

BUILDING AN INTEGRATION SYSTEM POLICIES TO SUPPORT IMMIGRANTS' PROGRESSION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

By Dušan Drbohlav
and Ondřej Valenta



**A Series on the Labor Market Integration of New Arrivals in Europe:
Assessing Policy Effectiveness**



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BUILDING AN INTEGRATION SYSTEM

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Executive Summary

Large-scale immigration is a relatively new phenomenon in the Czech labor market. Accession to the European Union in 2004, increased foreign investment, and rapid economic growth throughout the mid-2000s made the country a significant migrant destination. Although the economic crisis of 2009 brought this growth to a halt, foreign nationals remain about 4 percent of the population—one of the highest shares among new EU member states.

The Czech immigrant population has extremely diverse integration needs. Many migrants come from countries that speak Slavic languages, such as Russia, Ukraine, and to a lesser extent Poland—enabling them to learn Czech with relative ease. By contrast, a large Vietnamese population does not enjoy this advantage and is concentrated in self-employment and small retail businesses, often working alongside fellow nationals. Labor migrants have comprised a significant share of the immigrant inflow, contributing to high employment rates among newcomers. However, many of these workers arrived to fill demand in low-skilled occupations, with only limited evidence of upward mobility into more skilled positions over time.

The Czech government has taken significant steps over the past decade to develop a coherent integration policy for newcomers, although considerable challenges remain.

Structural features of the Czech labor market impede upward mobility for both Czechs and immigrants. In particular, the education and training system is widely criticized for failing to meet employers' needs, slowing down workers' productivity, and limiting opportunities for career progression. Employers' involvement in providing training for employees has been relatively limited. And high rates of self-employment—particularly, but not exclusively, among migrants—is likely to have constrained upward mobility by removing the traditional pathways to career progress within firms.

The Czech government has taken significant steps over the past decade to develop a coherent integration policy for newcomers, although considerable challenges remain. A distinctive characteristic of Czech integration measures is that they have relied heavily on nonprofit organizations to provide specialized services to immigrants that mainstream government institutions (such as the public employment service) do not have the capacity to deliver. This has allowed nonprofit organizations to provide intensive and highly tailored services for migrants, such as occupation-specific language training and job counseling—but these programs have limited reach and are difficult to scale for serving greater numbers of recipients. This setup has also led to uneven coverage of services across the country, which varies depending on the presence of nonprofit groups and the availability of funding.

A second important feature of the system is strong reliance on financing from the European Union, which provides the vast majority of funds for integration measures. Integration projects financed by these funds are often restricted to particular target groups, making it difficult for service providers to offer access to all individuals with the same perceived needs. This includes the network of regional centers established by the Ministry of Interior in 2009 to provide more consistent access to certain services, such as basic language instruction and counseling, across the country. EU citizens, in particular, are virtually excluded from targeted integration measures. The reliance on both EU funding and small nonprofit organizations to deliver services has contributed to a fragmented landscape of support.

In addition to policies targeted at immigrants, some foreign nationals can access services through mainstream institutions such as the public employment offices and publicly funded training system for



jobseekers. These options are open to EU nationals (as well as non-EU permanent residents) but in practice have only limited capacity to address the needs of clients with language barriers. Staffing reductions due to austerity measures in 2011-12 decimated the public employment services' capacity to provide individual advisory services, for example. As a result of these constraints, the major strategy for addressing migrants' needs is to refer them to more specialized nonprofit organizations. This strategy is not applied consistently, however, since it relies *ad hoc* on individual networks and the knowledge of advisors.

The Czech Republic has developed a coherent set of integration measures on paper. In practice, funding constraints have limited the scope of these programs and the number of beneficiaries they can serve. Perhaps more fundamentally, boosting immigrants' upward mobility—and not just their access to low-skilled jobs—has not been a political or policy priority in a country that has primarily seen migrants as a way to provide temporary labor in low-skilled work that Czech nationals are unwilling to take. Looking forward, Czech policymakers face the challenge of consolidating existing integration measures into a coherent system—one with stronger coordination and political commitment from all the relevant actors, more consistent access to services for all those who need them, and a secure, long-term system of financing.

I. Introduction

The Czech Republic¹ has experienced widespread and fundamental changes since the collapse of the communist bloc in the early 1990s.² The country has undergone a rapid and dynamic transition from the economic and social model of the communist era to a postmodern society with full participation in the global economy. This complicated transition has been rather successful compared to those of many other postcommunist countries in the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region. It has been gradually integrated into international structures such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the World Trade Organization; and it acceded to the European Union (EU) in 2004 and the Schengen Area in 2007. By 2013, the country was 28th in the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Index.³

The Czech Republic also faces some important challenges, including a substantial informal economy, a proliferation of undeclared work, and a lack of transparency in policymaking.⁴

International migration patterns within CEE have changed dramatically in recent years, both in character and volume—as have policies and practices toward immigration and immigrant integration.⁵ With the exception of recent political and economic instability starting in 2008, a relatively stable environment during the period of political and economic transition quickly made the Czech Republic a country of immigration.

1 While “Czech Republic” is the naming convention used by the International Labour Organization and the Migration Policy Institute, the authors note that the country's more accurate English-language name is “Czechia” (a geographical, not a political name) corresponding to the Czech-language term *Česko*. However, since Czechia is not yet widely used internationally in English-language communications, this report will refer to the Czech Republic.

2 Martin Hampl, *Geography of Societal Transformation in the Czech Republic* (Prague: Charles University Department of Social Geography and Regional Development, 1999); Ivo Možný, *Česká společnost. Nejdůležitější fakta o kvalitě našeho života* (Prague: Portál, 2002); Jiří Večerník, *Czech Society in the 2000s: A Report on Socio-Economic Policies and Structures* (Prague: Academia, 2009).

3 Khalid Malik, *Summary: Human Development Report 2013—The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World* (New York: United Nations Development Program, 2013), www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/HDR/2013GlobalHDR/English/HDR2013%20Summary%20English.pdf.

4 See, for example, Wadim Strielkowski, “Does it pay off to do undeclared work in the Czech Republic” (peer review on Tackling undeclared work: developing an effective system for inspection and prevention, Dr. Wadim Strielkowski, GHK Consulting and CERGE-EI, July 2012), <http://files.strielkowski.com/200000120-5f7e360780/PPTs%20Does%20it%20pay%20off%20to%20do%20undeclared%20work%20in%20CZ%20WS%20final.pdf>.

5 Dušan Drbohlav, Lenka Medová, Zdeněk Čermák, Eva Janská, Dita Čermáková, and Dagmar Džurová, *Migrace a (i)migranti v Česku. Kdo jsme, odkud přicházíme, kam jdeme?* (Prague: Sociologické nakladatelství, 2010); Marek Okólski, *European Immigrations, Trends, Structures and Policy Implications* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012).



With more than 440,000 legally resident foreign nationals in 2013,⁶ or slightly more than 4 percent of the population, the country has taken a leading position among other CEE countries—and on the eve of the global economic crisis in 2007, it had become one of the major immigrant destinations within the European Union.⁷

Like many aspects of Czech society, immigration changed significantly during the economic crisis. The number of work permits issued to third-country nationals (TCNs), including green and blue cards,⁸ shrank from more than 128,000 in 2008 to fewer than 37,000 in 2011—more or less stabilizing the number of immigrants in the country.⁹

The growth in the international migrant population has created a new policy imperative to integrate these migrants into the Czech economy and society, for the mutual benefit of migrants and the country. An earlier report in this series found that recent cohorts of immigrants have entered the Czech labor market with relative ease;¹⁰ unlike immigrants in many other immigrant destinations, they are employed at similar or higher rates than nationals. That said, migrant workers were strongly overrepresented in the lowest-skilled jobs, with only limited progress into more skilled work over time. This was particularly the case for the largest group of migrants, arriving from former Soviet Union countries. A smaller group of highly skilled expatriates from wealthy Western countries, many of whom come for jobs in multinational companies, have fared much better.¹¹

The growth in the international migrant population has created a new policy imperative to integrate these migrants into the Czech economy and society.

This report presents an overview of Czech integration policies, with a special focus on economic integration. It focuses on policies designed to support migrants' incorporation in the Czech labor market, and assesses the extent to which these policies facilitate migrants' upward mobility into more skilled work. The report examines policies in three major areas: employment services, language training, and vocational training. It also explains the roles of employers and civil society in immigrant integration, and discusses the significant institutional and policy changes that will affect integration outcomes in coming years.

II. Overview of the Czech Labor Market

Between 2001 and 2009, the Czech economy experienced stable and rapid growth. The pace of growth was more than double that of EU-15 countries. A massive influx of foreign investment created approximately 140,000 new job positions, predominantly in the manufacturing industry (especially its automotive and

6 Ministry of the Interior, *Cizinci s povoleným pobytem* (Prague: Ministry of the Interior, 2014), www.mvcr.cz/clanek/cizinci-s-povolenym-pobytem.aspx.

7 Dušan Drbohlav, "Imigrace a integrace cizinců v Česku. Několik zastavení na cestě země v její migrační proměně z Davida na téměř Goliáše," *Geografie* 116, no. 4 (2011): 497-517.

8 Green and blue cards are long-term residence permits issued for the purpose of employment.

9 Milada Horáková, *Mezinárodní pracovní migrace v ČR*, *Bulletin č. 28* (Prague: Výzkumný ústav práce a sociálních věcí, 2012). More recent data is unavailable due to long-term difficulties at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs connected with innovation of registers collecting data on employment.

10 Daniel Munich, *A Tumultuous Decade: Employment Outcomes of Immigrants in the Czech Republic* (Washington, DC and Geneva: Migration Policy Institute and International Labour Office, 2014), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/tumultuous-decade-employment-outcomes-immigrants-czech-republic.

11 Ibid.

electronic components).¹² Foreign investments have provided clear benefits to the Czech economy, such as access to advanced technologies and know-how that can boost productivity. However, investments were primarily oriented to lower levels of the industry value chains with lower value-added activities, and the new jobs were mostly created in the sectors offering limited opportunities for career progression. At the same time, the economy's dependence on foreign customers intensified.¹³

Relatively stable growth from 2001 onwards was interrupted by the financial and economic crisis in the second half of 2008. In 2009, gross domestic product fell by 4.7 percent from the previous year,¹⁴ a sudden shift that had a considerable effect on the Czech labor market, especially within the industrial sector. A significant downturn of domestic and international demand led to massive downsizing among companies operating in the country, causing a rapid rise in unemployment. The number of vacant jobs decreased by two-thirds from 2008 to 2009.¹⁵ The unemployment rate peaked in 2010 at 9.6 percent, and since then has stabilized at approximately 8.5 percent—still a relatively favorable figure within the EU context.¹⁶

A. Main Features of the Czech Labor Market

Several cultural, demographic, economic, and political features of the evolving Czech society and economy have directly and indirectly shaped opportunities in the Czech labor market, both for migrant workers and Czech nationals. These include:

- **An aging population.** The Czech population is aging and labor-market participation decreasing. Increasing life expectancy and lower fertility has reduced the size of the working-age population (those between ages 15 and 64) to 68.4 percent of the whole population in 2012, compared to 70.5 percent in 2002.¹⁷ Foreign nationals, by contrast, are heavily overrepresented in the 25- to 39-year-old group.¹⁸
- **Rising education levels alongside a failure to align education and training with employer needs.** Since the beginning of the 1990s, the share of the tertiary-educated population has increased, while the share of those with no more than primary or secondary education (particularly those with vocational qualifications) has decreased.¹⁹ At both secondary and tertiary levels, relatively few graduates are taking technical and natural science disciplines, and there is widespread concern about the educational system's failure to respond to labor market demand.²⁰ This failure to align education and training to labor market needs has contributed to the demand for foreign labor across the skill spectrum, including low- and semi-skilled workers, technical occupations, and certain expert professions.
- **Generous social policies and complex labor legislation.** Czech labor income taxes are well above the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average.²¹ A generous and

12 Věra Czesaná, ed., *Předvídání kvalifikačních potřeb trhu práce* (Prague: Linde nakladatelství s.r.o., 2009).

13 Ibid., 7.

14 Wadim Strielkowski, "Does it pay off to do undeclared work in the Czech Republic?"

15 Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, *Statistická ročenka trhu práce v České republice 2012* (Prague: Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, 2013), https://portal.mpsv.cz/sz/stat/stro/statisticka_rocenka_trhu_prace_v_cr_v_roce_2012.pdf.

16 Lukáš Savko, *Postavení českého trhu práce v rámci EU* (Prague: Czech Statistical Office, 2013), [www.czso.cz/csu/csu.nsf/1e01747a199f30f4c1256bd50038ab23/c8cab00dd325e48fc1257c13003a7b42/\\$FILE/czam102913analyza.pdf](http://www.czso.cz/csu/csu.nsf/1e01747a199f30f4c1256bd50038ab23/c8cab00dd325e48fc1257c13003a7b42/$FILE/czam102913analyza.pdf).

17 Czech Statistical Office, *Vývoj obyvatelstva České republiky 2012* (Prague: Czech Statistical Office, 2013), [www.czso.cz/csu/2013edicniplan.nsf/t/D60022056F/\\$File/400713a1.doc](http://www.czso.cz/csu/2013edicniplan.nsf/t/D60022056F/$File/400713a1.doc).

18 Czech Statistical Office, *Cizinci v ČR 2012* (Prague: Czech Statistical Office, 2013), www.czso.cz/csu/2012edicniplan.nsf/publ/1414-12-r_2012.

19 This trend is expected to continue. Tomáš Fiala, Jitka Langhamrová, Vladimír Hulík, *Aktualizovaná prognóza struktury vzdělanosti obyvatel ČR* (Prague: University of Economics, 2009), http://kdem.vse.cz/resources/relik09/Prispevky_PDF/Fiala_Langhamrova_Hulik.pdf.

20 Jiří Večerník, "Trh práce a politika zaměstnanosti" in *Socioekonomické hodnoty, politiky a instituce v období vstupu České republiky do Evropské unie* eds. Zdeněk Nešpor and Jiří Večerník (Prague: Sociologický ústav AV ČR, 2006).

21 Total taxation of labor income was an estimated 42.4 percent in 2013, compared to an Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average of 35.9 percent. OECD, "Taxing wages: tax burden on labour income in 2013 and recent trends," accessed July 3, 2014, www.oecd.org/ctp/tax-policy/taxing-wages-tax-burden-trends-latest-year.htm.



complicated system of social support,²² in combination with a relatively low level of minimum wage, may decrease the motivation to work. In theory, various forms of flexible labor are available, such as flexible working time, part-time employment, and work on fixed-term contracts. In practice, the Czech labor market can still be considered relatively inflexible as these programs are not widely utilized. Finally, enforcement of labor laws has been persistently insufficient. Confusing and complicated labor legislation and limited judicial and administrative enforcement capacity have contributed to the problem, creating the conditions for widespread quasi-legal employment practices, including undeclared work.²³

A large share of the economically active population operates as independent contractors or sole practitioners.

Alongside these broad trends, labor mobility is limited.²⁴ On one hand, spatial (or geographic) mobility is low; Czechs' unwillingness to move to regions with better job opportunities has led to a combination of unemployment *and* vacant job positions, especially at the lower rungs of the labor market ladder. Opportunities for vertical mobility (that is, career promotion) have also been limited,²⁵ for several likely reasons. One is the disconnect between the skills employers demand and the skills graduates and school leavers possess. Large numbers now hold university degrees but either work in jobs "below" their qualification level or work outside the profession in which they were trained. The need to develop new knowledge is likely to slow their ascent up the career ladder—especially in a country that does not have a strong tradition of employer-provided on-the-job training.

A second driver of low upward mobility is the prevalence of misclassification or bogus self-employment, known as the *Švarc* system in the Czech context.²⁶ A large share of the economically active population operates as independent contractors or sole practitioners. These people are classified as independent entrepreneurs, but are often in fact performing regular employees' activities under direct supervision. However, they are less integrated into a company's structures, with reduced opportunity for career advancement. The *Švarc* system also makes workers more likely to lose their jobs during a temporary economic crisis, and deprives the state of health and social insurance revenues.²⁷

Taken together, these economic and institutional characteristics create the conditions for a mismatch between supply and demand in the Czech labor market. This environment has enabled immigrants to find work in various labor market niches;²⁸ it has also limited the opportunities for the Czech economy to capitalize fully on the skills of its population and ensure smooth pathways into more skilled work over time.

22 Certain groups of foreigners are eligible beneficiaries, as described later.

23 Večerník, "Trh práce a politika zaměstnanosti," 51.

24 Both upward and geographic mobility are also thought to be—at least partially—a legacy of the stratified and immobile society of the communist era.

25 Pavel Kuchař, *Trh práce: sociologická analýza* (Prague: Karolinum, 2007).

26 This *Švarc* system had been illegal until 2007 (though rather rarely penalized), silently tolerated until 2012, and now it is again explicitly illegal due in particular to Labor Code No. 262/2006 Coll. as amended since January 1, 2014.

27 Strielkowski, "Does it pay off to do undeclared work in the Czech Republic?"

28 Večerník, "Trh práce a politika zaměstnanosti."

B. Migrant Workers' Position in the Czech Labor Market

The migrant population in the Czech Republic is quite diverse, as are the integration challenges that different immigrant groups face. The largest group of foreign nationals comes from nearby countries where Slavic languages are spoken—particularly Ukraine, Russia, and Poland. While these migrants often come to fill low or semi-skilled jobs in industries such as construction, lower language barriers and greater cultural proximity facilitate their integration.

The next largest migrant group, Asian migrants (predominantly from Vietnam), does not enjoy this advantage. The Vietnamese population is characterized by strong intracommunity social networks and is concentrated in wholesale and retail trade (mostly small family-run shops).²⁹ Vietnamese workers are particularly likely to be self-employed, with 91 percent of the economically active population holding trade licenses for the self-employed in 2011.³⁰ By contrast, a narrow majority of nearly every other nationality of foreign workers are in employee positions.

Another small but notable group is workers from high-income countries both within and beyond Europe, notably Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. These individuals tend to come, often temporarily, for high-skilled jobs with multinational companies that have invested in the Czech Republic. Finally, small but growing numbers of workers arrived from Romania and Bulgaria following these countries' EU accession in 2007. In some respects, these EU mobile citizens have similar integration needs as non-EU migrants from low- or middle-income countries, although they are often not eligible for integration programs, as described in later sections.

The migrant population in the Czech Republic is quite diverse, as are the integration challenges that different immigrant groups face.

Legal practices towards EU and non-EU nationals are extremely different (see Box 1). Third-country nationals face the greatest restrictions on their employment, as a result of which many have developed distinctive approaches to social and economic integration. For example, the complicated and demanding process for acquiring work permits has meant that relatively high numbers of foreign nationals hold trade licenses designed for the self-employed; the economic downturn and a subsequent policy shift that imposed more restrictions on the migration and employment of foreign workers enhanced this trend further.³¹

29 Czech Statistical Office, *Cizinci v ČR* (Prague: Czech Statistical Office, 2012), www.czso.cz/csu/2012edicniplan.nsf/publ/1414-12-r_2012.

30 Czech Statistical Office, *Cizinci: zaměstnanost – datové údaje* (Prague: Czech Statistical Office, 2013), www.czso.cz/csu/cizinci.nsf/datove_udaje/ciz_zamestnanost#cr.

31 Hana Pořízková, *Analýza zahraniční zaměstnanosti v České republice; postavení cizinců na trhu práce a podmínky jejich ekonomické integrace* (Prague: Výzkumný ústav práce a sociálních věcí, 2008).



Box I. Foreign Employment and the Czech Regulatory Framework

The Czech legislative framework creates several distinct groups of foreign nationals.

EU and European Economic Area (EEA) nationals and their relatives are not regarded as foreigners. They have the same legal status as Czech nationals and do not require an employment permit. The Czech Republic did not impose transitional restrictions on labor market access for citizens of countries that joined the European Union from 2004 onwards.

Refugees, permanent residents, family-reunification migrants, and some other third-country nationals do not need employment permits. In these cases, employment procedures are similar to those of EU and EEA nationals.

Other third-country nationals are eligible to work if they have an employment permit and a long-term visa or long-term residence status for purposes of employment. The employment permit is based on a contract with a particular employer. When an economic migrant loses a job, his residence permit may expire after a certain time period (usually two months) if the migrant does not manage to find a new job. From June 2014, a new “employees’ card” unifies residence and employment permits into one single document, in response to an EU-wide directive.

Self-employed workers, regardless of the country of origin, do not require a work permit if they have a trade license and, thus, are economically active as entrepreneurs. Some vocational and professional trade licenses require holders to demonstrate educational and professional competences. The issue of the recognition of qualifications and education attained abroad is closely tied to the ability of workers to practice their professions. The Czech Republic defines approximately 380 regulated professions for which individuals’ competences must be officially approved by authorized institutions such as ministries or professional bodies.³² Unqualified trade licenses are for nonregulated professions; they have no such obligations and are therefore easiest to obtain. It is therefore no surprise that about 80 percent of the trade licenses issued to foreign nationals are in the unqualified trade category.

Notes: According to the Czech Statistical Office, in 2011, the number of working immigrants reached 310,921, comprising approximately 70 percent of all immigrants. Third-country nationals (TCNs) residing in the Czech Republic for economic purposes constituted about 46 percent of the total number of TCNs, and 30 percent of all migrants. All statistics must be considered with caution, however, as the calculation requires combination of data from two different and partially incompatible registers.

Source: Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, *Special Cases of Granting Employment Permits to Foreigners* (Prague: Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, 2013), http://portal.mpsv.cz/sz/zahr_zam/zz_zamest_cizincu/zz_zvlastni; Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports, *Recognition of Professional Qualifications* (Prague: Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports, 2013), <http://uok.msmt.cz/uok/home.php?lang=en&dl=en>; Directive 2005/36/ES which was transferred to the Czech legislative system via the *Act No. 18/2004 Coll.*; Dita Čermáková, Soňa Schovánková, and Klára Fiedlerová, “Podnikání cizinců v Česku: vliv struktury příležitostí,” *Geografie* 116, no. 4 (2011): 440-61.

In addition to the process for obtaining work permits, a constant demand for cheap and flexible labor force also creates a certain level of undeclared work and irregular economic migration, especially in construction, agriculture, and accommodation and food service activities.³³ Inefficient state policies for the legal recruitment of foreign labor, as well as high taxation of work, are thought to be partially responsible.³⁴ Irregular legal status, as well as quasiregular economic activities connected to self-employment, are likely to constrain opportunities for upward mobility into or within middle-skilled jobs.

³² See also Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports, *Recognition of Professional Qualifications* (Prague: Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports, 2013), <http://uok.msmt.cz/uok/home.php?lang=en&dl=en>; Directive 2005/36/ES which was transferred to the Czech legislative system via *Act No. 18/2004 Coll.* (Prague: Printing Office of the Ministry of the Interior), <http://uok.msmt.cz/uok/doc/en/zakon%20aj.doc>.

³³ Dušan Drbohlav and Lenka Lachmanová, “Neoprávněné ekonomické aktivity migrantů v Česku – realita očima expertů (Delfy výzkum)” in *Nelegální ekonomické aktivity migrantů (Česko v evropském prostoru)*, ed. Dušan Drbohlav (Prague: Karolinum, 2008).

³⁴ Strielkowski, “Does it pay off to do undeclared work in the Czech Republic?”

III. Policies to Support Labor Market Integration

A. General Features of Integration Policy

Significant immigration is a relatively recent phenomenon in the Czech Republic, and neither immigration policy nor immigrant integration are major political priorities. The country had no official immigrant integration strategy until 2000, when the Ministry of the Interior approved the first and rather general immigrant integration strategy.³⁵ The strategy primarily addressed long-term legally residing foreign nationals, focusing on the protection of their political, economic, social, and cultural rights.³⁶ Today, Czech integration strategy is set out in the major national policy paper, *Policy for Integration of Immigrants – Living Together*, which is updated annually.³⁷ This paper is a legally nonbinding document.

The four principal goals of this integration strategy are: (1) enhancing knowledge of the Czech language among immigrants and their descendants; (2) enhancing migrants' economic self-sufficiency, in particular by increasing their legal awareness; (3) orienting immigrants in society by supporting their awareness and knowledge of Czech society, values, history, and institutions; and (4) supporting the development of relationships between foreign residents and Czech natives, and raising public awareness of foreign nationals.³⁸

The country had no official immigrant integration strategy until 2000, when the Ministry of the Interior approved the first and rather general immigrant integration strategy.

The integration strategy is seen as a major tool for preventing closed ethnic communities and the social exclusion of immigrants. The strategy includes both economic objectives and civic integration, but has put relatively little emphasis on encouraging migrants' upward mobility into middle-skilled jobs. It does not explicitly mention the goal of improving immigrants' skills and thus enhancing the quality of their economic opportunities.

Unlike some European countries, the Czech Republic has no formal introduction program for newly arrived immigrants, and no system of employment, language, or training offerings that immigrants are entitled or required to receive. However, a scattered selection of programs is available, mostly at regional or local levels. These include both government-driven and nongovernmental programs targeted specifically at immigrants, as well as mainstream services for which some immigrants are eligible—such as those offered through the public employment service.

The Czech integration policy's target group is non-EEA nationals legally residing under a long-term or permanent residence permit. EU or EEA nationals are not eligible beneficiaries of targeted integration policy

35 The strategy document, known as the “Concept of integration of foreigners” is based on principles adopted by the Czech government in 1999. See the Governmental Resolution No. 689 of July 7, 1999, http://kormoran.vlada.cz/usneseni/usneseni_webtest.nsf/0/C0665259AEE14CA4C12571B6006D8A70; and Governmental Resolution No. 1266 of December 11, 2000, http://kormoran.vlada.cz/usneseni/usneseni_webtest.nsf/0/92EB0C1957A6DAECC12571B600709317.

36 Drbohlav et al, *Migrace a (i)migranti v Česku*.

37 Like the 1999 and the 2000 documents, the strategy is a government resolution and a legally nonbinding document. See Czech Ministry of Interior, “Věc: Postup při realizaci aktualizované Koncepce integrace cizinců – Společné soužití,” 2013, www.mvcr.cz/soubor/postup-realizace-koncepce-integrace-cizincu-na-2013-usn-vlady-pdf.aspx.

38 Ministry of the Interior, *Aktualizovaná Koncepce integrace cizinců – Společné soužití* (Prague: Ministry of the Interior, 2011), www.mvcr.cz/soubor/uv-09022011-pdf.aspx.



measures, although they are eligible for mainstream policies from which third-country nationals without permanent residence are excluded, such as public employment services and retraining.³⁹ Provisions for applicants for international protection or persons already granted international protection are managed separately (see Box 2).

B. Responsibilities for Integration Policy and Implementation

The Ministry of the Interior is the principal authority responsible for formulating and implementing the integration strategy. Recognizing that integration is a complex and decentralized process, the integration policy also delegates partial competences to other ministries and relevant subjects at regional and local levels, the most important of which are shown in Figure 1.

Nonprofit organizations have also been heavily involved in delivering integration services, and their dominant role is one of the defining characteristics of Czech integration policy.

At the national level, integration measures are delegated to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs; the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport; and the Ministry of Industry and Trade. At the regional level, Centers to Support the Integration of Foreigners (CSIF) were established beginning in 2009. They aim to improve the local implementation of immigrant integration policy by transferring it down the regional hierarchy, and improve access to basic integration measures in regional centers outside of Prague. The CSIFs are expected to formulate regional integration strategies tailored to local needs and coordinate the various regional and local actors involved, such as nongovernmental organizations, employers, educational institutions, labor unions, and labor offices.⁴⁰ They also provide services to non-EU migrants, albeit within significant funding constraints, which this report discusses later.⁴¹

Nonprofit organizations have also been heavily involved in delivering integration services, and their dominant role is one of the defining characteristics of Czech integration policy; in this area, the country's institutions are more developed than those of other postcommunist CEE countries.

The Policy for the Integration of Immigrants calls for close cooperation among the relevant organizations and enables decentralization of competences by allowing regional and municipal authorities to carry out their own integration strategies; in practice, however, the system seems to be highly centralized, with the fundamental role for the Ministry of the Interior.⁴²

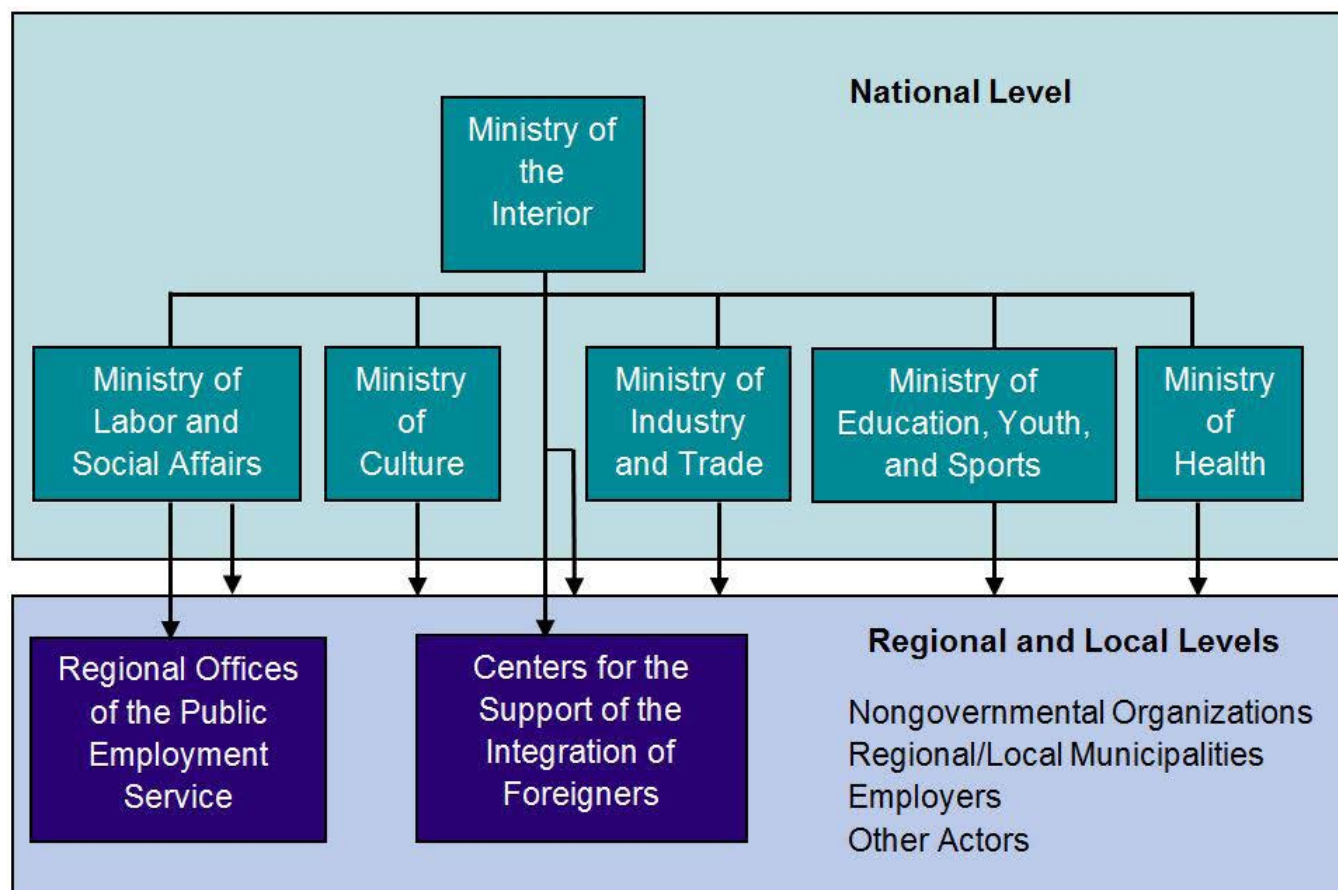
39 The policy includes immigrants from the European Union and the European Economic Area (EEA) only in cases of an urgent need.

40 Ministry of the Interior, *Spolu a lépe/Together and Better* (Prague: Ministry of the Interior, 2013), www.icpraha.com/theme/Icp/files/Spolu%20a%20l%C3%A9pe%20-%20Centra%20na%20podporu%20integrace%20cizinc%C5%AF%20v%20C4%8CR.pdf.

41 Tereza Blahoutová, *Role integračních center při integraci cizinců* (Multikulturální centrum Praha, 2012), <http://migraceonline.cz/e-knihovna/role-integracnich-center-pri-integraci-cizincu>.

42 Eva Valentová, ed., *Zvýšení role neziskového sektoru v oblasti sociální integrace pracovních migrantů v České republice* (Prague: Sdružení pro integraci a migraci, 2012).

Figure 1. Basic Outline of the Governance of Integration in the Czech Republic



Notes: The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs is responsible for the economic integration of foreign workers. Relying on a network of regional offices of the Public Employment Services, it organizes language and training courses. The Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports is responsible for language training for immigrants; its dominant focus is immigrant children. The Ministry of Industry and Trade provides information services to immigrants regarding the conditions for entrepreneurship. Source: Ministry of the Interior, *Zpráva o situaci v oblasti migrace a integrace cizinců na území České republiky v roce 2012* (Prague: Ministry of the Interior, 2013), www.mvcr.cz/soubor/postup-realizace-koncepcie-integrace-cizincu-na-2013-usn-vlady-pdf.aspx.

Box 2. Integration Policies for Humanitarian Migrants

Asylees and refugees form a specific group of international migrants in the Czech Republic and are subject to special integration measures. The State Integration Program funds these measures and the Ministry of the Interior administers them. The initiative supports the refugees in getting housing, education in the Czech language, and finding a job. As in other fields, nongovernmental organizations support the government in these activities. For example the Organization for Aid to Refugees has recently tried to place refugees in the Czech labor market in the towns of Kostelec and Havířov. Typically, these small-scale projects provide employment matches via firms that have already employed refugees in the past.

Note, however, that the overall numbers of refugees in the Czech Republic is very small. For example, 49 asylum seekers were granted refugee status in 2012, and just over 750 asylum applications were made in the same year.

Source: Czech Statistical Office, “Cizinci v ČR,” www.czso.cz/csu/cizinci.nsf/kapitola/cizinci_uvod.



C. Employment Services

As with other areas of integration policy, employment counseling is available through a mix of programs implemented by different actors and with different target groups.

At the national level, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs operates a publicly accessible job portal that centralizes information on vacancies available to foreign workers who require work permits (these jobs have already been advertised to Czech or EEA citizens for at least 30 days). It also provides online information about employment rules and regulations in various languages.

At the subnational level, three main actors are responsible for employment services to immigrants: the region-level Centers to Support the Integration of Foreigners, regional offices of the Public Employment Service, and a range of nonprofit organizations.

I. Centers to Support the Integration of Foreigners

The first major service providers are the Centers to Support the Integration of Foreigners (CSIFs) at the regional level.⁴³ In addition to their intended role as a platform for cooperation between the various local and regional actors involved in integration, the CSIFs also provide services directly, and in cooperation with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). These services are available only to legally residing non-EU nationals (both permanent and temporary residents) and are predominantly supported with EU funding.⁴⁴ Migrants' employment is not the primary focus of the Centers, although supporting labor market integration is among their stated goals.⁴⁵ CSIF services fall into two major categories: counseling and language instruction.⁴⁶ Counseling may include individual legal advice (for example on work permit renewal procedures), as well as group workshops providing sociocultural orientation. The latter can include work-related issues such as job-search skills and résumé writing. Center employees or contracted partners provide these services, in most cases free of charge or for a very low "motivation" fee. The CSIFs provided services to more than 33,800 foreigners between 2009 and 2012, according to the Ministry of the Interior.⁴⁷

2. Public Employment Services and Nonprofit Organizations

Some immigrants are eligible for assistance from the regional offices of the public employment service (PES). These offices provide job counseling and can refer jobseekers to training courses. In contrast to CSIF services, EU citizens and third-country nationals who are permanent residents are eligible for public employment services, but non-EU citizens without permanent residence status are not.

The Czech PES has undergone enormous changes in the past few years, following a restructuring in 2011-12 that added additional responsibilities and created serious understaffing problems. As a result, individual

43 Most Centers to Support the Integration of Foreigners (CSIFs) are founded and managed by the Ministry of the Interior, though some of them are managed by regional or city authorities in collaboration with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). One of the CSIFs is run by Catholic Charity. The Centers began to be established in July 2009 and have as of 2014 been established in all but one region of the country (the Central Bohemia region, which surrounds the capital city, Prague). Since services are already provided in this region by some NGOs and the capital city of Prague is a natural magnet pulling migrants also from the Central Bohemia region—and given constrained financial resources—the establishment of CSIF in this region is not considered to be a pressing priority.

44 In particular, the European Fund for Integration of Third-Country Nationals (EIF). The national and subnational government budgets also contribute some of the financing.

45 Ministry of the Interior, *Spolu a lépe/Together and Better*.

46 More specifically, the following basic services are at one's disposal there: social counseling, legal advice, Czech language courses, sociocultural courses, Internet access, computer courses, foreign language library, and information centers for foreigners. Moreover, there are additional services offered, including educational events for foreigners, laypeople, and the professional public; lectures and discussions; cultural and sport events that aim to support the mutual relationship between foreigners and the larger society; conferences, seminars, and roundtables; support of competences of local administration bodies and other institutions and individuals in frequent contact with foreigners; providing interpretation both for the clients of the CSIFs and for third parties dealing with CSIF clients; and support of cultural development among foreign communities.

47 Ministry of the Interior, *Spolu a lépe/Together and Better*, 63.

advisory services were dramatically scaled back. A new government came to power in 2013 and later announced moves to rebuild the capacity and staffing of the public employment services—a process that is now underway but likely to take some time.

In addition to these general constraints, the public employment services face the challenge of accommodating the specific needs of foreign jobseekers. Capacity constraints reduce their ability to tailor advice to diverse clients. In some cases, specialized advisors for EURES—the European job mobility portal whose primary purpose is to advise Czech workers moving to other EU countries or EU citizens moving to the Czech Republic—have better language skills and can communicate with clients who do not speak Czech. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs is also currently developing a set of guidelines to help advisors serve foreign clients. Still, the PES will likely retain only a relatively limited capacity to provide specialized advice to these individuals.

Instead, PES advisors have developed their own strategies to provide access to specialized services, primarily by referring clients to NGOs with more knowledge and experience serving migrant populations.⁴⁸ A range of NGOs provides various types of legal advice, employment counseling, and training. Examples include InBáze Berkat, Meta, OPU, and Klub Hanoi. The regional offices of the PES have also organized special advisory services providing legal and employment information to foreigners, the execution of which is often delegated to NGOs. NGOs typically provide these services free of charge, relying on EU Structural Funds or the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals. This delegation can be rather ad hoc, however, as it depends on locally available NGOs as well as the PES staff members' ability to develop the relevant networks and knowledge.

Foreign workers have not sought out PES advice in large numbers, however. As for August 2012, fewer than 7,000 non-EU nationals were registered with the PES.⁴⁹ Moreover, third-country nationals are not eligible for PES assistance, and must instead rely on NGOs and the regional integration centers.

Box 3. Foreign Nationals and Social Support Policies

The position of foreigners in the Czech social support system is generally unequal to that of native population. Foreign nationals looking for employment are generally excluded from unemployment benefits. The only groups of foreign nationals eligible for the unemployment allowances are EU citizens, third-country nationals with permanent residence, and asylum holders.⁵⁰

Larger numbers of foreign nationals are eligible for other state social policy measures of various kinds, however. These social policy measures aim predominantly at enhancing social cohesion, inclusion as well as integration to labor market. The measures include the State Social Support Policy, which covers, for example, housing and child benefit allowances; and the Active Labor Market Policies (ALMPs)—most notably training for job seekers.⁵¹

These measures are designed to support individuals at high risk of social exclusion, making foreign nationals an implicit target group. The eligible groups of foreign nationals are (1) EU and EEA nationals regardless of their residence status; (2) non-EEA nationals with permanent residence; (3) non-EEA nationals with a temporary residence status for more than one year; and (4) asylum recipients.⁵² The number of social benefit recipients from non-EEA countries is nevertheless extremely low. For example, in 2009, they comprised 0.6 percent of all people receiving social benefits.⁵³

48 Tomáš Soukup, Ludvík Michalička, and Jaromíra Kotlíková, *Třídění uchazečů na úřadech práce – řešení problematiky cílení APZ a poradenství* (Prague: Výzkumný ústav práce a sociálních věcí, 2009), http://praha.vupsv.cz/Fulltext/vz_287.pdf.

49 Authors' correspondence with Štefan Duhán, Secretariat Deputy Secretary, Labor Market Department, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.

50 Centre for Integration of Foreigners, "Q&A about immigration in the Czech Republic," accessed July 3, 2014, www.cicpraha.org/en/pro-verejnost/zakladni-informace-o-imigraci-v-cr/otazky-a-odpovedi-o-cizincich-v-cr.html.

51 Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, "Active Labour Market Policies," accessed July 3, 2014, www.mpsv.cz/en/1604#almp.

52 Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, "Státní sociální podpora," accessed July 3, 2014, www.mpsv.cz/cs/2.

53 Ministry of the Interior, *Aktualizovaná Koncepce integrace cizinců – Společné soužití* (Prague: Ministry of the Interior, 2011), www.mvcr.cz/soubor/uv-09022011-pdf.aspx.



D. Language Instruction

Opportunities for free or low-cost language instruction are available through two main channels: the region-based CSIFs and nonprofit organizations supported primarily with EU funding.

The CSIFs organize basic and intensive courses in the Czech language. The basic ones are designed to improve communication skills in everyday situations, such as seeing a physician or going shopping, and neither registration nor regular attendance are required. The intensive courses are for migrants with better knowledge of the Czech language, and comprise regular and continuous lessons. These courses prepare foreigners for a Czech language exam at the beginner (A1) level, which is required for a permanent residence permit. Since many migrants work long hours, the CSIFs offer courses during evenings and weekends, and provide child care for parents who attend. Evaluation of the effectiveness of these services is, unfortunately, limited. Some NGOs also provide language courses. These organizations have somewhat more flexibility in providing specialized language training, including instruction specifically designed to improve migrants' prospects in the labor market. This may include Czech-language instruction for specific occupations, like nursing or accounting. The drawback of these programs is that they are generally only able to serve small numbers of participants and they are more widely available in some locations than in others.

While the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MLSA) has also provided some language instruction in the past, demand from immigrants has been extremely low. In 2013, only a handful of participants took these language courses and fewer than ten successfully completed them.⁵⁴ One likely reason for this is that immigrants who are eligible for MLSA training—permanent residents or EU citizens who are registered jobseekers—prefer to take courses that provide job-related competences, rather than focusing exclusively on language acquisition disconnected from skills training.

E. Vocational Training

Two main options for vocational skills training are available for immigrants in the Czech Republic: courses provided by NGOs, often designed specifically for language learners or those with foreign qualifications, and courses provided through the public employment service for unemployed jobseekers. The latter courses are not devised for immigrants (with some minor exceptions), but may be attractive to EU citizens or non-EU permanent residents who are eligible for PES assistance.⁵⁵

I. Vocational Training Through the Public Employment Service

These training courses are available to jobseekers registered with the PES whose current qualifications are considered insufficient to find employment. The system is thus not designed for those who are already employed; the primary aim is to provide the unemployed with qualifications that will enable them to find a job more easily. Training is free of charge for jobseekers referred by PES advisors, although participants can also attend on their own initiative if they are willing to bear the costs themselves.⁵⁶ Successful participants, both native Czechs and immigrants, obtain a nationally recognized certificate of the acquired qualification. Like the PES advisory services described earlier, this system is available to EEA and third-country nationals with permanent residence.

The content of vocational training courses is determined by the particular regional employment services office, based on analysis of available vacancies in the region and on anticipated development labor market developments. The courses cover fields from information technology to welding, to hairdressing, to food service activities.

⁵⁴ Authors' interview with representative from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.

⁵⁵ The vocational training offerings are managed by Public Employment Service regional offices in cooperation with specific educational institutions. According to the *Act on Employment* (paragraph 108, section 2), the subjects eligible to provide vocational training must have an accredited educational program or curricula.

⁵⁶ They are funded from the two principal sources: state budget through the Active Labor Market Policy, and through the Operational Program Human Resources and Employment (EU funds). Duháň, *Odpověď č. j.: 2013/63446 – 412/1*.

A small-scale project managed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in 2011 and 2012 provided training for those with foreign language skills to become certified interpreters. Implemented through a private college and provided free of charge, the training comprised about 120 lessons for translation between Czech and several other languages: Bulgarian, Mongolian, Romanian, Russian, and Vietnamese. The goal was to provide the participants with the skills to translate for other immigrants in contexts such as visiting the police, interacting with NGOs, and using health services. Numbers were small, however: only 23 people successfully finished the course.⁵⁷

No statistics are available on foreign nationals' participation in the vocational training system. Given the low numbers of third-country nationals registered with the PES—coupled with the fact that non-EEA nationals on work permits are only allowed to be unemployed for two months before losing their residence permits—it can be assumed that participation among this group is relatively low. Additionally, evidence is needed on whether these certificates have been helpful in improving immigrants' prospects in the labor market.

2. Private and Nonprofit Vocational Training

Various nongovernmental organizations widely utilize EU funding in order to provide opportunities for foreign workers to participate in vocational courses (alongside more complex advisory services designed to increase immigrants' awareness of labor market institutions, legislation, or social affairs). The range of immigrants targeted varies among the individual projects. Evaluations are generally rather perfunctory, making it difficult to assess the impact of these programs on immigrants' economic prospects.

The private sector has been less involved in providing vocational training. In general, employers' participation in work-based training is low in the Czech Republic, particularly when it comes to apprenticeships and other forms of initial vocational training. Recently, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs has also sought to encourage employers to provide training through incentive programs. As of 2014, for example, employers and sole proprietors in sectors with good growth potential can apply for a contribution to training costs.⁵⁸ The program is to provide 35 million euros in support and is financed by the EU Human Resources and Employment Operational Program. The training—employers can choose from 150 accredited courses provided by approved institutions—is intended to improve the company's growth prospects and the career promotion opportunities for participants.⁵⁹

The extent to which immigrants tend to benefit from employer-provided training is difficult to assess. Employers may provide vocational training internally for their own employees, both Czech and immigrant workers. While data are limited, survey information from 2007 found that employees who are migrants were somewhat less likely to receive continuing vocational training or education (other than induction programs) than native Czechs. The largest gap in training provision was among manual workers.⁶⁰ Similarly, while a majority of employers reported providing Czech language classes to non-native managers, only 7 percent reported providing language instruction to manual workers.⁶¹

57 Eight people specialized in Romanian, six in Bulgarian, four in Vietnamese, four in Russian, and one in Mongolian.

58 Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, "Integrovaný portál MPSV," accessed July 3, 2014, https://portal.mpsv.cz/sz/politikazamest/esf/projekty/podpora_odborneho_vzdelavani_zamestnancu.

59 The geographical coverage of the project is the whole country, except for facilities located in Prague. As to immigrant employees, the project targets EU and EEA workers (both permanent and temporary) and only third-country nationals with permanent residence. Ministry of the Interior, "Vzdělávejte se pro růst!" accessed August 6, 2014, portal.mpsv.cz/sz/politikazamest/esf/projekty/projekt_vzdelavejte_se_pro_rust~.

60 Employers were almost 20 percent less likely to report providing continuing vocational training either "always" or "as a rule" for migrant employees than for domestic ones. Among manual workers, this gap widened to over one third. Hana Dolezelova, "Czech Republic: The occupational promotion of migrant workers" (Research Institute for Labor and Social Affairs, March 2009), www.eurofound.europa.eu/ewco/studies/tn0807038s/cz0807039q.htm.

61 Ibid.



More generally, the policy goal of making better use of migrants' human capital and improving their skills has attracted minimal interest among employers and policymakers. One reason for this is the perception that foreign nationals should be working in necessary but unattractive occupations that domestic workers do not want to fill, often labeled as “3D” jobs (dirty, dangerous, and demanding—and, of course, low paid).

The policy goal of making better use of migrants' human capital and improving their skills has attracted minimal interest among employers and policymakers.

IV. Integration Policy Issues and Challenges

A. Coordination and Fragmentation

A variety of actors provide the services discussed so far, including employment services, language instruction, and vocational training. The most notable are CSIFs, regional public employment offices, and NGOs. These actors try to collaborate closely to provide complementary employment services to third-country nationals, but coordination is not systematic and generally depends on the individual initiatives by the actors involved. This results in rather fragmented support for immigrant integration.

Fragmentation is exacerbated by the fact that the initiatives often have different target groups. EU nationals can access public employment services but otherwise have limited options for tailored assistance, creating a significant gap in access to integration programs. CSIFs, for example, cannot enroll mobile EU citizens in courses even if they have similar needs to third-country nationals (see Table 1). NGOs may try to provide services to all groups that need them, but their ability to do this depends on their sources of funding, and their specific target groups vary according to the aim and focus of this funding. Examples include Muslim women, immigrants with children, third-country jobseekers, asylees—and much more rarely, mobile EU citizens.⁶²

Table 1. Eligibility for Czech Employment and Skills Programs

Types of Services	EU Citizens	Non-EU Permanent Residents	Non-EU Temporary Residents
Language and Advisory Services through the Centers to Support of the Integration of Foreigners	No	Yes	Yes
Public Employment Service Advice and Retraining Courses	Yes	Yes	No
Nongovernmental Organization (NGO) Services Funded by the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals	No	Yes	Yes
Other NGO Services	Varies	Varies	Varies

Source: Authors' analysis.

⁶² Evropský sociální fond v ČR, “Hledání projektů,” accessed July 3, 2014, www.esfcr.cz/modules/projects/index.php?lang=1. For example, now Czech legislation enables the support of migrants from EU countries who are in a desperate situation.

The availability of services also varies geographically. The demand for services is highest in Prague because it has the largest immigrant population. However, some of the funds which support migrants (such as the European Social Fund, discussed later) cannot cover Prague because the region's income level is too high to qualify. Consequently, all of the CSIFs outside of the capital region have reportedly met migrants' demand for services, while demand has outstripped supply in Prague. However, certain specialized services are more widely available in the capital city, such as translating services or vocation-specific language courses.

B. Financing Integration

Immigrant integration has not been a high political priority in the Czech Republic, and central government funding dedicated to integration measures is limited. Because of limited national resources, ministries responsible for integration policy often turn to international sources, such as the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals (EIF) and EU Structural Funds.⁶³

Immigrant integration has not been a high political priority in the Czech Republic.

Table 2 shows the amount and structure of financial means to support integration goals from 2009 to 2012, excluding the State Integration Program for refugees. International sources comprised 84 percent of the approximately 9.4 million euros spent on integration in 2012—up from 75 percent in 2009. As noted earlier, EU financing is used predominantly by NGOs, CSIFs, and in few cases, private employers at the local level. The EU resources also finance relevant active labor market policies, such as language courses, employment advisory services, or vocational training.⁶⁴

Table 2. Financial Allocations for the Integration of Foreign Nationals

Source of Funding	2009 (EUR)	2010 (EUR)	2011 (EUR)	2012 (EUR)	Share 2012
State Budget	887,934	1,015,847	1,024,560	1,488,470	16%
European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals	1,035,063	2,277,976	2,463,720	2,320,037	25%
EU Structural Funds (Including Operational Programs "Human Resource and Employment" and "Education for Competitiveness")	1,639,382	1,117,205	4,562,935	5,614,497	60%
Total	3,562,379	4,471,028	8,051,215	9,423,003	100 %

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Calculations from annual reports of the MI. Ministry of the Interior, *Zpráva o situaci v oblasti migrace a integrace cizinců na území České republiky* (Prague: Ministry of the Interior, various years), www.mvcr.cz/clanek/zpravy-o-situaci-v-oblasti-migrace-a-integrace-cizincu-v-ceske-republice-za-roky-2001-2011.aspx.

63 EIF funds are administered by the Ministry of the Interior, and projects using EU Structural Funds for the integration of immigrants are administered by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. European Social Fund in the Czech Republic, "Human Resources and Employment," accessed July 3, 2014, www.esfcr.eu/07-13-en/hreop.

64 Duháň, *Odpověď č. j.: 2013/63446 – 412/1*.



One pitfall of the reliance on international funding is a considerable variation in the total amount of finance available. Unlike national government support of a steady, institutional character, this targeted support depends on the timing of project calls within the funders' programming periods and is more likely to comprise local or regional initiatives.

C. The Role of Employers and Labor Unions

Immigrant integration measures by Czech government agencies and nonprofit organizations make up an uneven patchwork. The social partners—employers and labor unions—also have not addressed integration in a systematic manner.

The principal labor union organization, the Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions, has the primary mission of defending Czech employees' interests. The issue of foreign nationals' employment is seen predominantly from this perspective. For example, the Confederation champions prioritizing native Czech workers when filling job positions—an attitude in line with that of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. The Confederation has not undertaken initiatives aimed directly at improving the position of foreign workers in the Czech labor market.

Employers...have long taken a pro-immigration approach.

However, the Confederation also protects foreign workers' interests at times. It strives to prevent the economic exploitation of foreign employees, which ultimately has a negative impact on the wages and working conditions of native Czechs. The Confederation therefore aims to enforce uniform economic and legal employment standards for Czechs and foreign workers who are already in the country. Accordingly, it promotes the enforcement of regulations on employers and recruitment agencies, which are seen as the main beneficiaries of exploitation; it also opposes unauthorized immigration.⁶⁵

Employers, by contrast, have long taken a pro-immigration approach. Before the economic crisis of the late 2000s, big companies in particular lobbied intensively for reducing barriers to immigration, especially of workers with low educational levels or skills. However, these companies are no longer as active in the migration and integration debates.

In part because of the low attention to immigrant integration among government agencies, the public sector has been rather passive in the area of labor market integration, and does not make active efforts to encourage other social partners' involvement—including in areas where they might naturally contribute most, such as work-focused language learning and vocational training. The result is a fragmented system of support for labor market integration, nourished predominantly by bottom-up initiatives among NGOs and a few employers.

⁶⁵ See more on attitudes of the Confederation towards international migration in Pavel Janíčko, *Postoj ČMKOS k problematice zaměstnávání cizinců a k novele zákona o pobytu cizinců*, October 18, 2013, <http://migraceonline.cz/cz/e-knihovna/postoj-ckmos-k-problematice-zamestnavani-cizincu-a-k-novele-zakona-o-pobytu-cizincu>.

Box 4. Initiatives to Improve Data Collection and Monitor Integration Outcomes

While there have been no systematic assessments of overarching immigrant integration policies at the national level, the Czech government's capacity to drive better integration outcomes is likely to improve as a result of several important data-collection activities.

The Ministry of the Interior began a more systematic process for monitoring and evaluating the integration of third-country nationals in 2009. Relying on funding from the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals, it contracted with the Research Institute of Labor and Social Affairs (RILSA) to develop a methodology for generating integration metrics. This project was designed to provide the Ministry and other relevant government agencies with the information needed to monitor and adjust integration policies by collecting and processing relevant data.⁶⁶ RILSA holds regular meetings (once every six months) with Ministry officials to discuss the results and their implications. These data are an important source for updating the integration policy.

Another ongoing project managed by RILSA for the Ministry collects qualitative information about the integration experience of specific groups (including Ukrainians, Vietnamese, and Russians).⁶⁷ This project assesses barriers to migrants' integration through their own eyes by administering a questionnaire to migrants approximately every 18 months.

In addition, the Ministry monitors recent developments in the field of immigrant integration through regular meetings with managers of the Centers to Support of the Integration of Foreigners (CSIFs). According to the Ministry, this process has directly led to changes in migration and integration policy and legislation.⁶⁸ To aid evaluation, CSIFs run by the Ministry have also conducted several surveys to assess clients' satisfaction with the services provided.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

When assessing Czech policies on immigrant integration, context is very important. While this report has pointed to significant weaknesses in Czech integration efforts, it has done so by turning to “ideal conditions” and the experiences of highly developed Western countries of immigration as the bases of comparison.

However, immigrant integration is a relatively new field in the Czech Republic, and is making progress over time. Despite many shortcomings, the formulation and management of immigrant integration policies has arguably been much more developed than in other postcommunist countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, the system is still far from utilizing its own potential fully, or from making the most of the qualifications and educational potential of immigrants.

Immigrant integration is a relatively new field in the Czech Republic, and is making progress over time.

Policymakers responsible for immigrant integration face several interrelated challenges. First, each of the three areas this report has described—employment services, language training, and vocational training—have some common features. For each, the government has established a formal top-down structure

66 The “labor market sphere” plays a very important role within this methodology. “The set of analytical indicators is divided into five areas: (a) residence and demographic characteristics of third-country nationals (TCNs); (b) employed foreigners registered at the labor offices; (c) jobseekers; (d) social benefits paid out to TCNs; (e) education of TCNs. See Jana Vavrečková, Ivo Baštyř, *Indicators of the integration of third-country nationals into Czech society in the context of the requirements of European institutions* (Prague: Research Institute of Labor and Social Affairs, 2011), http://praha.vupsv.cz/Fulltext/vz_329.pdf.

67 Danica Schebelle and Milada Horáková, *Bariéry integračního procesu reflexí cizinců z třetích zemí* (Prague: Research Institute of Labor and Social Affairs, 2011), http://praha.vupsv.cz/Fulltext/vz_351.pdf.

68 Ministerstvo vnitra České republiky, *Spolu a lépe/Together and Better* (Prague: Ministerstvo vnitra České republiky, 2013), 37.



and elaborated policies, but capacity and financial resources are still lacking. As a result, the programs rely heavily on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and so are only available to small numbers of beneficiaries.

The strong role of NGOs in Czech integration policy has both positive and negative aspects. The development of a strong civil society committed to improving migrants' outcomes is a positive phenomenon—and one that is quite unique among Europe's postcommunist countries. Government agencies, particularly the Ministry of the Interior, have dealt with NGOs as partners, consulting them and relying on them to reach target populations with particular needs. However, the reliance on NGOs for integration efforts can also be seen as the result of an insufficient commitment within government to develop and fund integration. Nonprofit organizations have stepped in to fill roles that public bodies have left vacant. The nature of these organizations and the funding streams on which they rely inevitably leads to some uneven coverage and access to services.

Second, Czech policymakers have taken advantage of the availability of EU funds to support a wide range of immigrant integration measures. This funding has some limitations, as it is uncertain by nature and can make long-term planning difficult. Meanwhile, the limited funding that comes from the national budget may be the result of a lack of political commitment to deal systematically with the integration of newcomers at all levels. Different actors, particularly ministries, have taken somewhat different attitudes toward international migration and migrant employment. Building a consensus is, therefore, extremely difficult.⁶⁹ That said, recent moves at the Ministry of Interior to collect data and evaluate integration outcomes more closely are a positive development suggesting a growing political will to tackle the integration issue head-on.

Immigrant integration policies have tended to prioritize employment (getting a job) over gaining skills and experience that would permit upward mobility into better jobs.

Third, and in part as a result of this funding environment, the patchwork of policies with different financial sources and target groups has led to uneven availability of integration-related programs and services. In particular, EU citizens have been excluded from most of the existing projects—notably the Centers to Support of the Integration of Foreigners but also services offered by NGOs—even if their needs are similar to those of many non-EU nationals. Providing more consistent services for this group should be a priority. If the Czech government is to provide a better coordinated and systematic palette of services to support immigrant integration, it will also need to reach a higher level of steady government financing.

Fourth, greater involvement of regional and local administration bodies in immigrant integration issues—with more institutionalized decentralization of responsibilities—could help to strengthen integration. A strong role for the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs when dealing with migrants' integration into the labor market could also help to make the availability of services more systematic. Similarly, there is a strong need for a higher involvement of social partners (employers, labor unions, employment services) into the process of economic integration of foreign workers, including the foreign workers themselves.

Finally, immigrant integration policies have tended to prioritize employment (getting a job) over gaining skills and experience that would permit upward mobility into *better* jobs. One reason for this may be that despite the growing number of permanent residence holders in the Czech immigrant population, the current

⁶⁹ For example, the Ministry of Industry and Trade may call for more liberal rules to recruit circular migrants for companies operating in the Czech Republic without regard to the integration environment, whereas the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs may defend the positions of the Czech labor force on the Czech labor market. The Ministry of the Interior would perhaps like to be more restrictive when allowing new migrants to enter the country while being willing to support or even strengthen integration measures for permanent residence holders.



philosophy toward migration still emphasizes the goal of enhancing temporary and circular movements—especially among less-skilled migrants. However, the migration reality is much more complex, bringing many types of migrants with different strategies, plans, and indeed, needs.

Czech integration policy is thus somewhat constrained by Czech migration policy, which dominates the political discourse and emphasizes restrictions, limits, and security. These principles are not the ones on which immigrants' successful integration into society can be based. Thus, one of the main goals of the Czech integration policy is, in some respects, to “break away” from the Czech migratory policy mindset, while keeping the necessary level of interconnectivity between the two policy areas. In particular, expanded coordination between migration and integration areas would help increase the transparency and speed of the administrative system for obtaining or extending permits, as well as for gaining Czech citizenship. Replacing the atmosphere of uncertainty about immigrants' long-term status with a more stable, favorable environment could contribute to their quality of life and to the investments they make in economic integration.

Looking forward, a crucial policy goal will be to define a vision for integration policy in the Czech Republic and formulate a clear and systematic action plan to put the integration strategy in force. Throughout this process, the government must seek the dedicated commitment of all relevant actors. It must enhance horizontal cooperation among the main relevant ministries, as well as vertical cooperation with regional and local actors—and secure a long-term system of financing. It must also continue to build its monitoring system to ensure that sophisticated and reliable statistics can inform and possibly assist in reshaping the integration strategy over time.

A crucial policy goal will be to define a vision for integration policy in the Czech Republic and formulate a clear and systematic action plan to put the integration strategy in force.



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About the Authors



Dušan Drbohlav is Associate Professor in the Department of Social Geography and Regional Development, Faculty of Science at the Charles University in Prague. He is a leader of the GEOMIGRACE (Geographic Migration Centre) research team. He specializes in researching international migration issues and immigrants' integration into host societies, and participates in research projects for both domestic and foreign organizations such as the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the International Organization for Migration, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. He has published approximately 100 articles or book chapters (both in the Czech Republic and abroad) on migration and integration issues, and is a contributing author or editor of five books.



Ondřej Valenta is a postgraduate student in Social Geography and Regional Development at the Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Science. As a Research Fellow at the research unit GEOMIGRACE, he specialized in educational and labor aspects of international migration.

Mr. Valenta also works at the Technology Center of the Academy of Science of the Czech Republic as a Policy Analyst and Project Manager, focusing on assessment of system of research, development, and innovation. He is an expert in the development and utilization of foresight methods.



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1400 16th Street NW
Suite 300
Washington, DC 20036

Tel: 001 202-266-1940
Fax: 001 202-266-1900

