at the connection between the integration of foreigners and terrorism, it nevertheless has very concrete financial implications for the migrant community. The National Action Plan legitimises the financing of a series of activities, the funding for which will be taken from funds typically allocated for the integration of foreigners, to the amount of 5.5 million Czech Crowns. This amount might then be lacking from the budget assigned for activities and projects aiming to facilitate the integration of foreigners and which are more important than some brochures or seminars about vague security risks related with the formation of closed immigration communities, as suggested in the National Action Plan.