



The Socio-Economic Impact of Admission Policies and Admission-Related Integration Policies in the Czech Republic

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Until the first signs of economic recession in late 2008, the Czech Republic had for almost a decade witnessed one of the largest growths in immigrant populations in Europe [Trends in International Migration 2005; Statistics in Focus 2006, International Migration Outlook 2008]. Although the current economic situation has changed migration flows significantly, non-EU labour immigrants still remain an essential part of the Czech labour force.

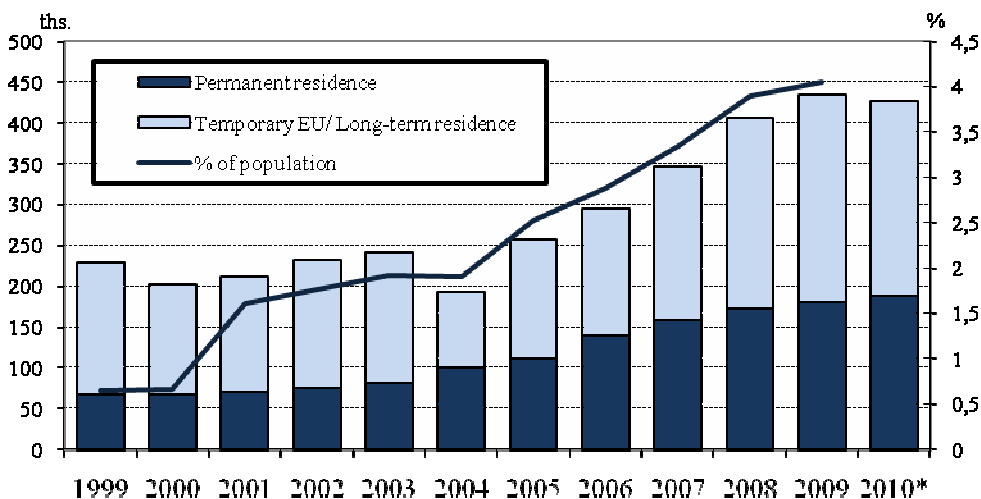
The main aim of this text is to provide a more detailed picture of non-EU labour migration to the Czech Republic. Unlike the Study on the National Policy Frame for the Integration of Newcomers [Babická 2010] this report is not intended to present a detailed picture of migration and integration measures. The main focus of this analysis is to (a) examine the impact of specific policies on the integration of migrants and (b) outline the general character of labour migration from non-EU countries to the Czech Republic. The analyses presented in this report are based primarily on a review of the literature and a secondary analysis of available statistics and sociological studies combined with several interviews conducted with experts and representatives from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA). The analysis of admission policies will focus on the selection mechanisms used by the Czech state in order to attract or block certain types of immigrants. Integration policies in this analysis are seen as a complex of set measures aimed at supporting the integration of immigrants into key institutions, relationships and positions within mainstream Czech society. Keeping in mind the fact that integration has both a bidirectional and multidimensional nature that have effects on many areas of everyday life for both migrants and the host society; this study will pay particular attention to the called structural dimension of integration [Bosswick and Heckmann 2006]. For these reasons much of the evidence presented in the following pages will evaluate the integration of immigrants into the Czech labour market.

Non-EU Labour Migration in Figures

In the Czech context, official statistics remain one of the richest sources of information regarding immigrants and especially those who are subject to visa and registration requirements. The activities of third country nationals are recorded in a number of offices and official institutions. A large part of the analyses presented in following pages are based on available data provided by the Czech Statistical Office (<http://www.czso.cz>). Despite the fact that not all the data are complete or publicly available (some of them are even contradictory); the official statistics provide a valuable, and in many ways unique, source of information concerning labour migration from the countries outside the EU into the Czech Republic.

According to official statistics about four hundred and thirty thousand foreign citizens resided in the Czech Republic at the end of September 2010. 58% of all migrants to the Czech Republic are men, 44% hold permanent residence permits and about two-thirds of these people come from outside the EU. This large group of non-EU migrants come from a wide range of countries: Ukraine (126,521), Vietnam (60,605), Russia (31,297), Moldova (9,136), the United States (6,031), Mongolia (5,559), China (5,424), Belarus (4,362) and Kazakhstan (4,103). Moreover, on the basis of different estimations there are perhaps up to half a million foreigners not accounted for in the official statistics because these migrants are unregistered [Drbohlav and Lachmanová 2008, Foreigners in the CR 2009, Drbohlav et al. 2010].

Figure 1: Number of foreigners officially registered in the Czech Republic



Source: CZSO 2010

Notes: * Statistics are valid for September 30 2010. This figure illustrates the relationship between type of residence (permanent vs. temporary) and migrants' contribution to the total population of the Czech Republic. These data reveal that as the total number of migrants has increased the proportion of permanent residents has always been less than temporary ones. However, in recent years the relative numbers of temporary and permanent residents have become more equal.

Official statistics indicate that immigration to the Czech Republic is primarily economic in nature. It seems to be especially true for EU immigration, where almost nine-in-ten registered immigrants are engaged in some kind of economic activity. This difference may also reflect the fact that population movement within EU is underestimated: especially temporary movements and those not driven by economic factors. When it comes to non-EU immigration, the official figures show that by the end of 2009 ‘only’ 55% of non-EU immigrants were economically active (as opposed to 88% among the EU 27).

Interesting findings emerge when a more detailed analysis of economic activities across different non-EU immigrants groups and across a longer timeframe is undertaken. The economic activities of officially registered non-EU immigrants seem to decline from 70% in 2008 to 55% in 2009. During the economic boom of 2008 there were slightly more than 200,000 non-EU foreigners registered as economically active in the Czech Republic. Within the following year the number of economically active tax payers from outside the EU dropped to 162,000: indicating a decline of almost a fifth (19%) in a twelve month period.

This apparent decline in officially registered economic activities, however, did not coincide with the return of the non-EU foreigners to their home countries. In spite of the economic crisis measures aimed at securing employment of the domestic Czech population by restricting the employment of foreigners who are already in the country and limiting the immigration of the newcomers (see later for more details): the share of foreigners among the total population did not fall but remained steady at around 300,000 as Graph 1 demonstrates.

Unsurprisingly, economic activities vary among the various immigrant groups. In addition to age, sex and qualifications, country of origin is an important factor influencing the economic activity of non-EU immigrant in the Czech Republic. According to the official records, which are summarised in Table 1, most economically active immigrants come from a specific set of countries: Mongolia, Moldova, Vietnam and Ukraine. Americans and especially Russians appear to be less integrated into the Czech labour market. At this point it is important to mention that the real number of economically active migrants are likely to be higher than the evidence in table 1 suggests because the official statistics only reflect the number of migrants who hold working permits and trade licenses. There is likely to be an underestimation of the economic activities of foreigners with permanent residence permits, i.e. those with an automatic right to work, and those migrants involved in the grey or black economy. The statistical evidence indicates that more than four fifths of Russians and three fifths of Americans are either not of a productive age, i.e. less than 15 or more than 65 years old. The particular subset of migrants appear to have come to the

Czech Republic for non-economic reasons or are engaged in economic activities not reported in official statistics.

Table 1: Summary statistics for the top six non-immigrant groups in the Czech Republic as of Dec. 31 2009

	Residing foreigners with residence permits	Composition (%)				
		Permanent residence permit	Economically active (incl. self-employed)	Employed	Women	Aged 15- 59 yrs
All non-EU countries	295,486	42	55	31	42	87
Ukraine	131,932	33	63	44	42	91
Vietnam	61,115	59	64	6	40	84
Russia	30,297	43	16	12	54	78
Moldavia	10,042	24	72	57	36	93
USA	5,941	45	39	28	39	78
Mongolia	5,745	30	78	73	60	84

Source: CZSO 2010

Note the evidence in this table reveals how migrants from different source countries exhibit different characteristics; and this forms the background for varying migration strategies and patterns of participation in the Czech labour market. In general, most migrants are of an economically active status, i.e. aged 15-59 years, and are motivated to participate in the domestic labour market.

The majority of non-EU migrants living in the Czech Republic are employed in low-paid unskilled jobs. There are many such jobs on offer but such work is unattractive to the native population. Within the last decade certain jobs seem to acquire the social label of immigrant jobs. According to official statistics, third country nationals are occupied mostly in industries like construction and manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade; but also in the repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles, real estate activities, administrative and support services, agriculture, forestry and fishing, accommodation and food services.

By the end of 2009, employment in the construction industry was largely the preserve of immigrants from the post-Soviet countries like Ukraine where 46% of employed Ukrainians work in construction, Moldova (40%), Uzbekistan (52%) and to the lesser extent Russia (7%); and also relatively new sources of migrant workers such as Mongolia (11%). More recently, employment in construction has also become attractive for immigrants from the EU new member states such as Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria. Manufacturing is the second largest sector of employment for

non-EU foreigners and this is particularly evident for specific national groups: Vietnamese (67%) and Mongolians (70%). Industrial jobs in the Czech Republic are also popular with Moldovans (23%), Ukrainians (23%) and Russians (12%). Non-EU migrants therefore occupy manual and auxiliary work, with men working mainly in construction and heavy industry, and women are mainly employed in cleaning services and doing manual labour in the food processing and the textile industries. When it comes to the type of economic activity, most of economically active non-EU labour migrants are employees (56%). On the other hand, the second largest non-EU immigrants group dominates in entrepreneurial activities. While most Ukrainians, Russians, Moldovans and Mongolian migrants to the Czech Republic are employees, Vietnamese immigrants are preponderant among the self-employed.

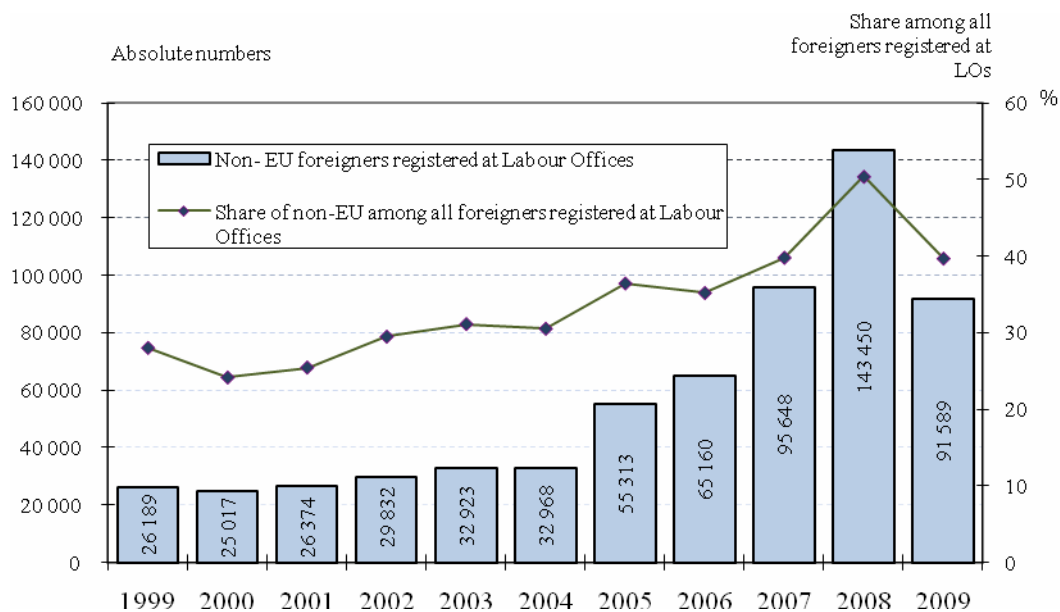
The number of employed foreigners is strongly determined by the situation in the Czech labour market: where employment of third country nationals is regulated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA) who are responsible for the granting and extension of work permits.¹ The number of non EU-foreigners working in the Czech Republic has fluctuated over time. Until 2009 the general trend was one of an increasing migrant component in the Czech labour force. With the global economic recession the Czech economy experienced an increase in unemployment for both native and immigrant workers. Due to the type of work undertaken by foreign born workers and the conditions under which they work migrants were hardest hit by the recent economic downturn.

A recent study of employment conditions in the Czech Republic by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA) revealed that the economic recession had a very negative impact on the secondary labour market, where the annual drop off in employment rate was almost 2%. While construction as one of the few secondary market sectors (rather surprisingly) experienced a slight growth in employment, the most harm in 2009 was done in industry (especially in processing industry) with a loss of 140,000 workers. A significant slow down was observed in a number of industrial sectors such as: metal processing, manufacturing and metalworking, the manufacture of machinery equipment and motor vehicles, repair and installation of machinery, in addition to the textile industry and other sectors – all of which had significant number of non-EU foreigners employed [Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs 2010a: 3].

¹ Until late 2008 a long-term residence permit for the purpose of employment was granted only for a period of up to one year as this was the maximum length of a job permit. From 2009 the maximum length for a work permit was extended to two years. Apart from permanent residence permit holders, only foreigners who have a long-term residence permit on the basis of family reunification have free access to the Czech labour market without having to apply for a work permit. All other third country nationals can be officially employed only provided they have a valid work and residence permits.

An interesting finding from this MLSA (2010a) report is that the general decline in employment in the industrial sector was accompanied by a growth in jobs in the service sector where 61,000 new jobs were created. This employment increase was especially evident in the wholesale and retail trades, and in particular in repair of motor vehicles, where foreigners are often employed. It makes sense at this point to have a look at the impact of the economic recession on employment structure of non-EU immigration in the Czech Republic. Graphs 2 illustrates that there was a significant change in the employment of third country nationals. The number of employed non-EU immigrants registered at Czech labour offices declined by almost 52,000 between 2008 and 2009 representing an annual fall of 36%. The largest reduction was observed among employees from Ukraine (23,600), Vietnam (12,600) and Mongolia (8,800).

Figure 2: Employment of non-EU foreigners in the Czech Republic, 1999-2009



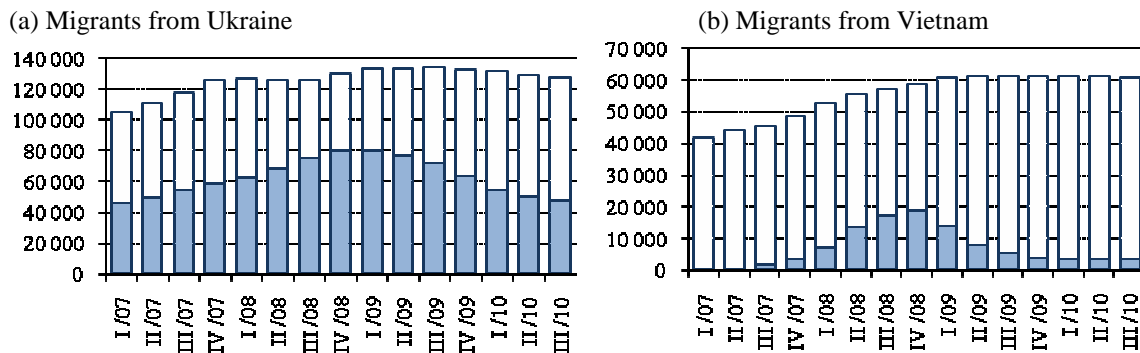
Source: CZSO 2010

Note that 'Los' denotes regional Labour Offices in the Czech Republic. This figure should be interpreted as follows. As the absolute number of non-EU migrant workers increased in the Czech Republic so did their relative contribution to the total number of all foreign employees participating in the domestic economy. The pattern of growth changed dramatically in 2008 following the international financial crisis and subsequent economic depression evident in 2009.

Changes in the Czech labour market and regulatory regime coincided with a fall of 6.4 % as of late 2009 in the share of non-EU foreigners (as well as foreigners in total) in the total labour force. The construction sector exhibited an interesting pattern of change as total employment grew by almost in 2009 and much of this growth occurred in Prague. During the same period 22,000 foreigners lost their jobs in the construction sector [MLSA 2010a: 20]. It is likely that in the "hard times" following the global financial crisis of late 2008 foreigners became increasingly vulnerable to being replaced by recently unemployed Czechs. Whether these contrasting patterns of

employment in construction are the product of market changes, the changing preferences of the employers,² or stem from the implementation of a new policy of domestic labour protection remains an open question. The available evidence suggests changes in market conditions had a less dramatic effect on the non-EU labour migration than the anti-crisis measures taken by the Czech government. For example, the number of non-EU foreigners working without work permits increased by 3,200 during 2009.

Figure 3: Economic activities of Ukrainian and Vietnamese migrant workers in the Czech Republic, 2007-2010



Source: CZSO 2010

Note that these two windows demonstrate the different profiles of non-EU migrants from Eastern Europe (Ukraine) and South East Asia (Vietnam) to the Czech Republic. There are two key patterns. First, the absolute numbers of immigrants from Ukraine is considerably higher than from Vietnam. Second, Ukrainian migrants were more likely to be directly employed, as wage earners, than their Vietnamese colleagues who tended instead to be self-employed. These data demonstrate that migrant participation in the Czech market exhibits important national differences and hence immigration strategies.

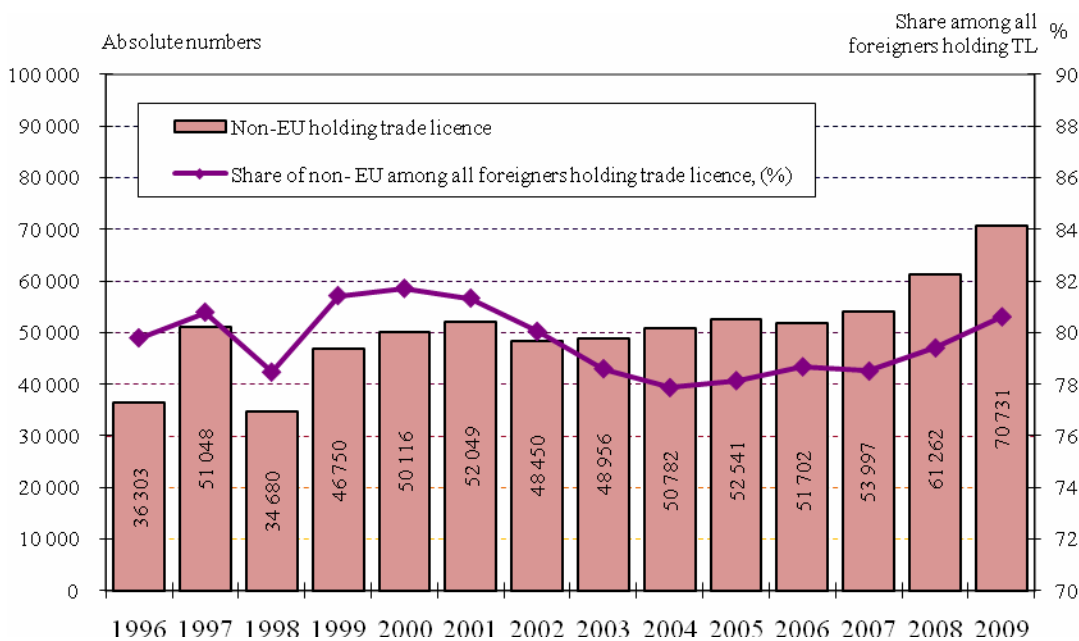
Unemployment among immigrants is not widespread in the Czech Republic. Regardless of the current economic recession the unemployment rate among non-EU immigrants tends to be significantly lower than the jobless rate among native Czechs. According to internal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA) statistics at the end of 2007 labour offices registered 2,753 unemployed third country nationals [Pořízková 2008]. A year later the number of officially unemployed non-EU migrants was approximately the same – 2,875 persons [Drbohlav et al. 2010].

Many explanations have been proposed to explain the low unemployment rate among non-EU foreigners in the Czech Republic. One of the most probable sources of underestimation is (a) unemployment of naturalized immigrants is not properly recorded, and (b) non-EU citizens have

² Horáková [2010a] claims that one of the impacts of the economic crisis was that Czech work seekers were compelled to compromise on job requirements due to employment scarcity.

very limited possibilities to claim for unemployment benefits in the Czech Republic.³ Under current legislation, foreigners with a long-term residence permit have in theory full access to unemployment benefits. In practice, when the “purpose” of a migrant workers stay in the Czech Republic comes to an end the residence permit granted for the purpose of employment or self-employment is also terminated.⁴ Consequently, if a non-EU migrant is unemployed and without any other legitimate purpose for staying in the Czech Republic (such as family reunification or a permanent residence permit) such an unemployed migrant workers are expected to leave the country immediately, regardless of how long they have been contributing to the Czech social security system. Moreover, those who are obliged to leave under these circumstances are not entitled to claim such benefits elsewhere.

Figure 4: Level of self-employment among non-EU foreigners in the Czech Republic, 1999-2009



Source: CZSO 2010

Note the evidence presented here illustrates the relationship between the total numbers of non-EU trade licence holders and the contribution of non-EU nationals to this economic group in the Czech Republic over a ten year period. As the general domestic economic climate worsens migrants appear to use trade licenses as a strategy for remaining within the Czech labour market. However, when the national economy expands the status of being a wage earning employee appears to become more attractive.

³ Prior to 2004 only holders of permanent residence permits were eligible for unemployment benefits. Nowadays in order to qualify for unemployment the foreigner should have been engaged in economic activity for at least 12 months during previous three years. For self-employment the requirement of being a registered social insurance payer applies. This condition may be used by Czech officials to claim that there is no discrimination between foreigners and the domestic population as the terms of participation in the social insurance system when employed are the same for foreigners and citizens of the Czech Republic. In reality, the situation very much depends on the type of residence permit a migrant possesses.

⁴ Since 2008 those who have lost their job through no fault of their own have a 60 day period to arrange a new job (Act No. 382/2008.). In practice, taking into account all the necessary paper work connected with the employment of foreigners this period of grace does not really improve migrants’ re-employment prospects. This rigidity in the regulations is also reflected in the low labour mobility among work permit holders an issue addressed later in the text.

As mentioned earlier, the decrease in the official employment rate among immigrants did not result in a significant drop in the total numbers of non-EU foreigners employed. Third country nationals did not leave the Czech Republic in large numbers, but searched for other opportunities in order to prolong their stay. The economic recession did not stop immigrants from being economically active, but rather pushed them to choose alternative strategies in the labour market. Non-EU immigrants traditionally dominated in entrepreneurship activities. During 2009, 5,010 new trade licenses were granted to citizens from Ukraine, 3,451 to citizens from Vietnam, 446 to citizens from Moldova and 74 to citizens from the Russian Federation. Therefore, as Graph 4 highlights an increase in unemployment coincided with an increase in rate of self-employment, where the Czech authorities appear to be less effective in terms of restricting and regulating the activities of non-EU migrant workers.

Turning attention to where migrant workers find employment, the evidence reveals that both EU and non-EU foreigner's work primarily in and around the large cities, that is areas with lower unemployment rates. Understanding the economic activities of third country nationals in the Czech Republic would not be complete without taking into consideration some important facts hidden behind the official numbers. There is not only the undocumented (illegal) economic activities of immigrants, but also a wide spread phenomenon of employment hidden behind self employment. This alternative strategy is often observed as an easier and more secure way to obtain formal employment, especially in unqualified occupations, such as cleaners, cashiers, welders, etc. As a result, a considerable number of foreigners have a trade license but are in fact employees.⁵

Sociological Research on Non-EU Labour Immigrants

Migration research has a multidisciplinary character. The topic of international migration in the Czech context is most often studied by demographers, lawyers and political scientists, rather than sociologists. Sociological research on immigrants is increasing although the main impetus for this work has not come from academia. A series of academic research projects undertaken over the last decade have focused on different target groups and studying different aspects of migrants' life. Often these studies employed different methodological approaches making comparison and synthesis of results difficult.⁶

⁵ This finding is supported by several researches carried within the last decade but it can not be derived from the official statistics.

⁶ Unfortunately, there are serious methodological problems with some of this research as critical remarks by Klvačová [2006] and Leontiyeva and Vojtkova [2010] demonstrate.

Most of the quantitative research on migrants in the Czech Republic applies a questionnaire survey method approach. One of the major limitations of this method in the Czech Republic and elsewhere is the lack of a valid and reliable sampling frame for drawing representative samples of migrant respondents for interview. Researchers applying non-probability quota sampling in the Czech context face the serious problem of having insufficient official statistics to estimate quotas.

Non-EU labour migration is often perceived and presented as a short term, or circular, migration not only by politicians and stakeholders but also by researchers. According to Drbohlav et al. [2010], the temporary character of immigration could to a certain extent justify the shortage of serious empirical research on non-EU foreigners and their integration into host societies. Bearing in mind the fact that official statistics are probably the most accurate data on non-EU immigration this section will present some key results from a number of research projects thereby extending the inferences that may be drawn from official data.

Due to the relatively low share of foreigners in the Czech Republic in comparison to western countries, the coverage of the Czech migrant population in national and international surveys is rather limited. Data from projects such as the International Social Survey Program (ISSP), the European Social Survey (ESS), and the European Values Survey (EVS) provide little useful information on migrants. However, these datasets do provide evidence on the attitudes of host populations to migrants. Often the data reveal varying degrees of anti-immigrant sentiments [Leontiyeva and Vávra 2009]. Even the specialized ad-hoc migration module included in the extensive Czech Labour Force Survey since 2008 provides little information regarding the integration of foreigners into Czech society.⁷ Out of more than 36,000 of respondents in the Czech Labour Force Survey, ‘only’ 161 informants (>.5%) were foreigners from outside the EU. The most represented in the survey were Ukrainians (67 respondents), Vietnamese (33 respondents) and Russians (20 respondents) and surprisingly Armenians (7 respondents); other non-EU immigrants such as Moldovans, Belarusians, migrants from the Balkan states and USA did not exceed four respondents in the each nationality.⁸ There is generally no longitudinal survey focused on immigrants (either EU-citizens or third country nationals). In spite of mentioned above pitfalls a couple of cross-sectional surveys of immigrants were realized on the national level within the last decade.

One of the first quantitative examinations of labour migration to the Czech Republic was undertaken in late 1999 on selected Prague hostels with high population of foreign workers

⁷ Figures are based on the Labour Force Survey frequency tables which are not publicly available and consultations with the representatives of the Czech Statistical Office.

⁸ The important reason for not using these data in reporting this study is their low cost effectiveness. The Czech Statistical Office charges around 20,000 CZK (€820,\$US 1,062 or £680) for the micro-dataset.

[Drbohlav et al. 1999; Drbohlav, Janská and Šelepová 2001]. This early and rather exploratory research revealed for example that Ukrainian immigrants have high level of educational achievements. About one third of the respondents had finished high school but were employed in manual unskilled positions especially in construction. In fact about 60 % of all interviewees did low skilled jobs. This study suggested that this form of labour migration was unlikely to lead to permanent settlement in the Czech Republic.

A similar non-random sampling form of exploratory research was conducted in Prague and its environs in 2003. This project focused on the question of integration of migrant workers into Czech society and examined the experiences of Ukrainians, Vietnamese and Armenians [Drbohlav and Ezzeddine 2007]. A major finding of this study was again the mismatch between the relatively high educational attainment of immigrants and their low occupation status in the Czech Republic. The study also highlighted the importance of social networks and the 'ethnic economy' for Ukrainian and Vietnamese migrants. One of key differences observed between the two largest groups of immigrants, Ukrainians and Vietnamese, was contrasting migration patterns. Unlike the Vietnamese and Armenians who expressed strong preferences toward permanent settlement, half of the Ukrainians interviewed planned to leave the Czech Republic within the following five years. The study supported the contention that labour migration to the Czech Republic had a strong transitional and circular or temporary character for many non-EU immigrants [Drbohlav 2007]. Moreover, the authors of this study claimed that factors such as family status, age and country of origin promoted migrant integration into Czech society; while other variables such as gender, education and number of children had little discernible impact.

The first nation-wide survey that attempted to draw a representative sample of the immigrant population was fielded in 2001 among foreigners holding work permits [Horáková and Čerňanská 2001]. Almost one thousand respondents were selected using a quota sampling methodology where the sampling frame was the official database of work permit holders. More than a half of the interviews were conducted with Ukrainians (55%) and remaining respondents came from a half a dozen countries: Poland (26%), Belarus (5%), Bulgaria (4%), Moldova (4%), the Russian Federation (4%) and Romania (2%). The main aim of the study was to explore the qualifications of employed foreigners and to evaluate their likely integration into the Czech labour market. It was one of the first empirical studies to highlight the phenomenon of 'transitional families' where the vast majority of employed foreigners living in the Czech Republic are separated from their partners and children. The study also showed that the educational level of foreign work permit holders is slightly higher than the educational level of the majority population: 12% of the immigrants interviewed had higher education, mostly technical degrees in construction but also in

services, hospitality and catering, and pedagogy. The authors of this study suggested that the qualification of immigrants corresponded to the demands of the Czech labour market where there was a lack of qualified workers in technical fields and especially in construction.

Analysis of migrants' work experience in their country of origin and in the Czech Republic revealed a trend to working in lower status positions such as handicraft or unskilled auxiliary jobs following migration. However, this national survey did not suggest a significant mismatch between skills and jobs and its authors claimed that most of the foreigners who were employed in low prestige professions had similar employment in their country of origin. The discrepancy between migrants educational level and occupation in the Czech Republic was however more significant than this study concluded. An analysis using the same data of the disparity between required and achieved education showed that 38% of Czech university graduates and 17% of those who had completed secondary education occupied a position that did not correspond to their educational level. In contrast, the same indicator of job-skill mismatch among immigrants with vocational training and basic education was 71% and 82% respectively [Horáková and Čerňanská 2001].

This research on work permit holders confirms the findings of previous studies concerning unsatisfactory working and housing conditions for migrants; and a general lack of information about the Czech health and insurance systems. Almost one forth of respondents stated that the job they did in the Czech Republic harmed their health; and more then a half of them wanted to find a new job. In spite of previous findings supporting transitional and temporary nature of immigration this national survey of work permit holders did not support the view that non-EU immigration is primarily seasonal in character. Although questions concerning plans for future stay or settlement were not included in the survey Horáková and Čerňanská [2001: 21] stated that labour migration from Central and Eastern European countries to the Czech Republic was becoming more permanent in nature and “on condition that the Czech state supported the integration of foreigners into the Czech society, especially into the labour market, the foreigners who already worked in the country would consequently decide to settle down”.

Another national survey of third country national work permit holders⁹ was conducted in 2006 [Leontiyeva and Vojtkova 2007; Leontiyeva 2010]. The research which is partly comparable to the 2001 study was conducted among 1,011 respondents selected using quota sampling methodology. This resulted in a sample with the following distribution: Ukrainians (70%), Russians (8%), Bulgarians (5%) and Belarusians (3%) and lesser numbers of other nationalities

⁹ The survey excluded those who do not have, or do not need, a work permit, i.e. illegal migrant workers, self-employed entrepreneurs, unemployed migrants, permanent residence permit holders, employed family members of Czech citizens, etc.

such as Moldovans, Vietnamese, Chinese, Americans and Mongolians.¹⁰ The survey confirms the conventional wisdom that labour migrants from non-EU countries tend to cluster in the “lower” labour market segments often taking marginal low-skilled, low-paid, and low-prestige jobs. The empirical evidences suggest that there is a discrepancy between the occupations of migrants in the Czech Republic and their home country. Less than half of those who were economically active back home worked in similar positions in the Czech Republic, the rest is over-qualified for the work they do. Although, the analysis of the educational structure of respondents does not seem to support the popular stereotype of large numbers of university educated migrants holding unskilled jobs. In reality, only a minority of non-EU work permit holders have high education (13%) and most of those with lots of schooling tend to have good jobs. The permit holder survey of 2006, however, revealed that older men with families and children back home constitute the most deskilled group; and one third of these deskilled and highly educated migrants have a professional teaching qualification [Leontiyeva 2010].

The results of this survey appear to confirm, a point noted earlier, low occupational mobility among non-EU work permit holders.¹¹ Almost two-in-three respondents (64%) have never changed their job in the Czech Republic. For this and other reasons, only one third of employed non-EU foreigners believe they have opportunities for career development. Regardless of prior labour mobility, the survey evidence from 2006 shows that for many migrant workers current occupation determines their career aspirations. And this is especially true for female migrant workers [Leontiyeva and Vojtkova 2007; Leontiyeva 2010].

Finally, given the restrictions on many migrants’ career aspirations evident in the Czech labour market the issue of permanent settlement in the Czech Republic is an important consideration. The survey results reveal that more than a third of respondents are undecided about their future; and almost half wish to stay in the country for at least five years. About one third of respondents did not express any specific plans about changing their residence status; but 44% did express a wish to apply for permanent residency: a status which in many respects gives migrants the same rights as Czech citizens. Respondents holding higher status positions and more qualified jobs tend to have more definite plans for the future. Holding a “good” job in the Czech Republic appears to be one of the most important reasons for settling permanently in the country. At the

¹⁰ In order to clarify why the second largest non-EU immigrant group, the Vietnamese, are poorly represented in the survey it should be noted that in late 2006 less than a thousand work permits were assigned to Vietnamese citizens. At this point, almost all Vietnamese nationals in the Czech Republic held an entrepreneur’s licence or a permanent residence permit. Two years later in 2008, the situation had changed where the share of directly employed Vietnamese workers had increased dramatically to almost 30%. The situation in late 2010 is similar to that of the 2006 when only a small number of Vietnamese held work permits. (see Figure 3.b)

¹¹ Such low labour mobility is a product of Czech migrant labour regulations which makes it practically impossible for a foreign (non-EU) worker to change jobs whilst holding a valid work permit.

same time, highly skilled migrants expressed ambitions about securing better employment elsewhere. In sum, the survey research of 2006 challenged some of the prevailing perceptions of non-EU immigration and questioned the assumption that younger migrants holding low-skilled and low-paid jobs are indeed likely to remain a temporary workforce rather than aspire to become the basis for a new generation of settlers. These survey results support some of the predictions of household migration decision theory. For example, the number of migrants in 2006 with no family in the Czech Republic who expressed a preference to stay in the Czech Republic over the next five years was only half the rate (30%) of those who have a partner, or at least one family member, living in the Czech Republic (60%).

The final nationwide quantitative research reviewed here concerns an “Analysis of Male and Female Immigrants’ Access to Education and the Labour Market in the Czech Republic”. This study conducted in 2007 mapped out the life and working conditions of non-EU immigrants with a special focus on the gender differences [Gabal and Kocourek 2007].¹² It is important to note that this survey is not a nationally representative sample in terms of citizenship or type of work permits.¹³ Notwithstanding this and other methodological limitations this research has some findings that are of substantive interest. This study confirms the view that non-EU immigrants occupy jobs mainly in the secondary labour market and make use of their qualification mostly in technical professions and lower-skilled jobs. The data also reveal that non-EU immigration is not exclusively temporary: 37% of respondents planned to stay permanently in the Czech Republic, 39% planned to stay in the country as long as they could secure employment, 6% planned to move to another foreign country, and finally 18% of the respondents expressed a wish to return home in the near future. This survey provided evidence that most immigrants to the Czech Republic reported problems with getting information prior to and shortly after their arrival in the Czech Republic. Migrants report that they rely mainly on working agencies or social contacts and other informal intermediaries. One of the key findings of this research was that cultural and geographical closeness are more important factors influencing integration than type of residence permit. Finally, this survey highlighted the importance of gender differences in labour migration and showed that women are more exposed to risks and discrimination in the Czech labour market, have lower salaries and make less use of their formal qualifications at the workplace [Gabal and Kocourek 2007].

¹² Although this survey was also targeted refugees, this report will present only those findings relevant for non-EU immigrants.

¹³ The authors claimed that the quota sample was based on official statistics in terms of gender and regional distribution. Nevertheless, the half of the respondents (52%) had Chinese or Vietnamese citizenship and the rest had either Ukrainian or Russian citizenship. The analysis reduced these four nationalities to two regional groupings: East Asia and East Europe. Half of the sample interviewed had temporary residence permits.

Aside from the surveys reviewed there are a number of other smaller-scale or exploratory quantitative studies and, of course a large number of ethnographic and anthropological studies carried out by different institutions. Analysis of the impact of non-EU migrants' qualifications on employment status and occupational mobility in the Czech labour market reveals the importance of structural and legislative conditions and the impact of social networks [Grygar, Čaněk and Černík 2006]. Evidence from in-depth interviews undertaken in 2003 with first generation immigrants who possess residence permits and are naturalized from Ukraine, the Russian Federation, the USA, Belarus and Bulgaria suggests that immigrants' career expectation and aspirations are closely associated with their legal status, age, origin and language skills. Another large qualitative study that included 250 interviews with immigrants conducted in 2008 and focused on social integration and the position of immigrants in the Czech labour market. This research also reported poor working conditions for the majority of non-EU immigrants, the problem of inflexible work permit regime for East European immigrants and the use of alternative strategies within the labour market (including undocumented employment, subcontracting through intermediates and employment hidden under the entrepreneurial activities). Another important theme in this research is the role of social networks and the impact of the ethnic economy in case for Vietnamese immigrants [Rákoczyová and Trbola 2009].

To conclude this overview of sociological research on migration to the Czech Republic it is noting that knowledge of non-EU immigration to the Czech Republic is partial and sometimes biased. Studies of target groups and the topics do not facilitate the cumulation of knowledge, and often the methodological approaches employed are not comparable. It seems that researchers do not always agree on the most important factors determining labour market integration such as (a) the educational level of immigrants, (b) the match between education and occupation, and (c) the extent to which immigrants link their future to that of the Czech Republic. Trends such as the feminization of immigration, increases in the number of permanent residence permit holders among the third country nationals and the growing importance of a second generation of non-EU immigrants all underscore the desirability of expanding research on the integration of foreigners into Czech society.

Integration Policies toward non-EU Labour Immigrants

The Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic (MoI), and more specifically the Department of Asylum and Migration Policy (DAMP) plays a key role in formulation and implementation of migration and integration policies. When it comes to labour migration there are at least two other stakeholders involved and worth mentioning at this point. The important duty of managing labour

migration is on the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA), which controls the labour offices responsible for issuing the work permits. Apart from its regularization function and control over the legal employment of foreigners; Czech labour offices also collect data on the employment of foreigners and provide important assistance aimed on the inclusion of selected groups of foreigners (predominantly permanent residence permit holders and refugees) to the Czech labour market. Labour inspectorates, which also belong under the MLSA, control the working conditions. Another important actor is the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MoIT), this ministry has responsibility for regulating the self-employment activities of foreigners organised through the trade license offices which are administrated by municipal and regional authorities. Bearing in mind the recent growth in the number of trade licenses granted to non-EU immigrants, in contrast to the increase in unemployment statistics, it is important to study not only the conditions under which the trade licenses are granted but also the system of oversight, meaning the observance of labour code regulations by the self-employed.

Generally speaking, there are no specific integration policies or programmes specifically oriented towards labour immigrants living in the Czech Republic. However, official integration strategy outlined by the Interior Ministry is summarized in the most important document defining governments' policy: The Concept of Foreigners' Integration in the Czech Republic. This policy document states that economic independence is one of the basic priorities of migrants integration into Czech society. This document also implies equal rights principles and measures combating discrimination [MoI 2006]. The official concept of integration is strongly connected with a continuous improvement of rights with length of residency. Indeed, the permanent residency permit is connected with a more secure status than any other form of temporary residence visa.¹⁴ However, in the context of the recent anti-crisis measures for the Czech economy, discussed later in this report, the principle of progressive integration and increasing rights could be questioned. The target group for integration policies are all foreigners legally residing in the country for at least one year with exception of asylum seekers and EU-nationals.¹⁵

¹⁴ This is not always relevant when comparing EU and non-EU immigrants' rights.

¹⁵ Unlike asylum seekers (who are targeted by a special state integration programme) EU labour immigrants are not object for integration policies basically due to the presupposition that equal rights principle and absence of "institutional barriers" would secure inclusion. However, recent developments such as the case of Romanian and Bulgarian workers exploited as cheap labour force which recently made headline news in the Czech media and several scholarly studies indicates that labour market integration is sometimes far from successful even for EU labour immigrants [Drbohlav 2010a, Rakozsyova and Trbola 2010].

Proactive Labour Migration Policies - A Few Drops in the Ocean?

The beginning of 2010 witnessed a significant move on the part of the Czech government to formulate a more comprehensive set of labour migration policies. A governmental resolution passed on May 2010 addressing current problems and trends in migration proposed creating a “new system of economic migration” by the end of 2010 [Kolmerová 2010]. This resolution was the first to mention terms like “circular” and “temporary migration”. The principles of the new system in preparation are geared toward creating a consistent system of managing economic migration so as to meet the needs of the Czech economy and operate within the limits set by the “integration possibilities” of Czech society. For labour migration, the options of circular migration are to be preferred to permanent settlement; and specifically migration of low-skilled migrants should be primarily based on the principle of temporary migration [Temporary and Circular Migration 2010]. In order to understand these new developments in Czech labour admissions policies it is appropriate at this point to present some concrete examples of this new system of economic migration management.

Selection of qualified foreign workers

The Czech governments’ policies of selecting qualified workers were inspired by the Canadian experience. These new selection policies were launched in 2003.¹⁶ This period is often associated with a shift in general migration policy away from a liberal laissez-faire regime to a rather restrictive and regularised approach where states adopted a more active approach towards selecting immigrants [Baršová and Barša 2005; Drbohlav et al. 2009]. The Czech governments’ selection of foreign workers scheme operated initially as a pilot scheme for five years and was expanded in 2008 because of its success. However, just two years later in 2010 the scheme was effectively abandoned.

The main principle of the selection program (2003-2010) complies with the principles of governmental policies toward immigration, which declared that the state should not obstruct legal immigration and should in fact support immigration because it is beneficial in the long term to Czech national interests [MoI 2003]. The proponents of the foreign workers selection scheme claim that it is an instrument for managing migration because of its potential to solve demographic problems such as the rapid decline in the Czech working population in the coming decades. From the outset, the selection scheme supported legal labour migration provisions and the regulation of

¹⁶ The preparation of the project started two years earlier as a result of the government decree. Detailed information may be obtained from the official website of the project at: <http://www.imigracecz.org/>

migration using work permits.¹⁷ One of the main outcomes of this scheme was a reduction in the period required before making an application for a permanent residence permit. Unlike other non-EU immigrants, successful applicants for the Czech Republic's qualified workers' selection scheme receive a recommendation for a permanent residency permit from the MoI after 30 months, or in case of highly qualified employees after 18 months. One distinct advantage of this scheme is that migrants' closest family members, i.e. partners and children, are also given residence visas. Another bonus of the scheme was that it facilitates job mobility where those who participate in the scheme for at least one year are allowed to change jobs even if they voluntarily leave their first position.¹⁸

Apart from citizenship, the other major condition for participating in the scheme is an employment contract, where an applicant must hold a valid work permit and to have at least a secondary level of education.¹⁹ In the first years of the pilot phase of qualified workers selection scheme applications were only open to the citizens from Bulgaria, Croatia and Kazakhstan. By the end of 2010, the project was open to migrants from 51 non-EU states. Keeping in mind the list of top non-EU immigrant groups (presented in Table 1), it could be interesting to mention that neither Vietnam nor Mongolia was included in the preferred country lists despite the fact that these nationals are among the largest migrant communities in the Czech Republic. The citizens of Mongolia and Vietnam could only apply for the qualified worker scheme if they had graduated from Czech secondary or high schools and are currently employed.²⁰ Therefore, the Czech government declared little interest in promoting the integration of Vietnamese and Mongolian labour migrants not considering their qualifications or position on the labour market. Nekorjak and Hofírek [2010] claim that this exclusion is connected with attempts by the Czech government to limit immigration from the countries, which are viewed as being problematic in terms of security and cultural distance. The selection of qualified worker source countries also indicates which immigrants are viewed as being capable of integration into Czech society and are likely to provide benefits to the host society over the long term.

Aside from the very selective approach adopted and the rather complicated paperwork involved, one of the major pitfalls of the qualified worker scheme is it does not include any integration measures such as integration courses, social counselling, assistance marketing finding a job or help with finding accommodation. More recently, participants in this scheme were subject

¹⁷ Only employed foreigners with a work permit could apply. The self-employed were not targeted at all.

¹⁸ Compared to other employed third country nationals who can make use of that tolerated "waiting period" only in case they lost their job through no fault of their own; before 2008 this was 30 days for project participants and two weeks for the rest.

¹⁹ Applicants should have a valid residence permit for the purpose of employment, scientific research or family reunion.

²⁰ Migrants who graduated from Czech schools could apply regardless of their citizenship.

to investigation by the MLSA who wished to discover if the migrants had successfully integrated into Czech society and were worthy of recommendation for a permanent residence permit.

During the operation of the Czech Republic's qualified workers scheme it was criticized by a number of experts and the media for its lack of effectiveness. The total number of non-EU migrants who had received a permanent residency permit under the scheme by March 31 2010 was 843 (including family members). In addition, to this group there was by the end of 2010 approximately 1,300 participants and their family members participating in the scheme. New applications were no longer being accepted at the beginning of 2011. However, the scheme will continue to operate for next 30 months for those who had already applied before January 1st 2011. An analysis of the occupational structure of project participants reveals that the possibility of acquiring permanent residency in the Czech Republic under an accelerated process was mainly attractive mainly to information technology specialists. Relatively few medical personnel applied, although this is the profession that the Czech Republic has the greatest skills shortage. There is no a straightforward evaluation of the project success because one should take into consideration the fact that the project resulted form the compromise between the MLSA and other ministries where the former only provided recommendations regarding the granting of permanent residence permit by the Ministry of the Interior and within this process did not always "play a key role" in decision making regarding which countries should be included in qualified workers scheme. The official reasons for terminating the scheme was (a) its failure to attract sufficient numbers of applicants, (b) a changed domestic labour market characterized by increasing unemployment and opportunities for foreigners, and (c) budget cuts.²¹

Green cards²²

During the economic boom another pro-active labour migration project was designed.²³ The launch of this project, which began in 2009, unfortunately coincided with the economic slow down. This unfavourable context combined with negative general public attitudes towards the organized recruitment of foreigners and fears that foreign workers would take Czech jobs mean that the green card programme has remained limited in scope.

The main advantage of the green card programme is that, unlike its predecessor, it combines work and residence permits in a single document. This programme seems to be motivated by different criteria than the qualified workers scheme as green cards are targeted

²¹ Interview with Kust [2010].

²² Detailed information could be obtained at the official web of the project http://portal.mpsv.cz/sz/zahr_zam/zelka

²³ The plan for green cards implementation was approved by the government in 2007.

not only to highly skilled professionals but also other occupations requiring qualified or unqualified workers who could fill important gaps in the labour market. The most important supporter of the green card programme is the Czech Ministry of Industry and Trade (MPO). This ministry appears to articulating the interests of Czech entrepreneurs and big companies who are in favour of a flexible and low cost foreign labour force.

The main aim of the green card programme is not to speed up the inclusion of labour migrants and to promote their integration and settlement, but to simplify the administrative process connected with the system of work permits. The opportunities offered to migrant holding a green card depend on the type of green card held and migrant worker's qualifications. Currently there are three types of green cards available. Type A green cards are allocated to qualified migrants with a third level education who are classified as having key skills for the Czech economy. This type of green card is valid for three years and may be extended. Type B green cards are valid for two years and may also be prolonged. This form of green card is designed for qualified workers who have at least a vocational level of training. Type C green cards are valid for 2 years but without the possibility of extension and allocated to low skilled or unqualified workers.

The most significant criticism of the green card programme to date has been based on its selection criteria where level of education and qualifications, but also migrants' home country are used to choose green card holders. Meaning not only qualification and education criteria but mainly the limited number of source countries included in the project [see for example Čižinský 2008,²⁴ and Drbohlav 2010, Nekorjak 2010]. According to a special decree from the Ministry of the Interior (No. 461/2008 Coll) citizens from Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Croatia, Japan, Macedonia, Montenegro, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Serbia, the USA and Ukraine can apply for a green card.²⁵ Only the USA and Ukraine belong to the top six non-EU source countries of migration to the Czech Republic. Immigration from the other countries to the Czech Republic is rare. The official reason for this selectivity is the national security considerations [Klvaňová 2008]. With the green cards programme the Czech government has revealed which immigrants are considered worthy permanent residents (qualified from listed countries), which ones are viewed as a temporary

²⁴ Čižinský [2008] also criticises the intense centralisation of green card decision making in hands of two ministries (MVCR and MPSV) and the weakness of labour offices, which lost control over green card allocations in their regions.

²⁵ Inclusion of Ukraine in the green card programme remained an open question until commencement. Ukraine was excluded early proposals for the green card but was added to the final list after a series of the inter-ministerial negotiations [Klvaňová 2008].

migrants (unqualified citizens from listed countries) and, those that are not welcome (all remaining non-EU immigrants).

In November 2010, a hundred and twenty three green cards were issued (49 A types, 38 B types and 31 C types).²⁶ The vast majority of these green card holders were Ukrainians (91 people). C type green cards were granted exclusively to Ukrainian nationals. The second largest group of green card holders employed predominantly as 'key personnel' came from the United States (18 people). The remaining green card holders came from Serbia, Croatia, Japan and Macedonia. It was noted earlier, that the green card programme is relatively new and because it was launched during an economic crisis, it is difficult to evaluate its effectiveness.

Blue cards²⁷

Another example of migration management project is the recently launched the Blue Card Programme, which unlike its predecessors, does not originate on the national level. An amendment to the Czech Alien Law, signed by President Klaus in late 2010, brought several changes including the transposition of an EU directive concerning a special type of long term permit for highly qualified foreigners. From the beginning of May 2011 foreigners who have a third or fourth level education or higher vocational training will be eligible to apply for a blue card (which combines both a work permit and a residence permit) in the Czech Republic.

The blue card programme is in many respects similar to the Czech green card system, but there are some key differences. First and the most importantly, blue cards are open to all highly educated foreigners regardless of their citizenship. One of the prerequisites for a blue card is having a work contract signed prior to application.²⁸ Aside from the qualification requirements, special attention is also given to the financial situation of labour migrants.²⁹ The main advantage of the blue card system in comparison to other work permit schemes is job mobility: a process that may involve change of employer and position. If employment is terminated during the validity of blue card, the migrant can take up to three months to find a new job.³⁰ The importance of the mobility option is also reflected in the fact that blue cards

²⁶ MPSV statistics on foreign employment are available at <http://portal.mpsv.cz>

²⁷ Detailed information could be obtained at the official web of the project: http://portal.mpsv.cz/sz/zahr_zam/modka

²⁸ In case of green cards the contact with the potential employer prior to submitting an application is recommended but not required.

²⁹ The requirements regarding salary correspond to payments that are at least 150% of the average salary in the Czech Republic.

³⁰ Repeated unemployment (apart from some exceptions) during the validity of one blue card is not allowed.

may be issued for the duration of a work contract plus a period of three months [Sněmovní tisk ... 2010].

Recent Measures for Regulating Labour Migration

Economic growth over the last decade, and especially in the years 2006 to 2008, was paralleled with a large increase in foreigners' participation in the Czech labour market. In 2008, Czech labour offices issued the largest number of work permits since their establishment. The Czech state, and most especially the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MPO), not only accepted that there was high domestic demand for foreign workers but reaped the rewards of increased immigration as the Czech economy surged ahead. However, the financial crisis of late 2008 and the subsequent global economic recession adversely affected Czech economic performance as exports and local demand lessened. This downturn revealed a series of problems that had remained largely hidden until this point.

The reaction of the Czech government to the economic recession was the formulation of a National Anti-crisis Plan (Národní protikrizový plan, NPP) approved by the cabinet in early 2009 [Government of the Czech Republic 2009]. This national plan identified two key immigration related priorities, which the government asserted would bring harmony to Czech society and ensure domestic security [Government of the Czech Republic 2009: 13]. The first measure involved restricting the inflow of new foreign workers into the Czech Republic, while the second measure focused on the voluntary repatriation of those who had lost their jobs during the economic crisis. The last immigrant related plan proclaimed by the government was the enforcement of controlling measures targeted on foreigners without valid permits.

The Czech government envisaged achieving the first goal by suspending the issuing of any further selected type of visas. Here the focus was mainly on long term visas for the purpose of employment and self-employments. According to official information, some Czech embassies and consulates abroad stopped accepting applications for several months. Ironically, Čižinský [2009] notes that the Czech government was unsuccessful in this plan as new visas were still issued regardless of the new provisions. Moreover, the government was strongly criticized in the media for promoting this particular measure even though it proved ineffective. Many experts agree that regulation of immigration from third countries is often ineffective because the criteria for issuing new visas are vague the national quotas remain in place. Moreover, these regulations are often not subject to general public scrutiny [see Čižinský 2009, Drbohlav 2010].

Attempts to achieve the second goal contained in the Czech governments' anti-crisis measures resulted in a programme of voluntary repatriation.³¹ This programme was launched in early 2009 to provide financial aid and a one-way ticket to the country of origin to those migrants who had lost their jobs; and therefore had no purpose for remaining in the Czech Republic. The rationale behind this voluntary repatriation programme was not only to help foreign workers in a time of crisis, but to ensure that large numbers of foreigners remained in the country without valid work and residence permits. In its first phase the voluntary repatriation programme was targeted toward those third country immigrants who had lost jobs but still had valid residence permit, and had thus stayed legally in the country.³² In the following stage, the programme was expanded to include foreigners without valid residence permits. At the end of 2009, the blue card programme was ended after a brief 10 month existence.

One central reason for this decision was that the number of voluntary returns by migrants to their home countries did not match the expectations of the Czech government's. During all phases of the repatriation project 2,258 foreign citizens were returned to their countries of origin; and only 169 of these migrants had resided in the Czech Republic without legal documents. Most success was achieved among citizens from Mongolia. During the voluntary return programme 1,342 legal residents and 15 illegal workers returned home. The largest groups of labour migrants, i.e. Ukrainians and Vietnamese did not participate in significant numbers in this project as 303 Vietnamese citizens (including 20 without valid documents) and 130 Ukrainians (70 did not have valid documents) returned home. One of the main reasons for low interest in voluntary repatriation among immigrants was the global nature of the recession during 2009 and 2010. Consequently, the home countries of migrants also experienced economic hardship and difficulties ensuing from expenses stemming from the original decision to immigrate.

In the Czech case, it is also possible to speak of other fears such as obstacles restricting repeated immigration. Participants in the voluntary returns programme received shorter re-entrance bans, as well as documents confirming their participation in the project, which did not however guarantee success upon re-entrance. As Plewa [2009] suggests that certain signs of reorientation of migration policies (excluding "culturally distant" and migrants who are unlikely to assimilate into Czech society were evident before the crisis. In addition to repeated attempts by the Czech state to implement a selective approach toward admission policies, restrictive measurements taken in 2009 led to concern about the possibility of re-admittance to the Czech Republic especially among immigrants from the Asian states like Vietnam. Migrants from Asia

³¹ More information about the project is available at: <http://www.dobrovolnavrat.cz/>

³² See previous comments on allowed period of stay in the country after the termination of work permit.

were excluded from practically all pro-active immigration projects and subjected to the visa suspensions [Plewa 2009].

As noted earlier, one of the priorities of the Czech Republic's anti-crisis plan was the enforcement of controls targeting foreigners without valid residence and work permits. In addition, to increased Foreign Police checks there were greater attempts to coordinate the activities of other state institutions. In the light of these events, Čaněk [2010] criticized this increased coordination across state agencies such as the Labour Inspectorates and the Foreign Police. This criticism was based on the principle that immigrants and domestic workers should be treated fairly and in an equal manner. Consequently, equal treatment of all workers depends on separating control over length of residence and working conditions. If foreigners are subject to higher levels of surveillance in their daily lives then inter-institutional cooperation would result in increased fear of possible sanctions: and a general reluctance by foreign workers to report any violation of labour law or other abuses [Čaněk 2010].

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA) was also active during the initial phase of the economic recession. At the beginning of 2009, this ministry sent out a special memorandum to all labour offices. Significantly, this official document was not made available to the general public. This internal ministry document instructed labour offices about how best to make decisions about issuing and prolonging work permits. According to the MLSA, this memorandum did not recommend the suspension of work permits at any cost, but appealed for "greater consideration" to be made of a general decline in the demand for foreign labour within the Czech economy [Kolmerová 2010]. In a press release, the MLSA admitted that the main aim of this memorandum was to facilitate unemployed Czech citizens return to the labour market. According to the MLSA, the situation in the domestic labour market should be "taken into account" not only when issuing new work permits; but also when making decisions about extending current work permits. This memorandum had some unintended consequences as its blanket measures also applied to foreigners who are partners in Czech business enterprises or are members of co-operatives [MLSA 2010b].

According to the MLSA communication, the main criteria for issuing work permits to third country nationals was to be an officials evaluation of the situation prevailing in the local labour market. As the result of this rather vaguely formulated instruction and the fact that the memorandum did not authorise any significant departure from the status quo, local labour offices made decisions on the basis of their own judgements: and hence tended to act in an inconsistent

manner.³³ Surprisingly, this restrictive measure included some integrative principles. For example, extending work permits was judged to be preferable to issuing new ones; and the MLSA memorandum recommended that labour offices consider the family situation of resident applicants and the number of years spent in the country [Kolmerová 2010].

Recent research undertaken at local labour offices has revealed that some labour office officials adopted a benevolent approach toward work permits so as to minimise any disruption to Czech employers through the potential loss of their trained (foreign born) labour force [Pořízková 2010]. In other cases, local labour offices acted more capriciously by restricting the validity of work permits to very short time periods such as three months; or stopped issuing work permits altogether although the position could not be filled by a Czech or other EU national.³⁴ One important consequence of these developments was that local labour offices, or more precisely their head officers, obtained increased powers and freedom in decision making because of the MLSA memorandum. This decentralisation of decision making has had important consequences for many non-EU labour migrants. The effectiveness of this restrictive measure in boosting the employment prospects of the domestic workforce is not entirely clear. This is because official statistics indicating if the positions on which the foreigners failed to get permits were subsequently filled by Czech workers, thereby reducing local unemployment, are not available. Taking into account the dynamics of the Czech unemployment rate, described above, it seems that instead of combating unemployment and exclusion the measures taken by the MLSA only influenced the character of labour migration. Migrants' preference for direct employment fell sharply and this trend in turn undermined those official policies oriented toward integrating third country nationals into the Czech labour market.

Conclusion

Czech migration and integration policies are still rather centralized and implemented using a top down approach. Despite the slow but steady improvement of integration on the local level there is a continuing concentration of powers within the Ministry of the Interior, which seems to be more concerned about security issues, and often undertakes measures that undermine the declared principles of integration. To date, Czech migration policies have largely been the product of ad-hoc solutions often in response to particular events. Many migration experts have appealed for

³³ Even before the economic recession the primary condition for issuing work permit for third country national (with certain exceptions) was the fact that the position could not be filled by a citizen of the Czech Republic or any other EU country.

³⁴ This extreme reduction of work permit validity seems absurd taking into account that (if work permit is the main purpose of stay) three months prolongation of work permit implies only three months prolongation of "long-term" residence permit (consider the amount of paper work and the waiting periods connected with both prolongations).

conceptual changes especially in the domain of creating more linkage between admission and integration policies [see Tošnerova 2009; Čížinský 2009; Drbohlav 2010; Nekorjak 2010; Kolmerová 2010; and Kust 2010]. The effectiveness of imposing more restrictive measures is disputable.

The possibilities of labour immigrant's successful integration into Czech society are also influenced by the principle of "purpose of stay" where an immigrant has to have a specific reason for residing in the Czech Republic. Most of the legal economic activities undertaken by foreigners are arranged on the basis of employment contracts through holding a work visa or work permit, or setting up a business as a holder of a trade certificate or have legal personality through the establishment of a company. The current system of work permits in the Czech Republic is characterised by a static (against social mobility), limited (geographically and in time) and dependent (on the employer) conception of a non-EU migrant in the labour market [Čaněk 2010b]. While the employment of foreigners is effectively regulated by the state, alternative strategies for entering the labour market are often preferred by migrants [Horaková 2010; Nekorjak 2010; Drbohlav 2010].

Although circular or temporary migration has not yet been embraced by Czech migration policy makers, the government has already declared support for giving preference to permanent migration especially with regard to low-skilled immigrants. The government resolution of May 2010 already set a task to prepare a proposal for a "new system of economic migration" by the end of 2010 [Temporary and Circular Migration 2010]. On the one hand, the government wants to attract "more brains" from non-EU states by supporting an active policy of encouraging skilled immigrants. On the other hand, immigrants with "brawn", i.e. low-skilled and unskilled workers are also considered desirable because this source of low-cost flexible labour is seen to be a key component of economic prosperity and mitigating the worse effects of the current international recession. Low or unskilled migrant labour are, however, generally seen to be "guest" workers who ideally would be issued with type C Green cards on the understanding that they return home once their labour is no longer needed. A recent study of employed foreigners attitudes and aspirations suggests that many labour migrants (both qualified and unqualified) connect their future with the Czech Republic [Leontiyeva 2010]. Unwise policies and populist political rhetoric that asserts that local jobs should be protected often ignores the collective benefits of having free movement of labour. It would seem that the economic sense of giving migrant workers equal opportunities and wealth migrants labour generates for the national economy can be superseded by worries about loss of secure employment and income.

Recent developments such as the economic boom and subsequent recession provide a salutary lesson concerning the potential dehumanization and commoditisation of immigrants by public policy makers. An analysis of official statistics and several studies suggests that the number of foreigners who lost their work permits (or voluntarily changed them for trade licences) came from employers who experienced economic pressure and had to rationalize their business activities. In this sense the economic crisis provided an opportunity to increase the level of regulation over migrant labour's participation in the Czech labour market as direct employees. On basis of fairness, the suspension of issuing new work permits should operate simultaneously with increased protection of the rights of those immigrants who are already working in the country for several years. Instead the Czech government applied a rather instrumental approach: "once we need them – we bring them, once we don't – we send them back home."

The historical evidence from economic stagnations in other developed countries shows that migrants most often prefer to stay in the destination countries [Drbohlav 2010a]. In this respect, Castles and Miller [2010] suggest that the highest probability of return during an economic slow down is often among (a) immigrants who are the most beneficial for the host society because they have enough skills and opportunities to be occupied elsewhere, and (b) among those migrants who have a sufficiently secure status to return to the host country when the economic situation starts to improve. The state itself creates through rigid migrant labour regulations a number of barriers to the successful integration of non-EU immigrants (both qualified and unqualified) into the Czech labour market and society. Such short sighted policies fail to heed the wisdom of a well known aphorism that states "nothing is more permanent than temporary immigrants" [Leontiyeva 2010].

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