

*Immigration and the Czech Republic (with a Special Focus on the Foreign Labor Force)*¹

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This article presents an overview of international migration in the Czech Republic, with a special focus on labor immigration. Currently, the Czech Republic is an immigration and transit country. The most important immigratory segment – economic immigrants – create a colorful mosaic of various ethnicities (80% of them from Europe), each group with their own different economic strategy and niche. After sketching historical patterns and data problems, the focus is on the current situation of labor migrants in the country. A number of issues are addressed: *e.g.*, the relationship between immigrant inflows and the economic situation of the country; immigrants' regional concentration/deconcentration processes; the popularity of the capital city of Prague and western regions vis-à-vis eastern ones; and the different structural backgrounds of immigrants coming from the East versus the West. Special attention is placed on undocumented/illegal immigration, mainly in relation to the misuse and evasion of immigration legislation. Finally, the immature Czech migration policies and practices are discussed, as are needed policy improvements and the need for new immigration legislation. It is clear that the major trend over time leads to more restrictive migratory policies, in line with efforts to harmonize Czech migratory policies and practices with those of the European Union (EU).

This article focuses on international labor migration in the Czech Republic. Labor immigration clearly dominates over emigration in Czechia, and that is why the former phenomenon is emphasized here much more intensively than

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the latter. The main focus of this paper is to provide an overview of what is happening in the field and to systematize data and pieces of information that are available from currently imperfect data sources. After placing the larger issue into a broader Central/Eastern European context and a very brief examination of the data, a short description of patterns tied to Czechs working abroad is briefly outlined. The article then discusses the most important patterns/features of the current foreign labor force inflows in Czechia. Special remarks are devoted to undocumented and clandestine immigrants and problems stemming from the misuse and evasion of Czech immigration legislation. Further, a rather condensed description and typology of individual immigrant groups operating in the current Czech labor market is provided. New trends in migration policy (including new legislation) and practices and probable future developments in the field of labor migration in Central and Eastern Europe are also discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the 1980s, like other Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs), the Czech Republic has been going through a process of transition/transformation of its former discredited system. The ultimate aim is to build a developed, democratic, pluralistic and parliamentary society based on a free-market economy. Very simply expressed, the philosophy of Czechia (and of many other CEECs as well) is to open its society² and, at the same time, to re-orientate interests from the former closed internal cooperation among the CEEC (and particularly with the Soviet Union) towards the West.³ This process is to be cemented by inclusion of CEECs in various Western political, economic and military structures, particularly the EU. The transformation processes are typical of the dramatic changes that have affect-

²One hundred ninety-nine million foreigners registered as crossing the Czech state border in both directions (and staying not longer than 180 days) in 1999, demonstrating the country's openness in terms of population movements (Information, 2000). This openness sharply contrasts with the state of isolation under the communist regime when, for example, the number of all persons (foreigners and citizens of the state) registered as crossing the border of Czechoslovakia was only slightly above 50 million in the middle of the 1980s (Ředitelství Cizinecké a Pohraniční Policie, 1995).

³By the "West" in the context of this paper, I primarily include the most developed countries in Western Europe (primarily the EU and the European Free Trade Association countries), but also most other developed democracies like the United States, Canada, etc. On the other hand, the East is represented by other Central/Eastern European countries in transition (including countries of the former Soviet Union) as well as some of the typical developing Third World countries of Asia.

ed all spheres of society – macro as well as micro factors have been and will be involved. Apparently, massive international migration is one of the new phenomena related to the new political and economic organization/structure. Though only Czechia is analyzed in this article, the results have a broader relevance. The combination of such factors as relative political stability, a given geographical position (bordering on the classical Western world which has no history of a communist era), and the strict migration policies of the Western developed democracies has led to the creation of a migratory buffer zone between the West and the East (*see also* Wallace, Chmuliar and Sidorenko, 1996). This migratory buffer zone is composed of Czechia, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary – countries which, despite many problems, are progressing through the transition relatively successfully compared to many other ex-communist countries and which have been able to maintain reasonable living standards (*e.g.*, Garson, Lemaitre, and Redor, 1996). Apparently, the socio-economic climate, including the labor market situation and relatively liberal legislation and liberal practices towards immigrants in these countries, seemed to be a crucial “pull” factor for migrants from the Eastern world. In general, migratory trends within the above CEECs are more similar than different. However, among the four buffer zone countries, Slovakia differs most by having a limited number of official/documented immigrants as well as a significantly smaller number of clandestine immigrants in its territory. The compact buffer zone creates conditions for intensive transitory movements, East-West crossborder movements as well as massive circular labor (temporary) migration within the region. Migratory trends in these buffer zone countries might, in addition to experiencing huge inflows of circular labor migrants, be characterized in the following way: 1) hosting of a diversity of types of migrants; 2) experiencing an inflow of asylum seekers and refugees and a minimal outflow of domestic citizens abroad as asylum seekers and refugees; 3) having a stable or a declining number of permanent emigrants; 4) hosting a huge transit migrant⁴ population; 5) and attracting a particularly large flow of immigrants to the capital cities (*see* Drbohlav, 1997b). Unlike in buffer zone countries, local push migration factors destabilize population in many other CEECs (namely Bulgaria, Romania and most of the ex-Soviet

⁴Transit migration in the Czech Republic might be briefly defined as a movement through the country where the migrants’ main intention is not to stay and live, but only to go through and reach other countries as soon as possible. Migrants usually transit Czechia on their way to Western Europe, but for many reasons their movement is not as easy and rapid as anticipated (*see, e.g.*, International Organization for Migration, 1994); plans of many of them come to nothing and, at least temporarily, they are forced to stay in Czechia or to return eastward.

republics) and propel migration streams to the buffer zone or further west. The most important conditions in these countries are political instability and often catastrophic socioeconomic parameters, resulting in very low living standards. As far as labor immigration in CEECs is concerned, one important fact should be emphasized. Among the buffer states, despite similarities, Czechia represents an important exception in terms of the quantity of the foreign labor force in its territory. Its contingent, at least regarding documented foreign workers having work permits, has been and is much greater than in any other buffer zone country (*see* Wallace and Stola, 2001; Okolski, 1997).

The differences, however, are diminishing, taking into account undocumented workers. The estimated hundreds of thousands of foreigners were in irregular employment not only in Czechia but also in other CEECs (Wallace and Stola, 2001; Okolski, 1997 referenced in Salt, 1996).

The import of foreign laborers to Czechoslovakia/Czech Republic has a long tradition. While only limited numbers of Czechs worked abroad during the communist era, relatively significant numbers of foreigners worked in Czechia, mainly during the 1970s and 1980s. These temporary workers came mainly from Poland, Vietnam, Hungary, Cuba, Mongolia, Angola and Korea and gained skill and work experience in Czechia and, at the same time, filled gaps in the Czech labor market (*e.g.*, in food-processing, textiles, shoe and glass industries, machinery, mining, metallurgy, agriculture). The system of recruiting students, apprentices and workers functioned via intergovernmental agreements and, to a much lesser extent, also through individual contracts (mainly with workers from Poland and Yugoslavia). After the Velvet Revolution, the agreements were terminated relatively quickly, and the number of foreign workers legally employed within the old schemes has sharply diminished – as of April 1993, only 1,330 were allowed to stay in the country (Boušková, 1998). Most of the former workers returned to their native countries, whereas some started using the new economic opportunities and established entrepreneurial ethnic enclaves.

THE INEVITABLE PROBLEM – DATA

It is generally agreed that the data concerning international migration movements are of poor quality. If available, they are often inaccurate, incomplete, delayed, irregular, incompatible and lacking in detail. This is valid for developed Western democracies as well as for buffer zone countries. The latter group suffers from a total lack of experience with regard to the handling of international migration issues. Concerning the Czech Republic, there are

shortcomings in terms of monitoring movements. The (macro) migration statistics, records and databases are rather poor and dispersed and not compatible with each other. There are problems regarding data classification and ways in which the data are collected in the field and are disseminated. Some important pieces of information are not collected while others are not easily available to the public and to academics. Consequently, to this point in time there has been a very limited investigation of the problem of international migration in scientific/research circles (*see* Drbohlav, 2000). As a result, there is a lack of in-depth analyses of immigration (at macro as well as micro levels). The characterization of immigrants themselves is insufficient. The logic of their behavior and the consequences of inflows at state, regional and local levels are poorly described and explained. There are very limited attempts to theorize regarding these issues.

New, more reliable mechanisms of collecting, processing, classifying and releasing data are being installed or are in the process of development in Czechia. Furthermore, a lack of financial means, inadequate cooperation among ministries and other institutions responsible for dealing with migration issues and, at least until 1999, overall fairly illiberal attitudes further complicated the situation.

Apparently, when analyzing labor migration flows one has to keep in mind that, in addition to available data on documented (legal) labor migrants, there are also huge numbers of undocumented, clandestine foreign workers. These can only be roughly estimated.

The data for this contribution come mostly from the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic. Except for Table 1, exclusively "stock" data are presented in tables and figures while, of course, the "flow" data are mentioned and commented upon in the text as well.

FOREIGN LABOR FORCE

Regarding the new economic environment, Czechia is now trying to regulate the numbers of labor migrants in its territory. At the same time, it is also attempting to legally control, through bilateral or multilateral agreements, the possibility of their citizens working abroad. Such bilateral employment agreements have already been signed, for example, with Germany⁵ (1991), Poland

⁵Regarding Germany, the most important migratory partner of Czechia amongst classical developed Western democracies, there are five ways to legally work there for Czechs and other

(1992), Slovakia (1992), Vietnam (1994), Ukraine (1996), Russia (1998) and Hungary (1999). Generally, EU countries are rather conservative with respect to signing agreements regarding mutual employment with CEECs. Hence, EU countries have few agreements for only a very limited number of specialists/workers/trainees, the preferred activities in this field.

Czechs Working Abroad

It is difficult to get any precise overall data on Czechs working abroad. Data on official temporary migration to Germany, by far the most important destination of Czechs, indicated a decreasing number of Czechs working in that country between 1992 and 1998, whereas for 1999 and 2000 the numbers rose slightly. According to the best estimates available, about 50,000 Czechs (including illegals and commuters within the border zone) worked in Germany in 1992 (for time periods *see* Horáková and Drbohlav, 1998; *see also* Horáková 1993, 1996, 1998). In 1995, the number was estimated at some 30,000–35,000. Presently, their number is probably smaller. Germany imposed an important limitation on some of these programs in 1996 and 1997. To summarize, outflow of Czechs abroad to the West in order to work peaked between 1991 and 1993 (nevertheless, one can deduce that it mostly concerned temporary stays with possible future returns to the mother country) and, since then, it has been decreasing (*see also* Marešová, Drbohlav, and Lhotská, 1996) and, recently, more or less stabilizing. The reason is that Western European countries have introduced more restrictive measures (mainly because of high unemployment rates in their countries and a growing xenophobic atmosphere among their populations). More importantly, at least between 1993 and 1996, working in Western Europe became less attractive for Czechs than earlier. Those who wanted to leave for the West had already left. Also, the fascination with the West which was evident in the very beginning of the 1990s has dissipated. Further, the Czechs went relatively successfully through transformation, and their living standard has been increasing. There were many opportunities to start a business or make a good living at home, particularly in light of the indirect revaluation of the Czech crown vis-à-vis Western currencies. Labor migration of Czechs to other regions of Eastern Europe so far has been negligible.

CEEC citizens: 1) Project-tied employment (regulated by bilateral agreements), 2) guest-worker contracts (regulated by bilateral agreements), 3) seasonal workers (regulated by law), 4) staff to care for sick and elderly (regulated by law) and 5) crossborder commuters (regulated by law).

Foreign Workers in the Czech Republic

International migration very quickly gained a foothold in the newly established Czech democratic system and has found its place within society. It is estimated that the current number of foreign immigrants who operate within the Czech Republic is about 460,000 – documented and undocumented, permanent and temporary (excluding, however, tourists, asylum seekers and transit migrants).⁶ This is about 4.5 percent of the total population of Czechia (excluding these immigrants). Nevertheless, transit migrants alone might well represent at least 100,000 people who are on the move in the territory of the country (International Organization for Migration, 1994).

Economic migrants dominate among the different types of international migrants. In this article, economic migrants are considered those who stay under the umbrella of long-term residence permits (before and including 1999) and those with long-term visas issued for a period exceeding 90 days (in 2000) for, in the broad sense, employment or entrepreneurial activity in Czechia. These economic reasons traditionally dominate over others (86% in 2000) for which the long-term residence permit/long-term visa can be issued, namely study, short-term attachment, medical treatment, etc. Thus, generally speaking and for the purpose of this study as well as for pragmatic reasons (given that more detailed data are not available), the situation is often simplified, and all foreigners having long-term residence permits/long-term visas are labeled as “economic migrants.” Below, we concentrate only on these two categories because they are the bulk of the economic immigrants. With the exception of Slovaks, who fall into a special migration regime, these categories include also those persons who own work permits and trade licenses. Obtaining a job or a promise of a job as well as meeting demands put on future businessmen is required to get a long-term permit/long-term visa. Logically, as far as job permits and trade licenses are concerned, one can find similar regional and structural patterns to those of economic migration represented by long-term residence permits/long-term visas.

Following the above definition, one can state that some 115,000 foreigners – economic migrants (86% of 134,060) – were in Czechia as of December 31, 2000.⁷ The other 66,891 migrants (*see* Table 1) are those who did not primarily enter the country for economic reasons. They have been granted permanent residence permits mainly for family reunion purposes. Thus, the documented economic migrants represent some 67 percent of all officially resident immigrants (with long-term visas and permanent residence

permits). In fact, the importance of economic immigrants is much higher if undocumented migrants are added.

As stated above, the pool of documented foreign labor workers, measured in terms of those who stayed with long-term visas for a period exceeding 90 days issued either for employment or entrepreneurial purposes (and closely related activities), was some 115,000. However, if one applies a more rigorous definition, a more precise figure can be quoted: 164,987 foreigners registered an economic activity at that time (Horáková and Macounová, 2001). From this number, 40,080 were holders of work permits, 61,340 of trade licenses, and there were also 63,567 citizens of Slovakia who were "extra" employed and registered by job centers in Czechia as of December 31, 2000. In fact, the former approach and number must be applied since the latter has no suitable breakdowns, and specific figures do not exist and cannot be compiled.

As far as quantity and related impacts, refugees and asylum seekers represent a marginal community compared to economic immigrants in the Czech Republic at present (*see* Table 1).

Despite the relatively short time that has elapsed since the revolution, four periods typical of different labor immigration patterns in Czechia might be sketched:

- 1) 1990–1992 – Political reform was implemented and economic transition/transformation processes started; migration mechanisms were designed (responsible bodies/institutions, legislation, specific programs, etc.); immigrants were "putting out feelers" in the country.
- 2) 1993–1996 – The country went through the economic transition relatively successfully and stayed, in terms of many economic parameters, on the top among all the CEECs in transition; there was a huge inflow of economic migrants.
- 3) 1997–1999 – An economic disequilibrium occurred and, consequently, belated attempts of the Czech government to combat the unfavorable economic situation, to speed up transformation processes via new economic measures, led to deterioration of macroeconomic characteristics

⁶This estimate is based on interviews with representatives of the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic and the Institute of Work and Social Affairs in June 2001. Furthermore, studies done by Drbohlav, 1997a; Kroupa *et al.*, 1997; Drbohlav *et al.*, 1999 were also taken into account.

⁷Those who stayed with long-term visas issued only for either employment or entrepreneurial purposes (or closely related activities).

TABLE 1
IMPORTANT CATEGORIES OF FOREIGNERS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC; OFFICIALLY REGISTERED
IMMIGRANTS AND ESTIMATES OF UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS

Migration type; Time	Number	Source
Foreigners included in a short-term stay category in 1999 (flow)	199 mil.	Directorate of Alien and Border Police, Ministry of Interior
Foreigners with long-term visas issued for a period exceeding ninety days ^a (at December 31, 2000) (stock)	134,060	Directorate of Alien and Border Police, Ministry of Interior
Foreigners with permanent residence permits (at December 31, 2000) (stock)	66,891	Directorate of Alien and Border Police, Ministry of Interior
Foreigners with work permits (at December 31, 2000) (stock)	40,080	Ministry of Work and Social Affairs
Foreigners with trade licenses (at December 31, 2000) (stock)	61,340	Ministry of Industry and Trade
Foreigners with registered economic activity (at December 31, 2000) (stock) – a) 40,080 holders of work permits, b) 61,340 holders of trade licenses and c) 63,567 citizens of Slovakia extra employed and registered by job centers ^b	164,987	Institute of Work and Social Affairs
Asylum applications in 2000 (flow)	8,788	Department for Refugees and Integration of Foreigners, Ministry of Interior
Asylum applications (between January 1, 1993 and December 31, 2000)	29,184	Department for Refugees and Integration of Foreigners, Ministry of Interior
Foreigners granted refugee status (between January 1, 1993 and December 31, 2000)	974	Department for Refugees and Integration of Foreigners, Ministry of Interior
Foreigners who have gained asylum-seeker status and reside in the Czech Republic (as of December 31, 2000) (stock)	1,268	Directorate of Alien and Border Police, Ministry of Interior
Estimate of undocumented foreign workers in 2000 (stock) ^c	about 165,000	Author's estimate
Estimate of transit migrants, beginning of the 1990s (stock)	100,000 – 140,000	UN ECE

Source: Horáková and Macounová, 2001; International Organization for Migration, 1994; Ředitelství Cizinecké a Pohraniční Policie, 2000; and <http://www.mvcr.cz>; Author's estimates based on expert consultations and research: see particularly Drbohlav, 1997a; Kroupa *et al.*, 1997; and Drbohlav *et al.*, 1999.

Notes: Some 460,000 is estimated to be the current number of foreign immigrants who operate within the Czech Republic - both documented and undocumented, permanent and temporary (excluding, tourists, asylum seekers and transit migrants).

^a The newly passed Act on the Stay of Aliens on the Territory of the Czech Republic (Aliens Act) No. 326/1999 (came into force on January 1, 2000) substituted the status of the long-term residence permit (valid in Czechia between 1993 – 1999) for a new one – long-term visas issued for a period exceeding ninety days.

^b Within these 165,000, foreigners active on the Czech labor market having permanent residence permit are not included. They represent a different, much more integrated immigratory segment, being accepted primarily for family reunion reasons and having more or less the same position as citizens of the Czech Republic.

^c Plus perhaps 30,000 dependents.

The short-term stay not exceeding 180 days category permits foreigners free movement as tourists under the compliance with the conditions for granting a visa or agreed upon in so-called visa-free agreements.

The long-term residence permit – new since 2000 – is a visa issued for a period exceeding 90 days. It is more or less economically based immigration subject to proving the purpose of the stay (mainly employment and business, and, to a much lesser extent, study, therapy, etc.).

The permanent residence permit in the territory of the Czech Republic is granted to an alien particularly for the purpose of family reunification, in cases where the spouse, a person of direct kin or a sibling of an alien had been granted permanent residence in the territory of the Czech Republic. It can further be granted on humanitarian grounds or if it is in the interest of the foreign policy of the country.

Work permits enable immigrants to be employed. Trade licenses enable immigrants to make their own business in the Czech Republic.

Asylum and refugee status follows from the Czech refugee legislation (Act No. 325/1999 on Asylum entered into force in January 2000). It is based on universal principles embodied in the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 New York Protocol.

The transit migrants are those whose main goal is not to stay in the Czech Republic but to enter (illegally) other country/ies (mainly Germany) as soon as possible.

while serious problems at a micro-economic level were apparent as well. Accordingly, the living standard of the Czech population has been following rather negative trends (a decrease of real incomes), the migration policy has become more restrictive, and the inflow of foreign labor force (legally resident, documented) has significantly diminished.

- 4) 2000–present – The turn of the century has brought more significant indications of improvement and economic revitalization; competent state institutions/bodies began paying more attention to the international migration issue; the new migratory laws and amendments came into force, although immigration policy and practice continue to be more restrictive. Accordingly, the inflow of foreign labor (legally resident) has been further diminished.

In addition to the dominance of economic migrants among migratory types in Czechia, there are also other important migration patterns worth noting:

- 1) The increase of those foreigners with long-term residence permits was enormous – mainly between 1991 and 1996 from 9,000 up to 153,000. During the last two years in question, the numbers increased annually by 68 percent and 27 percent. A break occurred in 1996, and from then until December 1998 the number has increased by only 3,069 (in absolute terms). Nevertheless, it dropped significantly in 2000 (when the previous status also was transformed into long-term visas and, hence, “administrative recategorization” changes were, to some extent, behind this decrease; the old and new statuses are not compatible). In contrast, family-based immigration grew, albeit very slowly, between 1999 and 2000.
- 2) The capital city of Prague is very popular among immigrants. For example, 33.5 percent of the total number of those with long-term visas were registered there on December 31, 2000. At the same time, Prague con-

concentrated 34.7 percent of all work permits and 32.3 percent of all trade licenses issued to immigrants in the entire country. Prague is the largest city in the Czech Republic and, consequently, the primary gateway for foreigners entering the country. It attracts labor migration from less developed regions because it offers more and better jobs and income opportunities since it benefits from the spillover of internationalization as it becomes more Westernized than any other area in the country. Prague is also the main destination of immigrants from developed Western Europe, other regions of Czechia, and CEECs as well (for more on the concentration of Western immigrants, *see* Drbohlav and Sýkora, 1997). Importantly, it also offers more anonymity for undocumented (clandestine) immigrants than rural settlements. Besides Prague, other highly urbanized regions attract immigrants more than do rural areas.

- 3) Nevertheless, an overall trend of migrant dispersion and diffusion, and homogenization within the country, is evident over time, as other regions become more attractive. While Prague's share of the long-term residence permits issued was 44.9 percent in 1992, it was only 33.5 percent in 2000 (Table 2) (the respective figures for working permits are 37% for the end of 1994 and 34.7% for the end of 2000). This has to do with the demand for foreign labor which has been, in part, saturated in Prague in the course of time as well as with growing economic opportunities in other regions of the country. In sum, since 1999, the tendency for concentration in Prague has lessened to a considerable extent.
- 4) Prague and the Central Bohemia region concentrate 48.7 percent of all foreigners with long-term visas (*see* Figs. I and II). In contrast to Prague, which is losing importance in relative terms, the surrounding region is gaining. Also, South and, in part, North Moravia are of growing importance in the process. Heavily rural South Bohemia has the lowest share of immigrants. Examining trends over time (1993 versus 2000), whereas the shares of Prague, North Bohemia and North Moravia have been decreasing, other regions have been increasing (1993 versus 2000). In relative terms (per 1,000 population), the importance of both the Moravian region and East Bohemia and South Bohemia is lower in comparison to other areas.
- 5) As far as immigrants' country of origin is concerned, by December 31, 2000, 80.0 percent of migrants of the entire economic immigrant group (represented by those who had long-term visas) were from European countries, 17.5 percent from Asia and less than 1.4 percent from North

TABLE 2
FOREIGNERS WITH LONG-TERM RESIDENCE PERMITS AND PERMANENT RESIDENCE PERMITS IN THE
CZECH REPUBLIC AND PRAGUE, 1990-2000 (AS OF DECEMBER 31)

Year	Long-term stay		Permanent Residence			
	CR	Prague	% Prague/		Prague	% Prague/
			CR	CR		CR
1990	7,695	- ^a	-	27,207	-	-
1991	9,204	-	-	28,457	-	-
1992	20,428	9,169	44.9	29,145	4,960	17.0
1993	46,070	17,754	38.5	31,072	5,223	16.8
1994	71,230	28,365	39.8	32,468	5,615	17.3
1995	120,060	46,913	39.1	38,557	6,335	16.4
1996	152,767	52,879	34.6	45,837	8,092	17.7
1997	153,516	49,309	32.1	56,281	9,712	17.3
1998	155,836	46,122	29.6	63,919	10,927	17.1
1999	162,108	52,797	32.6	66,754	12,364	18.5
2000 ^b	134,060	44,873	33.5	66,891	12,710	19.0

Source: Horáková and Macounová, 2001, Directorate of Alien and Border Police, Ministry of Interior (internal materials).

Notes: Stateless persons are not taken into account.

^aIt was not possible to separate data for Prague from those for Central Bohemia for 1990 and 1991.

^bThe newly passed Act on the Stay of Aliens on the Territory of the Czech Republic (Aliens Act) No. 326/1999 (came into force on January 1, 2000) substituted the status of the long-term residence permit for a new one - long-term visas issued for a period exceeding ninety days.

See also note in Table 1.

America (Horáková and Macounová, 2001). The most numerous current foreign labor force (measured in terms of long-term visas) officially registered in Czechia is represented by Ukrainians (41,438) and Slovaks (33,136),⁸ followed by Vietnamese (15,318) and Poles (5,281) (December 31, 2000)⁹ (see Tables 3 and 4). Other groups are less numerous and include citizens of Russia, China, Germany, Belorussia, Yugoslavia, Moldavia, Bulgaria, and the United States. Americans, Chinese, and citizens of Great Britain are highly concentrated in Prague (Ministry of Interior, internal materials). Economic immigrants from Ukraine prevail in four out of six Bohemian regions (including Prague). Slovaks make full use of geographical proximity and formerly developed economic ties in both Moravian regions (e.g., mining in the Ostrava region). Vietnamese, mostly as small businessmen (buying and selling goods), have newly established businesses in West Bohemia, taking advantage of the main transport corridors connecting Prague with

⁸In fact, the number of Slovak economic immigrants is much higher since some, though registering at job centers, did not ask for and do not have long-term visas.

⁹It is important to note the existence of a deviation of trade licenses from the mainstream. In contrast with the composition of immigrants who had long-term visas, Ukrainian (21,402) and Vietnamese (19,307) small businessmen are by far the largest communities – data as of December 31, 2000 (Horáková and Macounová, 2001).

Western Europe. Examining changes over time, two different periods can be identified. Between 1993 and 1997, there was an influx of Slovaks,¹⁰ a huge increase of Ukrainians, and steady growth of Vietnamese and Poles. Also, although at a lower level, numerous immigrant communities of other Eastern immigrants have started increasing significantly, while some Western groups rose slightly. However, according to the official data, the latest development (1998 – 2000) has been marked by stagnation and, recently, a rather significant decline in the numbers of individual ethnic groups of economic immigrants (measured via long-term residence permits/long-term visas). On the other hand, representatives of individual ethnic groups among holders of permanent residence permits (for family reunions) have increased, albeit slightly. As far as the most important immigrants' ethnicities are concerned, Poles decline in all migration statuses/categories, whereas the Ukrainian decline in long-term residence permits/long-term visas was offset by gains in the category of job licenses.

- 6) One has to distinguish two very different immigrant groups in Czechia. The first, an Eastern category, is mainly composed of young males who, in contrast to their usually high education/skill level, are hired for manual, underpaid and unskilled jobs (however, when dealing with officials at job centers, they often purposely undervalue their skills – see Table 5 and Drbohlav, 1997a). The second is a more heterogeneous immigration from the West that is characterized by more females, children and older persons in comparison to those from the East. This second group also typically contains people with high levels of education who are mostly engaged in professional and managerial areas of work (managers, advisers, language teachers, etc.). While data in Table 5 prove this situation with the example of work permits, in Table 6 the same is done with long-term residence permits when two different immigrant communities – Ukrainians and Americans – are juxtaposed. It is also worth mentioning that only for Poles is employment through group contracts more important than individual job search. Refugees do not participate in the Czech labor market at all.
- 7) Mainly due to the great share of “circulators” among immigrants and because only a short time has elapsed, some migratory features, otherwise

¹⁰Because of the common history within Czechoslovakia, Slovaks are a specific migrant category in Czechia. Their migration to the Czech Republic has a long tradition and even now, after the split into two independent states, the Slovak migration in Czechia has been regulat-

Figure I. Foreigners with Long-Term Residence Permits by Regions of the Czech Republic, 1993.

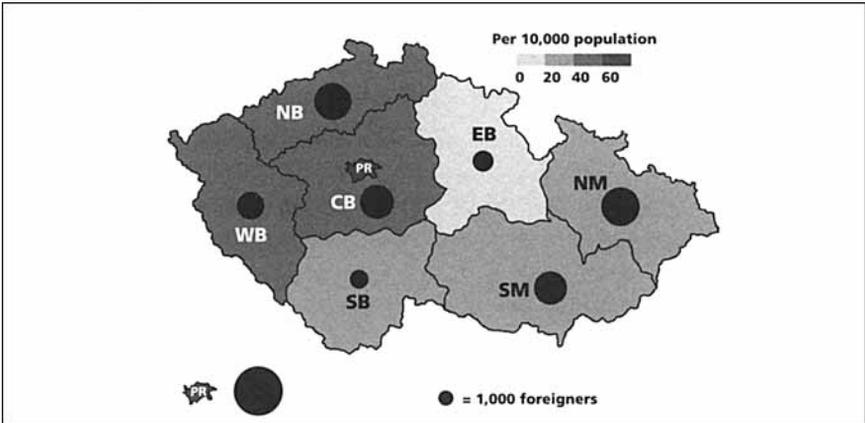
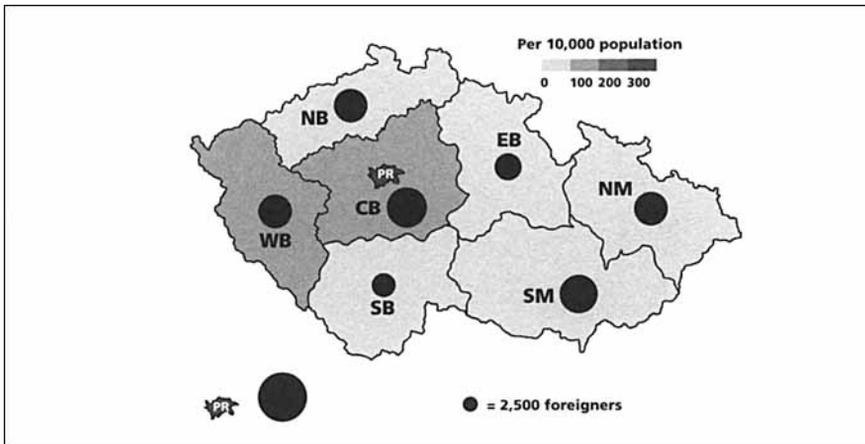


Figure II. Foreigners with Visas Issued for a Period Exceeding 90 Days by Regions of the Czech Republic, 2000.



Source: Directorate of Alien and Border Police, Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic.

Notes: PR: Prague, CB: Central Bohemia region, SB: South Bohemia region, NB: North Bohemia region, EB: East Bohemia region, SM: South Moravia region, NM: North Moravia region.

ed by a special “freer regime.” For example, Slovaks, unlike any other foreigner, are not supposed to ask for a work permit (in fact, a Slovak can compete in the Czech labor market without “being discriminated” vis-à-vis Czechs). Generally, an alien can take a vacant job provided no other citizen of Czechia is willing to accept it. What they are supposed to do is to register only themselves. As of December 31, 2000, 63,567 Slovaks were registered at job centers, and 6,670 Slovaks stayed in Czechia with job licenses (Horáková and Macounová, 2001).

expected, have not developed yet. For example, ethnic minorities have not so far created any significant areas of concentration within cities or regions (with the exception of the Russian community in Karlovy Vary), and no important ethnic social or political structures have evolved which would "unite, unify and organize" new immigrants in the country.

Illegal Labor Immigration and the Evasion of Migratory Legislation

Undocumented (illegal) migration of aliens relates to situations when their entry or stay does not or has ceased to fulfill conditions for entry or long-term residence, stipulated by relevant intrastate law or international agreement to which the Czech Republic is tied. No doubt, clandestine labor immigrants change the whole picture drawn by legally residing economic migrants. The

TABLE 3
FOREIGNERS WITH LONG-TERM RESIDENCE PERMITS (1993) AND LONG-TERM VISAS ISSUED
FOR A PERIOD EXCEEDING 90 DAYS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND PRAGUE BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN
(FOR SELECTED COUNTRIES)

Country	at December 31, 1993		at December 31, 2000	
	Number	% Prague	Number	% Prague
Slovakia	-	-	33,136 ^d	14.4
Poland	8,655	15.6	5,281	10.6
Vietnam	6,785	25.8	15,318	17.0
Ukraine	4,809	21.2	41,438	38.6
Former Soviet Union	3,240 ^a	45.3	-	-
Former Yugoslavia ^c	2,978 ^b	63.2	-	-
China	2,543	90.5	3,410	70.6
Germany	1,976	39.2	2,432	36.0
USA	1,621	52.4	1,591	72.2
Bulgaria	1,172	59.8	1,716	37.6
Austria	984	39.2	1,049	35.4
Great Britain	795	43.3	1,134	66.7
Russia	525	42.9	9,158	59.6
France	511	77.5	-	-
Romania	489	22.7	-	-
Italy	478	49.0	-	-
Total	46,070	38.5	134,060	33.5

Source: Directorate of Alien and Border Police, Ministry of Interior (internal materials).

Notes: ^aExcept for Ukraine, Russia and 309 other foreigners with passports of individual republics of the former Soviet Union.

^bExcept for 718 other foreigners with passports of individual republics of the former Yugoslavia.

^cFor 2000, data concerns newly established Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

^dSee footnotes 8 and 10.

^eCitizens of France, Romania, Italy and Croatia did not reach a threshold of 1,000 immigrants in 2000.

The newly passed Act on the Stay of Aliens on the Territory of the Czech Republic (Aliens Act) No. 326/1999 (came into force on January 1, 2000) substituted the status of the long-term residence permit for a new one - long-term visas issued for a period exceeding 90 days.

Country of origin is defined according to citizenship of immigrants. It concerns also other tables.

Not included are newly arising source migrant countries which, in 2000, had under the given status in the Czech Republic the following numbers of immigrants: Belorussia (2,134), Yugoslavia (SFRY)(1,989), and Moldavia (1,909).

See also note in Table 1.

TABLE 4
FOREIGNERS WITH LONG-TERM RESIDENCE PERMITS (1993) AND LONG-TERM VISAS ISSUED
FOR A PERIOD EXCEEDING 90 DAYS (2000) BY REGIONS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND THE
MOST IMPORTANT COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

Region	Number at December 31, 1993	at December 31, 2000
Prague	17,754 - China 2,301, Yugoslavia 1,881, Vietnam 1,752, CIS ^a 1,469, Poland 1,352, Ukraine 1,021, USA 850	44,873 - Ukraine 15,990, Russia 5,458, Slovakia ^b 4,782, Vietnam 2,600, China 2,406, Yugoslavia 1,426, USA 1,148
Central Bohemia	4,851 - Poland 1,725, Vietnam 1,107, Ukraine 710	20,362 - Ukraine 6,434, Slovakia 4,586, Poland 2,183, Vietnam 2,155, Russia 1,462
South Bohemia	1,726 - Ukraine 317, Vietnam 317, Germany 183, Austria 179, CIS 117	6,177 - Ukraine 2,657, Slovakia 1,222, Vietnam 561, Russia 304, Austria 247, Germany 240
West Bohemia	3,792 - Ukraine 1,035, Vietnam 795, Poland 626, Germany 373	11,804 - Vietnam 4,241, Ukraine 3,058, Slovakia 2,238, Russia 566, Germany 453, Belorussia 210
North Bohemia	5,136 - Poland 1,551, Vietnam 1,130, CIS 760, Ukraine 389, Yugoslavia 252, Germany 223	11,383 - Ukraine 3,642, Vietnam 2,711, Slovakia 2,351, Russia 620, Bulgaria 266, Moldavia 244, Poland 235
East Bohemia	2,398 - Poland 755, Vietnam 502, Ukraine 362	9,437 - Slovakia 3,172, Ukraine 3,106, Poland 872, Vietnam 678, Russia 237, Belorussia 235
South Moravia	4,624 - Ukraine 844, Vietnam 424, Slovakia 342, Poland 288, Austria 288, Yugoslavia 254, CIS 232	17,277 - Slovakia 7,107, Ukraine 5,228, Vietnam 1,242, Mongolia 474, Belorussia 364, Moldavia 320, Russia 315, Austria 295
North Moravia	5,789 - Poland 2,324, Slovakia 1,059, Vietnam 758	12,747 - Slovakia 7,678, Ukraine 1,323, Vietnam 1,129, Poland 1,089

Source: Directorate of Alien and Border Police, Ministry of Interior (internal materials).

Notes: ^aThe Commonwealth of Independent States.

^bRegarding Slovaks, see footnotes 8 and 10.

See also note in Table 1.

estimate of undocumented/illegal immigrants is for many reasons a very complicated matter (*e.g.*, there are many different migratory types, there exist rather poor statistics, “shifts” occur over time – both within illegal and legal statuses and from legal to illegal status, and vice versa; there are not many case studies or objective data on illegals from which totals might be derived, etc.). As already mentioned, one might estimate the current number of illegal

immigrants in Czechia (as of the end of 2000) at somewhere between 295,000 and 335,000 (from this figure, 165,000 might be illegals active in the Czech labor market, 30,000 their dependants and 100,000–140,000 transit migrants).

The capital city of Prague and its surroundings provide a good example of the impact of illegals (*see* Table 7). While there should be some 58,000 international migrants staying or registering themselves officially in Prague at the end of 2000 (the stock by the given year), the estimate tells us that as many as 80,000 more might be added to this figure in order to have a more realistic illustration of what is going on in the migration field. In the middle of the 1990s, the number of foreigners in Prague (excluding tourists) was esti-

TABLE 5
FOREIGNERS WITH WORK PERMITS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC (STOCK) BY THE MOST IMPORTANT COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN - STRUCTURE BY SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS, AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2000

Country	Number	Females	Individual ^a	Workers	SS ^b	Univ. ^c
Ukraine	15,753	33.3	92.9	97.7	1.4	2.1
Poland	7,679	14.2	53.4	90.4	3.0	6.7
Bulgaria	1,523	31.9	96.1	84.8	5.7	9.5
Germany	1,452	20.1	69.8	5.4	24.0	70.5
Moldavia	1,446	26.3	97.7	98.4	1.1	0.5
United States	1,356	35.1	66.5	0.7	35.3	64.1
Belorussia	1,139	51.5	98.4	88.1	3.1	8.8
Great Britain	1,112	20.1	66.2	0.3	32.1	67.6
Russia	1,016	49.3	88.8	46.9	10.6	42.5
Romania	908	16.2	94.6	85.0	6.8	8.1
Total	40,080	28.3	80.2	73.8	7.6	18.6

Source: Ministry of Work and Social Affairs (internal materials).

Notes: ^aIndividual form of employment (in comparison with "contracts" which represent the rest up to 100%).

^bGraduates at secondary school.

^cGraduates at university.

Slovaks do not need work permits when working as employees in the Czech Republic (*see* footnotes 8 and 10). *See also* note in Table 1.

ated to have been more than 10 percent of the total population (*see also* Čermák *et al.*, 1995). Table 7 provides a rough quantitative assessment regarding important communities of foreign undocumented immigrants by their country or region in Prague. Based on existing statistics and the author's own experience, it can be deduced that while North Americans, Chinese and Western Europeans are concentrated in Prague or in its near surroundings, Ukrainians and transit migrants operate throughout the entire republic. It is not difficult to believe that in the case of Ukrainian workers the overall number of undocumented migrants in Czechia reaches the number of legally registered immigrants (Drbohlav, 1997a).

As has been clearly shown in the example of the Ukrainians (*e.g.*, Lupták and Drbohlav, 1999), there recently has been an important shift from "work

TABLE 6
CITIZENS OF UKRAINE AND THE UNITED STATES WHO WERE GRANTED LONG-TERM RESIDENCE PERMITS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC IN 1996 BY SELECTED SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS (IN %)

Characteristic	Ukraine	United States
Sex: Males	77.4	60.3
Females	22.6	39.7
Age: 0 – 14	0.5	5.9
15 – 44	91.3	80.5
45 – 59	7.8	11.7
60 and over	0.4	1.8
Reason for stay:		
Employment	95.8	66.2
Study	0.3	9.6
Entrepreneurial activity	3.1	11.1
Other	0.9	13.2
Social structure: ^a		
Worker	65.5	2.8
Technical college	30.9	24.2
Intelligentsia	3.0	65.6
Other	0.7	7.5

Source: Directorate of Alien and Border Police, Ministry of Interior (internal materials).

Notes: ^aThe author is well aware of problems within the social structure categories when a mixture of them (type of employment, education and status) is applied (see also Table 5).

More recent breakdown of the given data was not available. The Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic has not registered the social structure data since they have been found to be unauthentic records. See also note in Table 1.

permits” to “trade licenses” or to the black market. The strict and bureaucratically functioning Czech-Ukrainian agreement on the mutual employment of citizens reduces the opportunity for Ukrainians to operate in the country. Also, economic problems and, indeed, generally more restrictive measures applied towards migrants lead Ukrainians in Czechia to either switch from work permits to trade licenses, which are much easier for foreigners to obtain, or to simply enter the black market and operate illegally in the country. Ukrainian independent quasi-businessmen are those workers who were provided trade licenses but whose working regimes in fact resemble what is typically considered that of classical employees (these are really “hidden employees”). They are active in the same kinds of occupations (“unqualified employees” in various sectors of the economy) as “normal employees.” The system of issuing trade licenses to foreigners is a very liberal model which is frequently misused by many foreigners (e.g., establishing public trading and limited liability companies within which foreign business persons now legally operate and function only as employees). It has been proven that this is the most advantageous way to legally penetrate the country and then legally or quasi-legally work or operate.

A new and pragmatic situation has developed in which Ukrainians are now entering an asylum regime within which working activities in Czechia are allowed by a new law for asylum seekers whose applications are being investi-

gated (currently, however, asylum seekers' possible working activities have been somewhat limited by new legislation – Act No. 2/2002).

Apparently, the restrictive measures applied in the Czech-Ukrainian agreement did not contribute to a factual decrease in the number of Ukrainians and other immigrants in the Czech Republic. It is more likely the opposite: in contrast to official statistical data, the number of illegal/undocumented immigrants has probably increased. Indeed, this situation is also reflected by the perception of the Czech public, which confirms a quantitative growth in the foreign labor force in the country over time – 1997 versus 1999 and 1999 versus 2001.

TABLE 7
ESTIMATE OF SELECTED MOST IMPORTANT COMMUNITIES OF FOREIGN UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS IN PRAGUE AND NEARBY SURROUNDINGS AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

Country/Region of Origin	Number
North America	10,000 – 20,000
Ukraine	some 20,000
China	10,000 – 20,000
Western Europe	5,000 – 10,000
Transit migrants	some 10,000

Source: author's assessment – based on own experience and research (e.g. Drbohlav, 1997a; Drbohlav *et al.*, 1999; Lup-ták and Drbohlav, 1999), many secondary sources of information and various data from the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic. Also, estimates are derived from the character of the spatial and functional setting/organization of ethnic groups – see also footnote 6 and Tables 3, 4 and 8 (including a philosophy regarding the creation of immigrant estimates).

Individual Segments of the Immigrant Labor Force

It is worthwhile to briefly sketch main behavioral patterns typical of the important labor immigrant groups in the current legal and illegal Czech labor market. Although simplifying reality to some degree, Table 8 summarizes some immigration trends (see also, e.g., Drbohlav, 1997a, b; Kroupa *et al.*, 1997; Chan, 1998; Wang, 1998; Drbohlav and Čermák, 1998). The emphasis here is on demonstrating which forms of residence/work, types of work, social and sociodemographic parameters, and regional patterns are linked with some important foreign labor force communities. Three rather different migratory inflows are found in Czechia now. The first group represents flows from the East (CEECs in transition – Poland, Slovakia and Ukraine), the second flow comes from the West (developed countries of North America and Western Europe), and the third is a migration stream of Vietnamese and Chinese from the Far East. Apparently, no homogeneous, compact pattern is visible. There exists rather a colorful mosaic of groups, activities, strategies and mechanisms.

MIGRATION POLICY AND PRACTICE

Some measures have been taken to control immigration to Czechia. First, at the beginning of the 1990s, laws regulating the entry and presence of foreigners were passed (the philosophy “being quick rather than thoroughgoing and thus slow” was applied). Further, a number of readmission agreements (concerning asylum seekers), as well as some multilateral and bilateral agreements for the employment of foreigners, were signed. Cooperation with international institutions dealing with migration were established (over time, at least in some specific migratory sectors, this cooperation has successfully intensified). Also, the introduction of a state integration program for refugees, re-emigrants and some other specific migratory categories was relatively effectively and successfully implemented in the Czech Republic.

Nevertheless, Czech migration policy and practice suffers from some weaknesses. First, the national immigration policy has no clear objectives, except: 1) to join Western democratic structures (especially the EU) and thereby harmonize international migration policies and practices with those in the West; and 2) to combat illegal immigration (which, however, also lacks a general conception and particularly the willingness, ability and means to do so). International migration in the Czech Republic has been seen mainly in the light of defensive reasoning, while trying to join Western democratic structures also predetermines geopolitical interests. At least until 1999, the policy was mainly concerned with *ad hoc* measures within a more or less static model. Unambiguously, passive attitudes prevailed over active ones. No general goals were defined, let alone specific preferences made regarding economic, demographic, cultural or social diversity. For example, many economic and, in fact, all demographic, cultural and geographic aspects were ignored. In so doing, a rather negative perception of the international migration issue is obvious; its positive effects are more or less ignored or not recognized. Discussing and publicizing the migration issue in general, and that of a foreign labor force in particular, was rare, reflecting an absence of any systematic activity in this field. The government and the Parliament – in many respects the key bodies to create and implement policy – had other priorities on the agenda. As a corollary, the existing migration legislation was not pliant. The whole process of change in this field (new laws, amendments) stagnated. Further, there was insufficient cooperation between the institutions/ministries mainly responsible for dealing with international migrants. No coherent and mutually complementary policies with regard to immigration were practiced.

TABLE 8
INDIVIDUAL IMPORTANT SEGMENTS OF IMMIGRANT LABOR FORCE IN CZECHIA (DOCUMENTED AND UNDOCUMENTED), AT THE END OF THE 1990s (SIMPLIFIED)

Ethnic group/ Region of origin	Form of stay, type of work	Social and demographic structure, social relations	Range/Regional pattern
Slovaks ^a	Permanent jobs, to a lesser extent seasonal ones, commuting within the border zone; heavy industry (mining and metallurgy), agriculture and forestry, construction, light industry and services within the interior – within the border zone, mainly construction; manual auxiliary workers and qualified workers as well	Workers, a wide mosaic of patterns and strategies	Ostrava, Karviná and the whole zone bordering on Slovakia, Prague and Central Bohemia but also some other districts
Ukrainians	Work permits – individual, trade licenses, illegally; manual work, auxiliary work; mainly construction but also industry (<i>e.g.</i> , food-processing, textile), agriculture	Poor; workers (relatively high educational level purposely undervalued), young, males; frequent trips to mother country	Throughout the whole country, especially Prague, Central Bohemia, large cities
Vietnamese	Trade licenses, illegally; small-scale market entrepreneurs/sellers; buying and selling clothes and electronics	Quasi-middle class	Throughout the whole country, especially western border zone - near Germany and Austria; large cities
Poles	Work permits – contracts; manual work, auxiliary work; construction, heavy industry (metallurgy, mining), textile industry, agriculture, forestry	Workers	Central Bohemia, the whole zone of Bohemia and Moravia bordering on Poland
Chinese	Illegally, via trade or entrepreneurial companies; representatives of firms in China and small-businessmen; import, distribution (wholesale) and retail of apparel, shoes and light industrial goods	Strong kinship ties and regional social networks, relatively frequent trips to mother country	Prague
North Americans	1) Work permits, short-term stays; top managers, advisers, employees of multinational and international companies; 2) Illegally ^b , trade licenses; lecturers, teachers of English, small-scale businessmen	1) Relatively affluent; university-educated, highly skilled, intellectual background; 2) a mixture of structures	Prague

TABLE 8 (CONTINUED)
INDIVIDUAL IMPORTANT SEGMENTS OF IMMIGRANT LABOR FORCE IN CZECHIA (DOCUMENTED AND UNDOCUMENTED), AT THE END OF THE 1990S (SIMPLIFIED)

Ethnic group/ Region of origin	Form of stay, type of work	Social and demographic structure, social relations	Range/Regional pattern
Western Europeans	1) Work permits, short-term stays; top managers, advisers, employees of multinational and international companies; 2) Illegally, trade licenses; lecturers, teachers of Western languages, small-scale businessmen ^c	1) Relatively affluent; university-educated, highly skilled, intellectual background; 2) a mixture of structures	Prague, a zone bordering on Germany and Austria

Notes: ^aIn fact, Slovaks are an integral part of the Czech labor market even after the split of Czechoslovakia - with no social, cultural and very limited geographical barriers. See footnotes 8 and 10.

^bEspecially in the case of Western immigrants, frequent undocumented stays seem to be caused, to some extent, by rejection of the immigrants to cooperate with the Czech administration. A huge bureaucracy, a demanding and time-consuming process of registration when communicating with the Czech administrative bodies (mainly within the Ministry of the Interior) and reluctance of Czech employers to register their foreign employees as soon as possible are the causes.

^cBy far, not as many undocumented immigrants (in absolute terms) in this category in the Czech Republic as compared to the North Americans.

See also footnote 6 and note in Table 1.

This characterization is not based on any representative survey research. It follows from the author's personal experience, through consulting on the issue with selected experts and through some original, primordial views on migratory and residence patterns of some immigrant communities in Prague/Czech Republic (see, e. g., Wang, 1998; Chan, 1998; Drbohlav, 1997a). The indicated facts stress only the most significant trends; omitting information does not necessarily mean that, in fact, there are no clearer trends in relation to selected aspects and given ethnic immigration groups. Rather, so far they have not been tackled or simply detected and widely publicized.

Nevertheless, since 1999, some positive developments regarding international migration and immigrants' integration have occurred. First, new migratory legislation has been adopted. This, to some extent, enabled migratory theory and practice to be harmonized within a domestic institutional, administrative bureaucratic network and towards the EU. In short, the main goal was to strengthen migration control according to the EU standards and requirements. The two new laws, Act No. 326/1999 on the Stay of Aliens on the Territory of the Czech Republic (Aliens Act) and Act No. 325/1999 on Asylum (Asylum Act), entered into force in January 2000. Each has detailed sets of rules aimed at regulating all aspects of asylum and migration procedures and the stay of foreigners, asylum seekers and recognized refugees in the territory of the state, leaving only a limited space for implementation by secondary legislation. It is noteworthy that the Aliens Act gives precedence over its own provisions to international treaties regulating the stay of third country nationals in the Czech territory. Further, certain issues closely related to migration itself are governed by specific laws, including, most importantly, access by third country nationals to employment and independent gainful activities. Recently, the relevant laws (on

Employment – No. 167/1999 and on Small Business – No. 356/1999) were amended (on October 1, 1999 and March 1, 2000, respectively) with respect to harmonizing them with the EU regulations.

Other major changes and, to a large extent, improvements¹¹ compared to former laws include a new complex visa regime that contains provisions for the issuance, validity and types of visas. Those third country nationals who intend to come to the Czech Republic for specific purposes, such as employment, must first obtain corresponding visas in their countries of origin through Czech embassies or consular offices. Accordingly, new formal statuses for a stay in the country have been created, and it is mandatory for anyone who is to operate in the country under the umbrella of a long-term visa to simultaneously also get a work permit or a trade license. In sum, just as in the EU countries, external controls have been strengthened.

There are other activities worth mentioning. The Ministry of the Interior, through its Department for Asylum and Migration Policy (former Department for Refugees and Integration of Foreigners), took the initiative to conceptualize and systematize the entire migratory issue. For example, a new ministerial advisory commission (composed of migration experts – representatives of other relevant ministries, other selected state bodies, regional or local policymakers, NGOs and independent research/scientific circles) has been established. In collaboration with this commission, the department worked out a “Concept of Immigration Integration Policy.” This document has become a basic policy pillar defining the policy and the means through which activities in the field of international migration/immigrants’ integration will be realized. For instance, regarding research in the migration field, the concept assumes that significantly more financial support (coming from the state budget) will be devoted to migration research. Furthermore, the communication/information channels between, on the one hand, the Ministry of the Interior and other Ministries and, on the other, the public and state administration at a local level have in part been improved. Also, the NGOs have been invited to further cooperate in relevant fields.

An important initiative also has come from the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs. In line with demographic parameters and the situation of the Czech labor market and, indeed, with what is going on in Western Europe

¹¹The new legislation also suffers from some evident shortcomings: For example, there is no preferential treatment for those who stay a very short time and from whom the state benefits (stays tied to trade, sport, culture, etc.); it does not take into account family reunion processes properly, etc. (*see, e.g., Drbohlav et al., 2000*).

(e.g., German activities), they have brought in a "Proposal for Active Selection of Skilled Foreign Workers." This point system, based on a Quebecian model, may have, if applied, an important impact upon the entire migratory arena of the country.

Despite some progress in the field of migration policy and practice, there are at least three basic problematic issues still to be addressed. These issues have been problematic for some time and successfully survived the new legislative changes as well:

- 1) Employment of foreigners, namely issuing trade licenses that allow foreigners to start businesses in the country, is very liberal. Yet, regulations are easily and frequently evaded both within and outside the law (*see, e.g., Kroupa et al., 1997; Lupták and Drbohlav, 1999*). This situation in many ways places Czech entrepreneurs who adhere to the laws at a disadvantage vis-à-vis foreigners.
- 2) As far as employment of foreigners through work permits is concerned, two points attract attention above all: a) the current, free regime for Slovak workers and b) the administratively rather complicated and demanding process of organizing employment for Ukrainians (given the bilateral agreement) – the latter agreement does not solve the problem inasmuch as tens of thousands of Ukrainians work in Czechia illegally or misuse/evade the migratory legislation, particularly small businessmen and asylum seekers.
- 3) There is no effective control mechanism for illegal labor activities. For example, while in theory some employer sanctions are possible according to regulations, in practice it is very difficult to prove a foreigner's guilt – that his or her work activity is illegal (the overall legislative setting is not effective).

PROBABLE FUTURE TRENDS

Though more reliable predictions of future international migration trends are almost impossible, some basic ideas on future labor migration of foreigners to Czechia are sketched below. The remarks are devoted to a time horizon of the next five years, when one can expect that the Czech Republic will crown its endeavor to become a developed Western-type democracy and will join the EU. The ideas are based on the assumption that the European integration process will go ahead according to plan relatively smoothly and no catastrophic events like a socioeconomic or political collapse in some CEECs will erode or stop it.

The existing trends might be extrapolated into the future. Labor immigration will continue chiefly in relation to the political, social and economic development in Czechia itself and other CEECs. Indeed, the character of economic development in Western democracies might, to some limited extent, play some role as well. CEECs polarizing into several different subgroups, despite many problems, should approach the levels of the most developed democracies. One can expect that Czechia might be one of those countries that will be at the head of the pack, hence attracting significant numbers of immigrants. Despite an attempt to regulate and limit the inflow of immigrants, circular labor migrants will probably dominate the immigration mosaic. The entire process may well follow an "S-shaped curve," characterizing the settlement of immigrants in the destination country over time (*see* Martin and Taylor, 1995). In other words, intensive circular labor movements become the first stage of a permanent (settlement) immigration. Simply stated, some of those migrants (not a negligible share) who started as pendular migrants after some time probably will settle permanently in the Czech Republic. The absorption of immigrants into Czech society will be strengthened by:

- 1) Considerable manifestation of globalization and internationalization of the economy.
- 2) Specific demands of the Czech market to meet labor deficits. This will be differentiated by individual regions and professions, with a greater demand for highly skilled professionals as well as those who will be willing to do the most demanding and, at the same time, unattractive, dirty work.
- 3) Employers' never-ending, strong desire for a cheap labor force.
- 4) Relatively low mobility of the Czech labor force (the collapse of housing construction, the nonexistence of a real estate market with flats/houses, etc.) which, at least for some time, might support immigrants' complementary rather than competitive function.

Against these inflows of immigrants coming mainly from the East, the voice of the Czech public will function with little success. Any resistance to immigrants will directly grow with a possible increase in economic and social problems within the society. Intensifying contacts with the Western developed world and harmonizing economic, juridical, social and other conditions will bring about a permanent, not large but important contingent of Western immigrants. In the course of time, more compatible rules for doing business might function as a migratory pull factor mainly for Western Europeans. On

the other hand, by accepting Western models with their protection of access to their own markets (placing tariffs and quota restrictions), the Czech Republic could lose some of the current and potentially important immigrants-investors from the East (*see, e.g.*, the example of the Chinese in Wang, 1998).

In the meantime, further harmonization of migration policies and practices with those in the EU will continue – *e.g.*, visa policy, arranging or rearranging bilateral agreements, further creation of conditions for application of the Schengen Agreement (including the protection of the state borders and the harmonization of information systems). These changes will have important implications in relation to foreign labor migration patterns as well.

It may be expected that joining the EU might provoke a short but strong immigration wave from the East (probably mainly from former Soviet republics) to Czechia in anticipation of even more systematic and restrictive migration policies. A huge social-economic polarization between Westernized, rich and fortified countries like Czechia, Poland, Hungary and other CEECs will permanently stimulate illegal migration flows.

CONCLUSIONS

The Czech Republic has very quickly become an immigration and transit country and the capital, Prague, an important immigration and transit city. The current number of foreign immigrants who operate within the Czech Republic is about 460,000 – both documented and undocumented, permanent and temporary (excluding tourists, asylum seekers and transit migrants). In addition, the number of transit migrants might well reach levels between 100,000 and 140,000.

There is a huge pool of documented foreign labor workers in Czechia, by far the most important migratory type in the country. The entire immigrant group is composed of various ethnic communities (coming mostly from other CEECs in transition, Western Europe, North America, Vietnam and China) that symbolize in some respects fairly different behavioral patterns (activities, strategies, mechanisms). The economic immigrants were quite easily absorbed into society between 1990 and 1996. Since then, exactly as experience would dictate, and manifesting more serious social and economic problems (1997–1999) and tighter, more restrictive migration policy, the level of documented migrants has significantly decreased (measured by stock data). Nevertheless, one can deduce that because of immigrants' pragmatic and flexible behavior, strong inflows of illegal immigrants continue (*see, e.g.*,

Lupták and Drbohlav, 1999). The analysis of the foreign labor force in Czechia demonstrates that migratory features in this country are in many respects similar to those characteristic of Western developed democracies (*see also, e.g., Drbohlav, 1997a, b, c*). For example, the popularity of the capital city of Prague is significant albeit decreasing over time, especially for economic migrants. There are also two very different immigrant groups in Czechia. The first, an Eastern category, is mainly composed of young males who, in contrast to their usually high education/skill levels, are hired for manual, underpaid and unskilled jobs. The second group is a more heterogeneous group from the West, characterized by more females, children and older persons (*vis-à-vis* the Eastern group), with high levels of education, mostly engaged in professional and managerial areas of work (note the correspondence to dual labor market theory).

On the other hand, given that such a short time has elapsed since the emergence of a democratic state, some typical migratory features, otherwise expected, have not yet developed (namely, ethnic spatial concentrations/enclaves and strong ethnic organizational structures).

Unlike in the Western developed world, the migration policies and practices are at an immature stage in the Czech Republic. Objective and inevitable shortcomings go hand in hand with delay and inattention to migration issues by the government and the Parliament and, consequently, other bodies and institutions. Nevertheless, since 1999, the situation in the migration field has, in part, been developing in rather a positive direction (better legislation, more active, systematic, comprehensive and coherent approaches).

The future development of international labor migration in Czechia will, to a large extent, be influenced by a desire to join the EU and to harmonize policies and practices with those in Western Europe. Accordingly, this will significantly influence the structure of the entire Czech migration picture.

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