

CHARLES UNIVERSITY

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Master Thesis

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Intersectionality in Migration

Intersekcionalita v kontextu migrace

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Klíčová slova

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Keywords

International Migration, Intersectionality, Migration Policy, Migrant Integration, Inequality

Abstrakt

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá zkušenostmi migrantů v České republice prostřednictvím intersekcionalního přístupu. Práce se zaměřuje na to, jak život migrantů ovlivňuje migrační status, aspekty vyplývající ze samotného „bytí cizincem“ v ČR, socioekonomické podmínky a gender a poukazuje na rozličné obtíže, kterým různé skupiny migrantů čelí. Práce upozorňuje na to, jak současná politická praxe, které se často zaměřuje na migranty jako na homogenní skupinu, neřeší specifické potřeby těch, kteří se nacházejí v průsečíku více znevýhodnění. V tomto kontextu pak demonstruje hodnotu intersekcionality při odhalování těchto odlišných zkušeností a poukazuje na její potenciální přínos pro vytváření účinnějších migračních a integračních politik, které by v konečném důsledku pomohly vytvářet inkluzivnější a spravedlivější podmínky pro všechny skupiny migrantů.

Abstract

The master thesis examines the experiences of migrants in the Czech Republic through an intersectional lens, exploring how multiple axes of differentiation shape their lives. By focusing on migratory status, perceptions of "foreignness," socioeconomic conditions, and gender, the thesis reveals the challenges faced by various migrant groups. By employing an intersectional approach, the thesis demonstrates how current policy practices, which often target migrants as a homogeneous group, fail to address the specific needs of those at the intersection of multiple disadvantages. The study highlights the value of intersectionality in uncovering these nuanced experiences and argues for its potential in developing more effective migration and integration policies, ultimately working towards more inclusive and equitable outcomes for diverse migrant populations.

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1. Introduction

In the current thesis, I discuss the experience of migrants living in the Czech Republic and the different aspects of their lives while pointing out how various groups of migrants can have different experiences. They face specific obstacles, vulnerabilities, and disadvantages. I suggest that we should not see migrants as an undifferentiated mass. Quite the opposite, we should be able to pay attention to less noticeable cohorts and the differences in their experiences. I do so by applying an intersectional approach. Next, I explore what implications for the integration policies we could take from this approach.

The intersectional approach has emerged as an attempt to capture the interaction between different dimensions of inequality as part of gender, queer, and postcolonial studies since the 1990s. The term intersectionality was introduced by Crenshaw, who pointed out that instead of examining disadvantage occurring along a single categorical axis, multiple dimensions of inequality and their interconnectedness and influence on each other should be considered (Crenshaw, 1989). It is already Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality that is aimed at urging policymakers to consider the dynamics of privilege and exclusion that arise when people at the intersections of disadvantages are disregarded. *"It warns us of the risks of policies that, by privileging the treatment of some inequalities are mutually constitutive, end up marginalizing some people, reproducing power mechanisms among groups, and failing to address the creation of categories that are at the root of the constitution of inequalities. The adoption of a more intersectional approach to the treatment of inequalities could thus promote the development of more inclusive and better quality policies"* (Lombardo & Verloo, 2009, p. 479).

Intersectionality is a framework for examining how multiple sources of inequality and disadvantage interact. It posits that understanding these interconnections is crucial for comprehending inequality structures and designing effective policies. The approach moves beyond single-category analyses (e.g., gender, class, or ethnicity) to explore multiple diversities and inequalities. It captures dynamic power relations and oppression while being sensitive to differences within and among groups, avoiding stereotyping and oversimplification. Intersectionality analyses how various forms of disadvantage intersect, explaining specific experiences based on simultaneous. The approach assumes that no single category can fully explain human experience without reference to others, addressing the complex relationships between identity, social context, power relations, inequalities, and social justice. (Agustín &

Siim, 2014; Bastia, 2014; Hašková, Křížková, Pospíšilová, 2018; Křížková, & Hašková, 2018; Mattsson, 2014)

In my thesis, I use two of the intersectional approaches (see McCall, 2005). The first of them, the inter-categorical complexity, allows working within the existing analytical categories and documenting changing configurations of inequality along multiple dimensions. The other approach, the intra-categorical complexity, makes it possible to focus on particular social groups of migrants at usually neglected points of intersection. I am aware of the limitations that the two approaches pose and that the third approach, the inter-categorical complexity, deals with. The third approach seeks to deconstruct analytical categories, as it sees them as necessarily simplifying the multidimensional and contextual view of the problem and failing to capture the true complexity of social reality. Furthermore, there is also a risk that by selecting certain dimensions of inequality, we fix some categories on which we then focus while making others invisible (Anthias, 2013).

Nonetheless, policies and legal frameworks may have difficulty in dealing with complexity. They identify fixed legal categories, and in the case of migration, they even directly create some, e.g., by dividing migrants by their residence permit. Therefore, I argue that if the discourse is not to be merely static and should be incorporated into social policies, it needs to work with existing categories. The categorisation enables transferability to policies that operate with different social categories in their measures. The benefit of the intersectional approach is that it brings these existing categories into the same analytical framework to examine how certain groups are assigned multiple disadvantaged positions for complementary insights into understanding inequality shaped by a range of influences. Even such an approach reflects the complexity better than the views that stick only to one dimension. In my thesis, I examine the dimensions I have identified as essential in shaping the migrant experience. These are the disadvantages that result from the migratory status, “foreignness,” and the environment in the Czech Republic, to which I also add a view through socioeconomic status. I also discuss the influence of gender since it is an influential generator of several horizontal and vertical dimensions of social inequality.

2. Czech migratory context

2.1 The migration context and historical migration patterns

During the communist era in Czechoslovakia, i.e., in the period between the Second World War and the Velvet Revolution of 1989, immigration to the country was insignificant, Czechoslovakia had a negative net migration stock, and it was a country with an ethnically homogenous structure. Hence, the Czech population did not have for a long time any extensive experience with immigration, except for the stay of citizens from the Soviet Bloc countries and some allied socialist countries such as Vietnam or Mongolia (Šimon, Křížková, & Klsák, 2020; Přidalová & Hasman, 2018). Nevertheless, after the end of communist rule in the country and the fall of the Iron Curtain, the situation started changing fundamentally. Numerous barriers to immigration to Czechoslovakia were overcome, whether it was a gradual abolition of visa requirements for selected countries or the relatively flexible and liberal migration policies characteristic of the 1990s in Czechia (Günter, 2016).

Besides the political developments, the concurrence of other social and economic trends further induced the inflow of immigrants. As Drbohlav and Valenta (2014, p. 42) note, Czechoslovakia *“experienced a relatively stable political and economic setting during the phase of the political and economic transition. ... Demographic changes with their impact on the Czech labour market also played a significant part. Since the 1970s, there has been a decrease in the birth rate, resulting in a decrease in natural growth.”* The country’s economic growth consequently quickly led to the demand for foreign workers, especially between 1993 and 1997. In addition to these pull factors, important push factors were present in other economically weaker post-Soviet countries (Drbohlav & Seidlová, 2016; Drbohlav & Valenta, 2014). As a result of all these circumstances, the Czech Republic has evolved from a country of emigration towards an intermediate transit country for Western Europe and then to one of immigration, i.e., the country with positive net migration (Drbohlav & Janurová, 2019; Drbohlav & Seidlová, 2016; Janská et al., 2014; Šimon, Křížková, & Klsák, 2020). The rapid increase in the number of immigrants documents this development. In 1990, a total of 35,198 foreigners with a residence permit were in the Czech Republic, while in 1999, 228,862 foreigners already legally lived there (Günter, 2016).

Other significant milestones affecting international migration patterns and regulations were the years 1993 when the independent Czech Republic was established by separation from Slovakia,

1999 when the Czech Republic entered NATO, and then 2000 when the entry and residence rules were significantly tightened by Act No. 326/1999 Coll., on the stay of foreigners in the Czech Republic (Drbohlav & Seidlová, 2016). Implementing this law led to a decrease in the number of immigrants (ČSÚ, 2014). Immigration initiated by the economic growth was further increased after 2004 due to the country's accession to the European Union and persistent labour market demands. Another significant marker was joining the Schengen area in 2007 (Drbohlav & Seidlová, 2016; Drbohlav & Valenta, 2014). The trend of steady growth in the number of foreigners was then disrupted by the outbreak of the global economic crisis and recession in 2008, but the number of immigrants later stabilised and gradually began to grow again in 2015 (ČSÚ, 2014; Janská et al., 2014; Přidalová & Hasman, 2018).

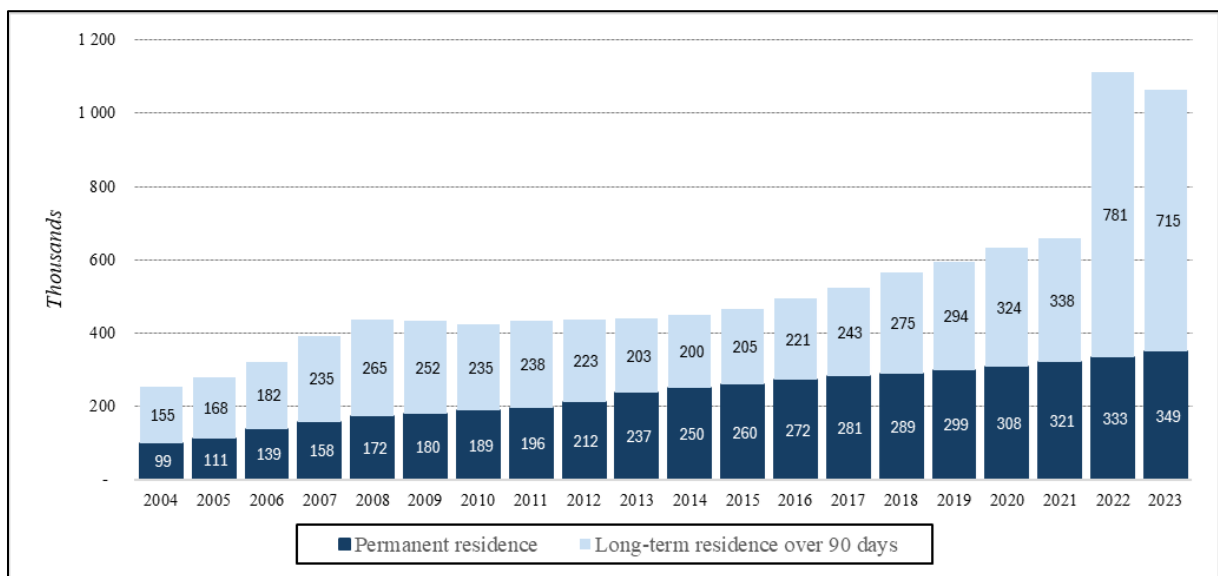


Figure 1. The trend in the number of foreigners in the Czech Republic by type of residence 2004–2023

Source: ČSÚ, 2023c

If it is about the recent development, the 2015–2016 European refugee crisis did not result in a substantial increase in the number of incoming migrants to the Czech Republic. Yet, it has intensified the negative attitudes towards immigration that, among other things, further contributed to the rise of anti-immigrant political tendencies (Drbohlav & Janurová, 2019). Apart from the first half of 2020, when the migration flows were partially throttled, the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent economic consequences did not have an essential impact on migration to Czechia, and the long-term trend of a steady increase in the number of immigrants continued (OAMP MVČR, 2021a; OAMP MVČR, 2021b). Another significant change in the migration trend occurred in 2022 when the number of migrants from Ukraine sharply increased

due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. People fleeing the war in Ukraine are categorised as migrants with temporary residence; specifically, they receive temporary protection.

2.2 Contemporary migrant demographics and socio-spatial distribution

As indicated above, the overall trend is a gradual growth in the number of migrants in the Czech Republic, mainly due to the high demand for the labour force. However, the share of migrants in the population has not yet reached the average value of immigration in established immigrant countries (Günter 2016; Křížková & Ouředníček, 2020). According to the most recent data (as of 28 June 2024), a total of 1,063,225 persons of foreign nationality were legally residing in the Czech Republic, of which 714,633 held a temporary residence permit, and the remainder 348,592 immigrants were permanent residents (ČSÚ, 2023b). The share of registered persons with other than Czech citizenship in the country's population is approximately 9.75 %.

The Czech Republic is not a traditional destination country for international protection seekers. The number of applicants, as well as granted applications, remains low compared to other countries, be it due to its geographical location or strict policy (Drbohlav & Janurová, 2019). At the end of 2022, a total of 1,124 persons enjoying asylum status and 1,190 subsidiary protection recipients legally resided in Czechia. The yearly number of applicants for international protection in the last ten years has been between 700–2,000, while the share of international protection grants has remained very low. The most common nationalities of asylum holders are Afghans (173), Myanmarese (168), and Russians (145), whereas subsidiary protection holders come mainly from Ukraine (406), Syria (293), and China (54). (ČSÚ, 2023a)

Among foreigners with a residence permit other than the granted international protection, third-country nationals predominate over citizens of EU and EEA member states and Switzerland (the former group consists of 836,350 persons, i.e., 78 % of the migrant population, whereas the latter 229,390 persons, i.e., 22 %) (ČSÚ, 2024). In general, three predominant types of international migrants in the Czech Republic can be distinguished: 1) persons migrating from countries in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union whose migration is predominantly economically motivated and who usually take up manual jobs in industries; 2) migrants arriving from Western Europe and North America who represent a relatively heterogeneous group, however, their work prevails to be in knowledge-intensive professions; and 3) Asian migrants particularly from Vietnam, Mongolia, and China, who can be characterised by economic

activity in retail, business and food services (Drbohlav & Valenta, 2014). The first group of migrants from Eastern Europe currently also includes a large group of persons who emigrated from Ukraine due to the Russian invasion of their country. Unlike in traditional destination countries, where immigrants come from diverse and often remote and culturally different areas, immigration from culturally and geographically proximate countries prevails in the Czech Republic (Přidalová & Hasman, 2018). The migrant population can, therefore, be depicted as largely socioculturally non-distant from the majority. Ukrainians are the largest group of migrants in the population, followed by the second most numerous group of Slovak migrants, and the third-largest group, the Vietnamese (see Figure 2), who form the largest group of immigrants from culturally distinct backgrounds. Other numerous groups of migrants are Russians, Germans, Poles, Romanians, and Bulgarians.

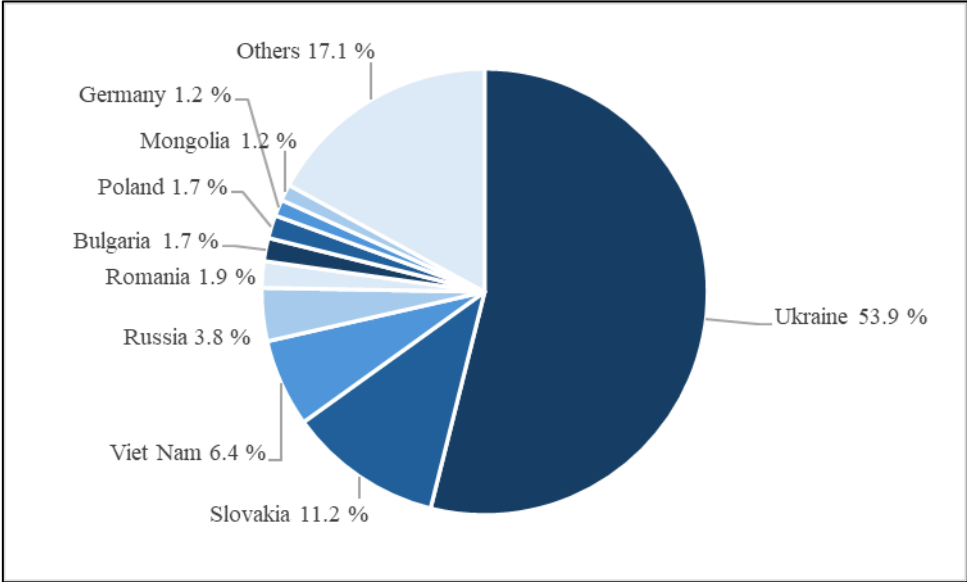


Figure 2. The most frequent citizenship of foreigners in Czechia as of 31 December 2023
 Source of data: ČSÚ, 2024

Prior to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Ukrainian citizens migrated to the Czech Republic primarily for job opportunities. The roots of this migration flow go back to the problematic transition to a market economy after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, and its further strengthening occurred because of the global economic crisis after 2008 (ČSÚ, 2014). Initially, the migration from Ukraine to Czechia could be depicted as almost exclusively temporary, transnational circulation. Nonetheless, Ukrainians were gradually inclining more toward long-term immigration and settlement (as evidenced by the increase in the number of permanent residence permit holders vis-à-vis long-term residence permit holders). The trend of family

reunification gradually became increasingly important among them as well (Drbohlav & Seidlová, 2016).

In general, there have not been any significant changes in the migration behaviour of Ukrainians since the outburst of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia in 2014. However, it is worth mentioning that there may have been changes in irregular migration that are not covered by data or research (Drbohlav & Seidlová, 2016). The conflict probably had the greatest impact on the number of granted international protections, or more precisely, there was a substantial increase in the number of granted subsidiary protections (see Figure 3). We can assume these were people who fled Ukraine because of the conflict. There was also a slight increase in the number of granted asylum in 2014. However, the absolute numbers remain low (25 asylum status granted to Ukrainians in 2014) (ČSÚ, 2020).

Furthermore, migration strategies and the structure of the flows have changed. For example, more migrants come from conflict-affected areas, a higher number of young Ukrainians, students, and family members of already settled immigrants come to the Czech Republic, and the strengthening of the family reunification trend can be observed. The conflict also hastened some people's decision to emigrate and emerged, in addition to economic reasons, as another migration motive. Especially for young men, this reason is avoiding conscription (Drbohlav & Seidlová, 2016). The invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022 then had an impact on the increase in the number of temporary residents, as this group of displaced persons can register for temporary protection. At the end of 2021, there were about 100 thousand Ukrainians with temporary residence in the Czech Republic (ČSÚ, 2022), while at the end of 2023, the number increased to 475 thousand (ČSÚ, 2024).

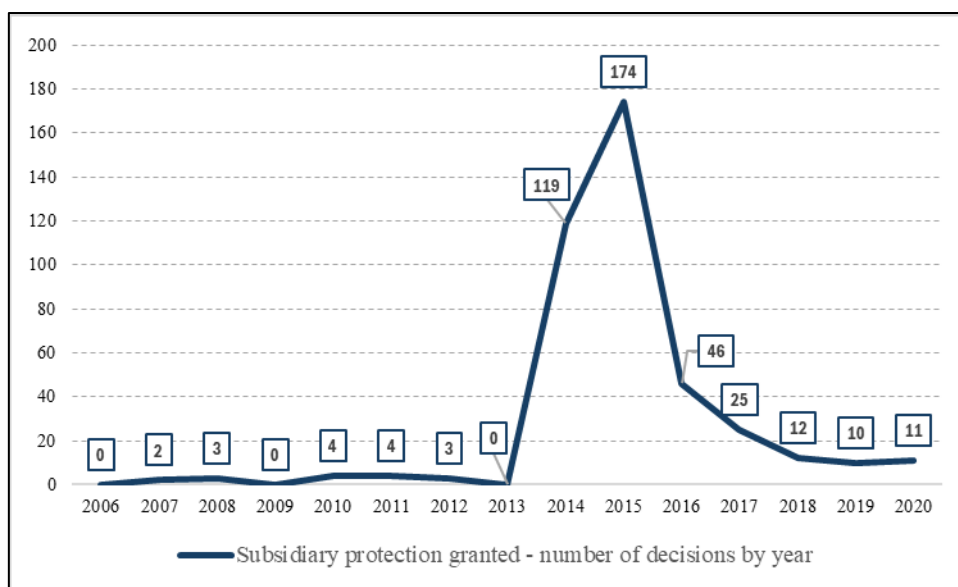


Figure 3. Subsidiary protection granted to Ukrainians in 2006–2020

Source of data: ČSÚ, 2021a

Slovaks occupy a specific position among the migrant population in Czechia. They lived together with Czechs in a common state until the 1993 split, and so they share a common history and culture. They also received preferential treatment in labour markets and other areas of social life after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia (Janská et al., 2014), and many citizens of Slovakia (more than 400,000) have acquired Czech citizenship since then (ČSÚ, 2014).

The migration of Vietnamese to the Czech Republic has its roots in the 1950s and cooperation between the countries during the socialist era (Přidalová & Hasman, 2018). The largest number of migrants from Vietnam arrived in the 1970s, which can be associated with the Czechoslovak demand for workers and the support of emigration provided by the Vietnamese government, which saw it as an opportunity to acquire work skills. In 1989, there were approximately 33,000 Vietnamese in Czechoslovakia. After 1989, there was no renewal of cooperation agreements with Vietnam, and there was a substantial decline in the economic activities of Vietnamese in the Czech Republic (ČSÚ, 2014). Nonetheless, in the 1990s, the number of Vietnamese migrants in Czechia began to grow gradually again and has remained at around 60,000 since 2008 (ČSÚ, 2021b).

Although the history of Russians' presence on Czech territory is already long, the Russians form a smaller group of foreigners compared to the nationalities mentioned above. They began arriving in the 1920s after the Bolshevik coup of 1917. Czechoslovakia then accepted about

25,000 Russians as part of the “Russian Action.” Their numbers decreased during the economic crisis in the 1930s and then because of the Nazi occupation. After 1945, most Russians were returned to the Soviet Union (ČSÚ, 2014). Since the 1990s, the number of Russians in Czechia has kept increasing steadily. The conflict between Russia and Ukraine in 2014 did not result in a change in this trend (ČSÚ, 2021b). Nevertheless, in the period after the outburst of the conflict, there has been a sharp decline in the number of visa applications among Russians – we can presume that it can be an effect of the dispute and a response to the EU sanctions (Drbohlav & Seidlová, 2016).

As to the nature of migration, most migration to the Czech Republic has been traditionally short-term and motivated by work opportunities. It is not surprising given the continuing strong demand for foreign labour on the part of the Czech labour market in periods of economic prosperity. Economic immigration into Czechia still predominates today (putting aside the Ukrainians fleeing the war), and work opportunities remain a primary motive for migration to the Czech Republic as evidenced by the current data – in 2017, 45 % of migrants cited employment or entrepreneurship as their migrant motive (Drbohlav & Janurová, 2019). However, the large proportion of foreigners with a permanent residence permit as well as the growing proportion of women and children among immigrants suggest that much of the migration has gradually changed from temporary to permanent and that the migration becomes over time more family-based (Drbohlav & Valenta, 2014; Günter 2016; Bernard & Mikešová, 2014; Křížková & Ouředníček, 2020). A higher proportion of women and children among the migrants is typical of groups working in retail or manual professions from Vietnam, China, or Mongolia, and highly qualified migrants from Russia and Western professionals. On the other hand, there are also male-dominated groups of migrants from Ukraine, Moldova, Bulgaria, or Romania who can be characterised by working mainly in manual labour (Přidalová & Hasman, 2018).

In 2022, the proportion of women among immigrants was 51.3 % – for the first since the monitoring of migration statistics began, the proportion of women was higher than that of men, which is linked to the fact that primarily women with children migrated from Ukraine because of the war. Children made up 22.8 % of the migrant population. Regarding the age structure of foreigners, compared to the majority, the categories of younger productive age are more represented (22.3 % of foreigners fell into the category of 30–39 years and 16.0 % into the category of 20–29 years in 2022), which corresponds to the prevailing economic motives for

immigration to the Czech Republic. On the contrary, the share of people in the post-productive age over 65 is low among migrants (5.0 % in 2022) (ČSÚ, 2023c).

Regarding the spatial distribution of foreigners in the Czech Republic, the overall trend is that the spatial patterns of immigrants and the majority's behaviour are converging. The increase in the migrant population in the Czech Republic, with specific exceptions, does not lead to the creation of distinct patterns of residential segregation at the micro-level (i.e., in the field of housing and everyday life). In the Czech cities, unlike, for example, in the USA and some Western European countries, there are basically no neighbourhoods with sharp spatial boundaries and a high concentration of migrants. The macro-concentrations of foreigners that occur in the Czech Republic are rather a consequence of segregation within certain labour markets, as the proximity to job opportunities is determinative in terms of selecting a place of residence (Přidalová & Hasman, 2018; Šimon, Křížková, & Klsák, 2020; Šimon, Křížková, Klsák, et al., 2020).

Migrants' spatial concentration can be found in the metropolitan region of Prague, in larger cities (Brno, Ostrava), and in border areas, while the spatial distribution of migrants follows a decreasing gradient from the West to the East (see Figure 4). Furthermore, the migrant population traditionally concentrates in spa towns (Karlovy Vary, Poděbrady, Teplice) and towns and districts with areas of substantial economic investment (Plzeň, Mladá Boleslav, Pardubice) (Bernard & Mikešová, 2014; Křížková & Ouředníček, 2020; Šimon, Křížková, Klsák, et al., 2020; Šimon, Křížková, & Klsák, 2020). The proportion of migrants in the Czech Republic peaks in Prague in both absolute and relative terms – at the end of 2022, 31.01 % of foreigners with either long-term or permanent residence permits (i.e., 345 307 persons) resided there (ČSÚ, 2023c).

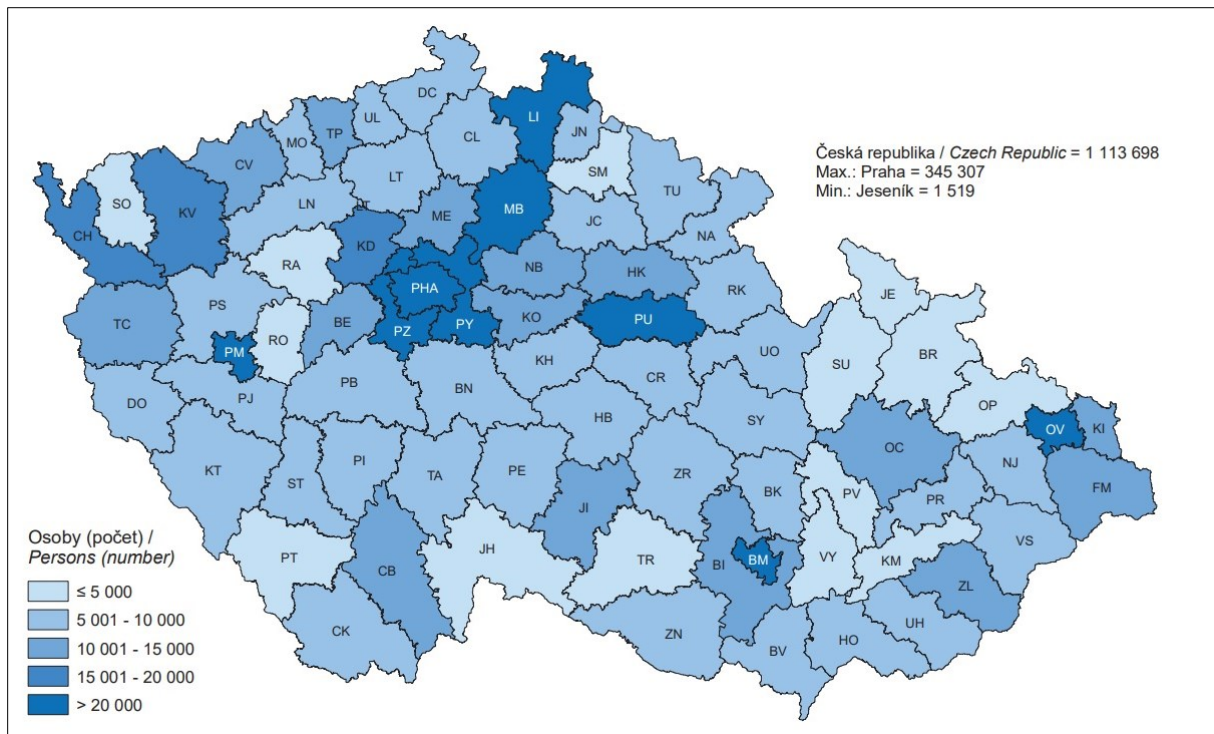


Figure 4. Share of foreigners in the population of the Czech Republic as of 31 December 2022

Source: ČSÚ 2023c (p. 66)

There are notable differences in spatial distribution that occur by nativity, which, for the most part, stem from the types of occupation. For example, migrants from the countries of Global North predominantly reside in Prague (except for the inhabitants of neighbouring countries who are concentrated in the border areas as well). The Vietnamese population concentrates in the western border areas and shows lower levels of concentration in Prague, and 62.76 % of Russians reside in Prague, and many of them also tend to settle in the Karlovy Vary region (Janská et al., 2014; OAMP MVČR, 2021c).

2.3 Legislative framework, immigration and integration policy

Migration highly depends on the nature of the migration policy. The same can be markedly observed in economic migration, which is supported by liberal measures during economic growth and, conversely, in times of economic stagnation or recession, restrictive measures are taken to prevent foreigners from entering the labour market and thus protect the Czech workforce. In general, Czech immigration policy is designed to shield Czech and EU workers, which is reflected, for example, in the fact that work can be offered to third-country nationals only if Czech or EU citizens are not available (so-called labour market tests) (Drbohlav & Janurová, 2019; Drbohlav & Valenta, 2014).

In addition to the effect of the economic development of the country, Günter (2016) sets three other fundamental milestones that had an influential impact on the development of Czech immigration policy:

- 1) The year 1990, when Czechoslovakia ratified the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and hence undertook to guarantee refugees the right to consider their asylum application, to humane treatment, and, when granting international protection, to important rights and opportunities for inclusion in the host society.
- 2) The year 1999, when previously relatively liberal immigration legislation had been changed to a restrictive one due to both internal (rising unemployment rates) and external reasons (efforts to harmonize Czech law with the EU), thus limiting migrating opportunities, especially for individual migrants from less developed countries.
- 3) The year 2004, when the Czech Republic joined the EU, which was linked with the harmonization of legal norms with other EU member states (in practice, this meant a partial softening of the immigration policy and the introduction of the Dublin system, which partially eliminated refugee immigration) and with the introduction of the categorization of foreigners into EU/EEA/Swiss citizens and citizens of other, so-called third countries.

Drbohlav and Seidlová (2016) further point to the importance of the refugee crisis in the era since 2014 that led to the introduction of “safety measures” in immigration policy, which are reflected in the emphasis on the security paradigm, control, and selectivity of immigrants.

The international migration policy can generally be divided into measures concerning the entry of foreigners into the territory of the Czech Republic and laws governing the stay of residing foreigners in the territory (Ibid.). As outlined by Günter (2016), the current Czech international migration policy is based on:

- 1) national laws and regulations¹,

¹ In particular, Act No 326/1999 Coll. on the Residence of Aliens in the Territory of Czech Republic, Act No 325/1999 Coll. on Asylum, Act No 221/2003 Coll. on Temporary Protection of Aliens, but also, for example, the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms declared in 1993, Act No 186/2013 Coll. on the citizenship of the Czech Republic or laws concerning employment, education, and health care.

- 2) EU regulations and directives²,
- 3) international conventions and covenants³,
- 4) and specific government strategic documents and programs⁴.

Overall, there are three key stakeholders to the Czech international immigration and integration policy that is the bodies of the state administration of the Czech Republic (especially MOI, MoLSA, MIT, MEYS), the EU, and governmental and non-governmental bodies. The competencies in the field of the immigration policy of MOI lie mainly in the formation and implementation of national policies and the control of international immigration from the point of view of security as it is in charge of processing applications for long-term visas, long-term and permanent residence permits (Drbohlav & Valenta, 2014). The MOI has an irreplaceable role in the integration policy, which it coordinates. Another essential task of MOI is to support the integration of foreigners at the local level, for which, for example, the support of municipal projects or a network of eighteen Integration Centres operating in each region serve as pivotal tools (MOI, 2024). Furthermore, the MOI is in charge of the agenda related to international protection, be it proceeding with the application for international protection, providing services to applicants through its body, the Administration of Refugee Facilities, or implementing a specific integration programme (the so-called *State Integration programme*) for this group of foreign nationals (Leontiyeva, 2011).

The Action Plan for the year 2024 contains specific tasks for implementing the integration policy. As outlined in the Action Plan (MOI, 2024), MoLSA focuses on the employment of foreign nationals, their social inclusion, prevention of labour exploitation, and protection

² Some of the relevant EU documents are the Council Directive 2003/86/EC concerning family reunification, the European Parliament and Council Directive 2004/38/EC concerning the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the EU and EEA member states, the European Parliament and Council Regulation (EU) 2016/399 on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code), the European Parliament and Council Directive 2011/95/EU on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted, or the European Parliament and Council Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person, so-called Dublin III Regulation.

³ For example, the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

⁴ Such as the 2015 Migration Strategy of the Government of the Czech Republic, Policy for the Integration of Foreign Nationals, or State Integration Program, which concerns the beneficiaries of international protection.

against discrimination in the labour market, monitoring the development of the situation and social position of foreigners, but also protection of the Czech labour market. Another crucial task of MoLSA is to perform an assistance function in the integration and to support social care services whose target group is foreigners. There are now 97 such registered social care services for foreign nationals (as of August 2024). Mostly, it is a social counselling service (54), and other services fall into the category of social prevention services (telephone crisis intervention, halfway houses, shelter services, outreach programmes, social activation services for families with children, and social rehabilitation) (MoLSA, n.d.).

In the context of migration, MEYS focuses on improving the Czech language skills of foreigners and the inclusion of children and youth with a migration background into the Czech school system (MOI, 2024). MFA then handles the procedure for applications for a short-term visa, and “*the consular department of this ministry manages the work of all embassies*” (Leontiyeva, 2011, p. 23). The last key ministry is MIT, which is responsible for the entrepreneurship of foreigners. The role of governmental agencies (such as The Public Defender of Rights or the Department of Office of Government for Human Rights) and NGOs lies mainly in emphasising ethics and human rights in migration (Drbohlav & Valenta, 2014).

2.3.1 The categories of foreigners staying in the Czech Republic

The current legislation towards foreigners is based mainly on differences in residence permits and, therefore, it is necessary to briefly outline what categories of foreigners the Czech law distinguishes and what conditions and requirements it sets up. According to the legal framework, the division of foreigners is as follows:

- 1) third-country nationals, i.e., citizens of a state that is not a member of the EU nor a citizen of Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway or Switzerland,
- 2) citizens of EU member states, moreover, citizens of Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland, and citizens of the UK who were legally resident in the territory as of December 31, 2020, have similar rights as EU citizens,
- 3) family members of EU citizens (mainly spouse or a registered partner, parent of an EU citizen under 21, descendant under 21 or a descendant of a spouse of an EU citizen, a partner who can prove the existence of a relationship similar to the family

relationship, a relative who lives in the same household as an EU citizen or is dependent on his/her care (Act No. 326/1999 Coll., § 15a)),

4) holders of international protection, i.e., either recognised refugees who were granted asylum or persons under subsidiary protection.

International protection can be granted only to foreigners who fall into a relatively narrowly defined category of an alien who “*experienced persecution for exercising political rights and freedoms or has a justifiable fear of such persecution in the country of which he/she is a citizen or, in the case of a stateless person, the country of his/her last permanent residence, for reasons of race, sex, religion, nationality, association with a social group or supporting certain political opinions*” (MOI, n.d.). Only persons from countries outside the EU and safe third countries can claim international protection. Applicants for international protection status are subject to a particular procedure. They have limited rights (travel ban, conditional access to the labour market) and are not covered by the social security system, except for social insurance, until the decision to grant international protection. Asylum is granted indefinitely, whereas subsidiary protection is for a definite period, usually two years (it can be extended, but the need for protection is verified). Persons granted international protection have access to the labour market, the public health insurance system, the social support system, education, and suchlike, under the same conditions as Czech citizens. Moreover, they can participate in the so-called *State Integration Programme*. However, they do not have the right to vote, and they cannot hold certain public positions or serve in the armed forces of the Czech Republic.

EU citizens and their family members have the right to free movement within EU member states and permanent residence in the Czech Republic and are guaranteed equality with Czech citizens in the field of the labour market, social security, and suchlike, and can participate in municipal politics (they have the right to vote).

The types of residence permits available for EU citizens and their family members are as follows (according to Act No. 326/1999 Coll., On the stay of foreigners in the Czech Republic):

1) For a stay of up to 90 days, there is no condition for the EU citizens’ stay in the country. Family members of EU citizens can stay either without a visa or with a Schengen short-term visa.

- 2) For a stay exceeding 90 days, EU citizens may apply for a registration certificate, while their family members need a temporary residence permit.
- 3) A permanent residence permit is granted to EU citizens and their family members after five years of continuous residence in Czechia. In case of family reunification with an immediate family member (with a permanent residence permit in the Czech Republic), there is an opportunity for EU citizens to apply for permanent residence status after two years of continuous residence in the territory.

The types of residence permits available for third-country nationals are as follows:

- 1) For a stay of up to 90 days, they may stay either without a visa or with a Schengen short-term visa, depending on the country of origin. (Visa is required for all residences for employment, regardless of the country of origin). The visa is linked with a specific purpose of stay, e.g., tourism, medical purposes, or invitation. It has a maximum duration of three months and cannot be extended.
- 2) For a stay exceeding 90 days, they need a long-term visa valid for up to one year. The long-term visa can be extended via an application for a long-term residence permit. The long-term visa is tied to the specific purpose of stay (e.g., employment, business, family reunification, study, taking over a residence, tolerance permit), which cannot be changed during its validity.
- 3) For stays over one year, third-country nationals obtain a long-term residence permit. The permit is issued for 1–2 years, and it is tied to the purpose of stay that, nevertheless, can be changed (there are yet again a few exceptions, such as the purpose of a business that can be changed only after five years of stay, family reunification after three years, and the like). When switching from a long-term visa to a long-term residence permit, the purpose of residence cannot be changed (except for an application for an employment card or a long-term residence permit for family cohabitation). It is possible to extend the long-term residence permit.
- 4) Third-country nationals can obtain a permanent residence permit after a total of five years of continuous residence in the Czech Republic (after four years in case of an unsuccessful application for international protection, or the condition of the previous residence does not have to be met in case of stays with purposes of family reunification,

humanitarian reasons, and stays that are in the interest of the Czech Republic). Permanent residence is issued for ten years and is associated with various purposes (employee card, blue card, business, family cohabitation, study, and such). The employee card has a specific status as it combines a residence permit with authorization to participate in the Czech labour market (however, there is also a so-called non-dual employee card which is intended for people with access to the labour market, and which thus serves only as a residence permit in the territory).

Foreigners can obtain Czech citizenship after five years of permanent residence or ten years of a continuous stay in the Czech Republic. In 2014, Czechia introduced the option of dual citizenship by amending its Act on Czech Citizenship (Drbohlav & Janurová, 2019).

2.3.2 Integration policy

In the Czech Republic, the current integration policy development is top-down, with the dominant role of the central government. The importance of regional authorities is in this process marginal (Bernard & Mikesova, 2014). Some larger cities and places with a higher share of migrants in their population (e.g., Prague, Brno, Karlovy Vary, Plzeň, Liberec, Olomouc) have their integration programmes or at least smaller or one-off integration projects. Nonetheless, most other cities do not address this topic beyond ordinary social policy (while the lens of local specifics is crucial in integration). Cities that implement specific policies and projects targeting the foreign population focus mainly on social integration into society, inclusion in the labour market, or promotion of the culture of minorities (Šimon, Křížková, & Klsák, 2020).

The Czech Republic gradually leaned towards a civic approach to integration that is characteristic of focusing on individual foreigners as members of society and their rights and obligations (to learn the language, respect the host society, and the like) (Drbohlav & Valenta, 2014). Today's most relevant document identifying the state's intention regarding the integration of foreigners is the *Policy for the Integration of Foreign Nationals – Living Together*, first approved in 2000. The policy builds on the government's document from 1999 containing 15 principles of integration. One of the key themes of this document was the emphasis on social integration, foreigners' protection against discrimination, and the promotion of equal access and equal opportunities, especially concerning employment, housing, education, health, social care, and religion. The Ministry of the Interior was entrusted with

implementing the policy; in 2004, the responsibilities were transferred to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. In 2008, however, it became MOI's duty yet again. (Leontiyeva, 2011).

The last update of the policy took place in 2016. Moreover, the government annually publishes a document that outlines the country's plan for implementing the policy. The current version of the *Policy for the Integration of Foreign Nationals* defines integration as “a long-term process of integrating foreigners into society, in which both foreigners and the majority are involved” (MOI, 2015, p. 15). It emphasises, therefore, that integration is a two-way process, the course of which is influenced not only by foreigners and their responsibility, initiative, and the will to participate in society but also by the Czech majority and its readiness and willingness to accept foreigners and participate in the integration process. The goal set by the integration policy is “to support the integration of foreigners into society, attain peaceful coexistence with foreigners, prevent the emergence of negative social phenomena, and ensure the protection of rights and safety of all inhabitants of the Czech Republic” (Ibid., p. 17). The policy defines five fundamental areas of integration of foreigners and principal objectives, which are enhancing the knowledge of the Czech language, promoting economic and social self-sufficiency of immigrants, enhancing foreigners' socio-cultural orientation in the host society, supporting the building of relations between foreign residents and the majority, and the principle of gradual acquisition of the rights of foreigners in connection with their residence status in the Czech Republic. It also emphasizes raising awareness of the activities of the state and organisations that promote integration and deepening and improving communication with the public on migration.

Foreigners from third countries who have been, or intend to be, legally resident in the Czech Republic for a long time (i.e., for more than a year) are defined as the primary target group of integration measures. Within the current version of the policy, the target group was expanded to include holders of international protection, who can thus also use relevant integration tools beyond the framework of the *State Integration Program*. The concept further stipulates that the target group also includes the majority society and, in exceptional cases, the citizens of EU countries. On the contrary, applicants for international protection (whose rights are given by the Asylum Act) do not fall into the target group. Within the target group, special attention is paid to vulnerable groups that include children of foreigners, youth, foreign women, and families of foreigners.

The narrowed focus of the integration policy on long-term third nationals is one of its problems because it causes worsened accessibility of various services (such as social counselling, interpretation services, or language courses) for other groups of immigrants (Drbohlav & Janurová, 2019). Integration is further complicated by a rather complex system regulating the residence of foreigners in the Czech Republic, preferring short-term migrations rather than family settlements and integration. Another contextual determinant of integration in the Czech environment is the negative attitude of Czech society towards foreigners, which makes this two-way process even more intricate (Bernard & Mikesova, 2014).

3. Public attitudes, discrimination, migratory status and “foreignness”

The experience of being a migrant, regardless of other intersecting identities, often involves navigating a complex landscape of public perceptions, societal attitudes, and systemic biases. This chapter examines the challenges faced by migrants stemming from their migratory status itself, challenges that transcend individual characteristics such as gender, age, or socioeconomic background. By focusing on these shared experiences of migrants, I aim to highlight how migratory status becomes a critical factor in the intersectional analysis of migrant experiences, often compounding other forms of disadvantage and discrimination.

At the core of these challenges lies the concept of “foreignness.” The label of “being foreign” acts as a lens through which the broader population views and often misinterprets migrants, leading to stereotypes, prejudices, and various forms of discrimination. Public attitudes towards migrants, influenced by media portrayals, political rhetoric, and deeply ingrained cultural narratives, play a crucial role in defining the migrant experience. Understanding these attitudes is key to comprehending the social environment in which migrants must operate and integrate.

A large part of society in the Czech Republic does not contribute to a welcoming and accepting environment for migrants. On the contrary, it participates in the creation of an adverse atmosphere. Concerning the general attitude towards migrants, 53% of the Czech public considers citizens of other nationalities a problem. They associate foreigners residing in the Czech Republic mainly with health risks and an increase in crime, but also with an increase in unemployment (53% of people perceive migrants as the ones who take job opportunities from Czechs) or see them as an added burden on the Czech welfare system or a threat to their way of life (Spurný, 2020b; TNS opinion & political, 2018). Young migrant men are more exposed to negative stereotyping in the public discourse since they are predominantly those portrayed as potentially committing violent, sexist, or criminal behaviour (Bareš et al., 2015). Negative attitudes are also manifested in the rejection of neighbourhoods with people of different skin colours (one-third of the Czech population) and foreigners (a quarter of the Czech population). The level of intolerance is even higher towards people whom the Czech population associates with Islamism, as documented by the fact that two-thirds of people reject the idea of a neighbourhood with Muslims (Tuček, 2020).

On the contrary, only a few positive aspects are attributed to foreigners. For example, 26% of people agreed that foreigners contribute to solving the problem of an aging population, 30%

that they enrich cultural life, 38% that they have an overall positive impact on the Czech economy, and 25% that they bring new ideas or boost innovation (Spurný, 2020b; TNS opinion & political, 2018). The involvement of migrants in the Czech labour market is perceived differently depending on where the migrant comes from. The Czech population divides working foreigners into two categories – those from the "East" and the "West" where the favouritism of the latter group of migrants is evident (Staňkovská, Čížek, Leontiyeva, Vávra, 2009). To accept foreigners in the country, people report that they must know the Czech language and participate in the labour market. Furthermore, knowledge of Czech history and culture, length of stay in the Czech Republic for at least ten years, participation in social life, or the acquisition of Czech citizenship are considered other important factors (Spurný, 2020a).

The degree of acceptance by the Czech population and a priori attitudes towards migrants also depend on their country of origin. The Czechs are ethnocentric in their attitudes toward other nationalities, evaluating themselves as the best, and the Slovaks as only slightly worse due to the specifically close relationship and their interconnected history. They also assess positively those who come from Euro-American countries, i.e., from countries perceived as "developed," and the more the country is perceived as "Western," the better. Contrarily, they negatively view those who are less similar to Czechs, not only physically but also culturally, and label people who come from countries that are perceived as "poor" as "unwelcome economic migrants." For example, people declare antipathy rather than sympathy towards Ukrainians (42% of the population expresses antipathy vs. 18% sympathy), Romanians (48% vs. 10%), Albanians (51% vs. 7%), and Arabs (60% vs. 7% vs. 60%). (Sokačová, 2014; Staňkovská, Čížek, Leontiyeva, Vávra, 2009; Uhde & Ezzeddine, 2019)

The anti-immigrant rhetoric and racist hate speech contribute to the negative attitude toward foreigners. The anti-migrant sentiment is generally strong, but it has for a long time been most intense against migrants from Muslim countries. Hateful comments are insufficiently condemned by politicians in the Czech context (ECRI, 2020). In contrast, we can observe negative manifestations from politicians and other public figures. Particularly since 2015, xenophobic populism has gradually increased in the Czech Republic (CERD, 2019; ECRI, 2020). Fear of migrants and stereotypes about migration are also produced and reinforced by the media. These public manifestations reinforce racist stereotypes and prejudices in society (CERD, 2019; Průchová Hřůzová & Zápotocký, 2021; Spencer, Acik-Toprak, Fox & Deakin, 2015). We can observe a circulation of anti-immigrant and anti-immigration posts on Czech Facebook, with certain prevalent narratives. Typical examples include the portrayal of Arabs

as dangerous, socially deviant, and incapable of social integration, the depiction of opponents of migration as patriots and defenders of Czech culture, and the portrayal of the so-called “mainstream” media (e.g., Czech Television) as pro-migrant and distorting the view of the situation in the Czech Republic (Průchová Hružová & Zápotocký, 2021).

The impact of views on migration must not be underestimated. People’s perception of migration is not fixed evaluation, but it is usual for these types of outlooks to be stable (Staňkovská, Čížek, Leontiyeva, Vávra, 2009). Not only do the views lead to a hostile environment and contribute to discrimination, but there is also a relationship between attitudes and actions – people organise behaviours around their perspectives. Nonetheless, the perception of cultural similarity or the attribution of different characteristics to different ethnicities can be considered learned and socially constructed. Similarly, stereotypes and prejudices are not based on reality but predominantly on preconceived notions perpetuated by society. Public attitudes and persisting negative stereotyping can, thus, be affected by varied factors such as media, education, and social interactions. We can create a more welcoming and equitable environment where everyone feels respected by challenging negative attitudes, stereotypes, and prejudices.

Apart from the effects of the environment, all migrants also face obstacles that stem from the migration policy, and the policy itself sets different conditions for them to live in the Czech Republic. The European migration policy induces the division between “wanted” and “unwanted” migrants and constructs primarily the people from third countries who do not fall into the category of highly skilled professionals as a priori undesirable. The fact that migrants from third countries are not EU citizens predetermines their status. Their non-citizenship implies deportability and detainability, which creates precarious living conditions and the situation of existential precarity. But at the same time, in some areas, European countries greatly benefit from their work, especially in low-skilled jobs or care work, and market forces actively generate the need for this kind of migration. However, the state wants to maximize profit while minimizing the costs, for example, by reducing the rights granted. Hence, although we see labour mobility, entitlements for some migrants remain rather non-mobile. (Gasper, Truong, 2013; Uhde & Ezzeddine, 2019)

To document the situation of these migrants, we can look at a few selected areas. The first example could be social protection. Generally, EU citizens have access to the social protection system (unemployment benefits, sickness and pension insurance, family benefits) under the same conditions as Czechs due to EU coordination rules, as well as refugees and beneficiaries

of subsidiary protection. The system is also open to third-country nationals with permanent residence and those who work for a Czech employer and have domicile in the Czech Republic. Furthermore, bilateral agreements with several third countries aimed at covering access to social protection are in place. Nonetheless, not all of them cover all the areas of the social security system (e.g., the agreements with India, the US, Korea, and Australia cover only pensions). If we look at the most represented foreigners from third countries, those from Ukraine and Russia can benefit from agreements with their countries, whereas, for example, migrants from Vietnam do not have this option, as no agreement has been signed with their country of origin. Besides, there are limitations arising from the non-exportability of benefits across systems of the country of origin and destination country that may affect some third-country nationals. For example, if they do not work for enough years in either country, they do not qualify for a decent pension, even if the eligible amounts from each country are combined. Thus, there is a disproportion between the obligation to contribute to the system and the possibility of drawing from it, which is considered a discriminatory practice. Hence, even though migrants work their whole productive lives and often migration is not solely their voluntary choice, territorialisation of social rights puts them at a disadvantage. (Duba, Faltová, Macková & Nečasová, 2016; ECRI, 2020)

Health care is another example of an area in which state policy creates obstacles and different conditions for certain groups of migrants. Firstly, migrants are a group of people who typically face multiple disadvantages compared to the majority population, resulting in their higher chance of suffering from major depression, chronic diseases, poor physical health, and functional limitations that impair their quality of life (typically back pain, arthritis, etc.). Perceived discrimination (both discriminations directed at themselves and other members of their group) also harms their physical and mental health. It is shown that migrants' health deteriorates over time in the host country, thus suppressing the "healthy migrant effect"⁵, and that the medical needs of migrants are more often unmet (6.55% of migrants report higher unmet needs for medical examination or treatment compared to 2.86% of Czechs). Even if we stick to connecting disadvantage in health care to socioeconomic status, we should consider that migrants often take up unskilled jobs. Migration, thus, becomes a source of stratification and leads migrants into a more vulnerable socioeconomic position. (Dzúrová & Drbohlav,

⁵ "Healthy migrant effect" refers to the fact that people who migrate are usually young and healthy, leading to distortions about the health status of migrants, who may appear healthier when compared to the majority (Drbohlav & Dzúrová, 2017; Ingleby, 2012).

2014; Drbohlav & Dzúrová, 2017; European Commission, 2020; FRA, 2013; Ingleby, 2012; Nielsen & Krasnik, 2010)

Hřešánová and Glajchová (2018) point out that in addition to factors such as gender, sexuality, social class, ethnicity, or age, the position of vulnerability on the part of healthcare recipients is conditioned by more variable factors such as contextual and situational communication capacity. Thus, the lack of language skills and the unavailability of interpreting services can constitute a barrier to communication in the context of healthcare, which in turn reinforces the position of vulnerability in migrants. Even some migrants entitled to Czech public health insurance by their status are not in the system due to a lack of awareness. Drbohlav and Dzúrová (2017) show that 30% of Ukrainian migrants with permanent residency or asylum and 50% of migrants eligible for public insurance due to their employment status were not in the system. Thus, it appears that insufficient orientation restrains migrants from accessing equal opportunities. Merely providing the possibility of equal access does not guarantee actual equality unless it is accompanied by sufficient awareness about the system (Dzúrová, Winkler, Drbohlav, 2014; FRA, 2013).

However, the most disadvantaged are those migrants who do not have access to public health insurance, which is a condition that stems directly from the legislation. The Czech legislation directly requires foreigners to be insured before they can even obtain a residence permit. Most migrants living in the Czech Republic are eligible for public health insurance, i.e., persons with permanent residence in the Czech Republic, all persons with citizenship of an EU member state, foreigners who are employed by a company registered in the Czech Republic, refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection as well as applicants for international protection, and foreigners whose health care is guaranteed by a bilateral or multilateral international treaty concluded with the Czech Republic (Sec. 2 of Act No. 48/1997 Coll., on health insurance). The group excluded from public health insurance thus consists mainly of migrants who are family members of migrants from third countries, foreigners who run businesses in the Czech Republic or operate as tradesmen, and some students studying in the Czech Republic.

Health insurance for foreigners residing in the Czech Republic, who are excluded from public health insurance, is regulated by the Act on Residence of Foreigners. The Act distinguishes between 1) insurance of emergency and urgent care and 2) complex health insurance. Emergency and urgent care insurance is intended for foreigners who apply for a short-term visa and plan to stay in the Czech Republic for less than 90 days – these are mainly tourists. Complex

health insurance is designed especially for long-term residents. It covers both outpatient care and preventive healthcare. This set-up of complex private health insurance appears significantly disproportionate for foreigners without the right to public health insurance. They are in a very disadvantaged or even discriminatory position. The law does not provide them with many rights and protections since the only parameter regulated by law for commercial health insurance is the minimum amount of coverage. In other areas, the regulation is very restricted, leaving discretion in setting the terms and conditions of insurance and the exclusions from insurance. Therefore, having a health insurance contract does not guarantee that the relevant insurance company will reimburse the migrant for health care. The two basic types of exclusions are 1) exclusions from insurance relating to types of illness and medical treatment and 2) exclusions from insurance relating to the causes or other circumstances of the insured event. The exclusions often include diabetes, haemodialysis, chronic renal failure, congenital defects, especially in children, treatment of addictions including any related complications, venereal diseases and AIDS, and treatment of clients in specialised treatment institutions. Also, some types of treatments and care are usually not covered. In these cases, the migrant needs to take out an extra type of insurance, e.g., insurance for pregnancy, postnatal care for newborns, or purchase ineligible treatments separately. Such additional insurance is, nevertheless, typically expensive and represents an unreasonable financial burden on the migrant's part and, for example, constitutes a barrier to giving birth in the Czech Republic for migrant women. Regarding the exclusions relating to the causes or other circumstances of an insured event, it is never clear in advance what all such "causes" and "circumstances" will be considered by the insurer. Another relatively common problem is the possibility of terminating the contract with the insurance company. The termination does not have to be justified by the insurance company. Although there is a notice period for protection, the foreigner is again without proper insurance after the period expires. The case may be, for example, if the insurance company learns of the patient's diagnosis and terminates the contract. Furthermore, private insurance companies do not have a legal obligation to offer an insurance policy, which creates a specifically unfavourable situation for people with pre-existing health problems and long-term illness, as it is difficult to impossible for them to find insurance that covers care associated with these health problems, or sometimes any health insurance at all. The group of people most at risk of being uninsurable includes people with mental illness, nervous disorders, children with birth defects, and people with diseases such as cirrhosis, tuberculosis, or cancer. (Buchtová et al., 2016; ECRI, 2020; FRA, 2013; Malmusi et al., 2014; OPU, 2016; Schebelle et al., 2013) One elementary thesis of law is that rights and duties are correlative, i.e., the duty should derive

correlatively from the right. Nevertheless, as can be seen, the right to arrange insurance for all foreigners is not secured by law. I would also argue that health is one of the fundamental elements of human integrity and that health services should be accessible to all segments of society based on the right to health. Having a system that ensures some groups of people inadequate access or even a lack of access to healthcare is worrisome since it can undermine their current health due to the inability to mitigate acute illnesses or delays in diagnosis and treatment, which lead to the worsening of illnesses or their transition to chronic conditions.

4. Socioeconomic status

The socioeconomic status of migrants plays a crucial role in shaping their position within Czech society. The status, defined by a combination of social and economic factors, including income, education, and occupation, serves as a key indicator of an individual's or group's standing on the socioeconomic scale. Examining the socioeconomic status of migrants is vital for understanding the complex social dynamics at play, as it can unveil disparities in resource access and highlight issues of privilege, power, and control. By analysing how the migrant population in the Czech Republic does in terms of income, occupation, and education (the primary drivers of socioeconomic status (Wilson et al., 2021)), we can gain valuable insights into the factors contributing to the potentially disadvantaged position of certain groups of migrants.

As explored in the previous chapter, migration represents an element of vulnerability in relation to the home society. In the socioeconomic area, it potentially translates into a lack of awareness of resources, power, social status, and lower established cultural and social capital (Spencer, Acik-Toprak, Fox & Deakin, 2015). The legal and political status of migrants can limit their rights and opportunities, be it in connection with their stay in the new country, their work, or their access to the social system (Blazek, 2014; Greve et al., 2016). Migrants face gaps in key areas such as employment, poverty, social exclusion, and housing. Firstly, a larger proportion of migrants, as compared to the native population, is at risk of poverty and social exclusion (39.0% among migrants vs. 19.5% among natives). Migrants are also more likely to live in deprived housing conditions and overcrowded houses – the share of people that live in overcrowded dwellings is 14.2% among natives and 27.6% among migrants. In addition, there is an 8.8% housing cost overburden rate among natives vs. 19.1% among migrants (European Commission, 2020; OECD, 2018). There is also a group of migrants who are concentrated in large industrial parks, where services (such as health care, language courses, housing, etc.) are less accessible but where they also have fewer chances for social integration into the majority population (ECRI, 2020). Nonetheless, it appears that with time and relocations, most migrant groups diffuse within space and gradually stabilize their housing arrangements, the exception being, e.g., the Vietnamese (Janská & Bernard, 2018). We also observe the disadvantages in education among children and young migrants. Compulsory primary schooling ensures access to it, but the situation is different at higher levels of the education system. Young migrants from third countries who want access to secondary education need a residence permit. That this is

a barrier to education for them is shown by the fact that pupils with a migration background are under-represented in secondary schools (CESCR, 2022), as well as they have a higher drop-out rate (8.9% drop-out rate among young native people vs. 22.9% among young migrants) (European Commission, 2020).

Immigration status may be linked with a disadvantaged economic position in the society of the destination country as well as migrants create a possibly marginalised group in the labour market. The legislative framework creates unequal conditions in the labour market for different types of foreign workers. Foreign employees with citizenship of the European Union, EEA, and Switzerland have the same status as Czech employees in the Czech labour market. Foreigners with permanent residence, foreigners granted international protection, foreigners staying in the Czech Republic on the basis of a temporary residence permit for family reunification, foreigners who are continuously preparing for a future profession on the territory of the Czech Republic, foreigners who are clergymen of a church or religious society registered in the Czech Republic foreigners sent to the territory of the Czech Republic by their foreign employer based on a contract with a Czech legal person, solely for the purpose of improving their skills and qualifications necessary for the performance of their work with the foreign employer, do not need a work permit. Employees from third countries whose access to the labour market is restricted can obtain work permits only 1) after considering the situation on the labour market and 2) after completing an administrative process in which they apply for an employment and residence permit – Employee Card, Blue Card, Intra-Corporate Transferred Employee Card or an Employment Permit (Čížinský et al., 2014; Valenta & Drbohlav, 2018b). The administrative complexity of this process, coupled with frequent corrupt practices, leads some foreign job seekers to look for other options, e.g., to obtain work and residence permits in Poland with subsequent transfer to the Czech Republic or to acquire a trade license in a less administratively demanding process (Valenta & Drbohlav, 2018b). Another barrier to employing foreigners is the lack of awareness among employers. It is evident in the case of foreigners with permanent residence who have free access to the Czech labour market and for whom there are no special legal and administrative requirements for employment (except for the need to report to the Labour Office) but whom employers are also often reluctant to employ (Sokačová, 2014). A comparison of migrants with the Czech population reveals differences also in their working lives. On average, for Czechs, the five working days week is common, for Ukrainians, the six working days week, and for Vietnamese, the seven working days week. The average income of

the various population groups also differs, with Ukrainians typically declaring a significantly lower income than the average in the Czech Republic (Ezzeddine-Lukšíková et al., 2006).

It is necessary to understand labour migration in the context of the Czech economy, which is characterised by an extraordinarily low unemployment rate and labour shortages, especially in many sectors of the economy and for specific positions that are not in demand among the Czech population. The Czech Republic is, therefore, considered labour absorbing, i.e., its economy attracts an extra workforce, which goes against the widespread narrative of migrants taking jobs from the native population – most migrants do not compete with the Czech workforce. Labour migration appears to be in the state's interest – employers get the employees they need, legally working people pay taxes, the economy is stimulated by productive work, and the country's industrial production is increasing. The demand for foreign labour is expected to grow, either as a solution to the structural shortage of own workforce in positions not sought by the Czechs or the highly specialised positions requiring professional qualification. The trend is also likely to be reinforced by demographic developments, especially the ageing of the population. Although migrants usually find work opportunities quite easily, the specific segments of labour market primarily occupied by migrant workers are characterised by prevailing jobs with low social status (workers in the building industry, cleaners, servants), low pay levels, lack of opportunities for upward mobility, and poor working conditions. (Baglioni & Calò, 2023; ECRI, 2020; Ezzeddine-Lukšíková et al., 2006; Gasper & Truong, 2013; Greve et al., 2016; Valenta & Drbohlav, 2018b)

The domestic population alone cannot meet the need for low-skilled labour – the Czech Republic relies on migrant workers in essential occupations. However, its approach to immigration primarily focuses on meeting the country's economic needs through temporary workers. The government views immigrant labour as a short-term solution that can be adjusted based on economic demands. This policy treats immigrant workers more like a commodity than as potential long-term residents or citizens. It aims to provide labour for the country's job market while limiting the government's responsibility to offer services to these workers. At the same time, the policy tries to appease political groups that oppose immigration. As a result, immigrants are often seen as temporary help rather than people who might build careers and lives in the Czech Republic. The policy creates a barrier for third-country nationals to integration and equal treatment and keeps them in lower-status or marginal positions. It is due to its limited scope of rights and opportunities and the creation of a system of hierarchy where

some groups have more rights than others. (Baglioni & Calò, 2023; Christou & Kofman, 2022; Čížinský et al., 2014; Drbohlav & Janurová, 2019)

Migrants are often employed in sectors that can be classified as high risk for labour exploitation. The term “severe forms of labour exploitation” denotes “*work situations that deviate significantly from standard working conditions as defined by legislation or other binding legal instruments, concerning in particular remuneration, working hours, leave entitlements, health and safety standards and decent treatment, and which are criminal violations under the legislation of the EU Member State where the exploitation occurs*” (FRA, 2019a, 11). Risk factors that enhance the chances of the occurrence of labour exploitation for migrants are irregular residence situation, dependence on the employer concerning the residence permit, economic vulnerability (poverty, indebtedness, profound financial motivation to maintain the job, especially within the context of obligations towards the relatives in the home country), lack of information on legal standards and labour rights, lack of knowledge of the language, lack of workplace inspections and discrimination. Another factor that increases the risk of labour exploitation is obtaining employment through recruitment agencies and intermediaries. The risk is exacerbated when the employee depends on the employer or an intermediary for transport, accommodation, visa, or information. (Baglioni & Calò, 2023; Blazek, 2014; FRA, 2019a; Greve et al., 2016; Sokačová, 2014)

Some groups of migrants who do not yet have a permanent residence permit are at a disadvantage because of how easily they can find themselves in an irregular situation. Foreigners (especially third-country nationals who do not yet have permanent residence) reside in the Czech Republic for a certain purpose. If this purpose ceases, the state has the right to revoke their residence permit. The stay of labour migrants in the Czech Republic is, therefore, strongly linked to employment. For example, if the holder of an employment card loses her job, her residence permit may be withdrawn under § 46e of the Residence of Foreigners Act. The possibility of obtaining new employment depends on receiving a new permit from the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic. Furthermore, in most cases, a change of employer, according to paragraph 7, § 42g of the Residence of Foreigners Act, is possible only after six months from the issuance of the employment card. The fact that the loss of employment also means the possibility of losing the right of residence in the Czech Republic establishes a great power imbalance between the employer and the migrant worker as the setup strengthens the position of the employer, who can keep the migrant at a disadvantage through the threat of deportation. It creates a vulnerable position for the migrant because of the fear that they could

lose their jobs and, if they do not find new ones, subsequently lose their residence permits. This configuration often leads migrants to endure substandard working conditions and rights violations. The interrelationship between the residence between residence and employment status can trap migrants in a cycle of precariousness and uncertainty. It makes it hard for them to improve their social and economic standing over time since their individual choices and employment opportunities are limited. Losing a job is not an option for some migrants due to the situation in their home country, and so it may mean the need to remain in exploitative employment. (FRA, 2011; FRA, 2019a; Greve et al., 2016; Sokačová, 2014)

Exploitation is not only faced by foreigners. However, it is documented that they are more likely to be found in these situations due to their weaker position. Specific examples of violations of labour laws by employers include non-payment of wages or overtime, violations of the permitted length of working time and related falsification of attendance records, pressure to pay additional fees to employment agencies, inadequate working conditions, verbal and physical violence, or withholding of personal documents. We have reports of the violations of the rights of Vietnamese workers employed through agencies – be it non-payment of wage supplements, bonuses, and wage refunds, unlawful wage deductions, putting a limit on the maximums of hourly rates by agencies, or reduction of the hours worked (Krebs & Pechová, 2009). In their research on migrants from Bulgaria, Romania, and Moldova, Jelínková and Fendrychová (2014) showed that the problem of non-payment of wages is not isolated – 15% of their respondents experienced it. Ukrainians then often have their lives strongly linked to work – their employer frequently provides them with accommodation and food and mediates legal, social, or health services, which creates a strongly unequal power relationship. Lack of social capital and isolation lead to the migrant's dependence on this system (Blazek, 2014).

Generally, some employers abuse the system and force migrants into undeclared work while having only part of their work formalised. Other times, they force them to work as freelancers, even in positions where they should otherwise be employed. Poorly designed government policies for legal recruitment don't match the need for affordable and adaptable workers in construction, farming, hotels, and restaurants. Additionally, high taxes on employment make it expensive for businesses to hire workers legally. These factors contribute to undeclared work, quasiregular economics, and irregular migration. Typically, some employers abuse the system and force migrants into undeclared work while having only part of their work formalised. Other times, they force them to work as freelancers, even in positions where they should otherwise be employed. For employers, this system is preferable because it does not allow employees to

enjoy the same protections and rights as they would in their role as an employee. (Bareš et al., 2015; Drbohlav & Valenta, 2014; Sokačová, 2014)

Public institutions have a crucial role in preventing and addressing labour exploitation. Nevertheless, their impact is hindered by migrants' low social connections, language barriers, financial constraints, and negative experiences with authorities. It is essential to focus on building trust between the institutions and migrants, as it is common for migrants not to turn to any organisation or institution for help. Effective labour inspections are a potential solution, but only when conducted with sensitivity to workers' rights and needs. The approach should include clear communication about the purpose of inspections, informing workers about their rights, and connecting them with support services. It should also consider the specific situation of those foreigners whose residence permit is tied to one employer and who are controlled by the fear of losing their job and, subsequently, their residence permit. It can empower exploited workers to participate in proceedings against abusive employers and feel supported in the process. (Blazek, 2014; FRA, 2018; Jelínková & Fendrychová, 2014; OPU, 2016)

Another problem we encounter in the context of migrant labour is limited opportunities in the host society and migrants' lower possibility to use their human capital (especially educational attainment). These issues are, along with low wages, linked to foreigners' dissatisfaction with life in the Czech Republic. The inability to use human capital refers to the issue of the overqualification of migrants, which is an integral part of foreign employment in Czechia. "Overqualification" can be understood as a vertical mismatch between the level of education (or professional qualification) attained and the level of education required by the job performed or the requirements for a new job. Migrants are more likely to be over-qualified for their work than the native-borns. Key factors explaining why overqualification is more prevalent among immigrants include a poor understanding of how the host society works and often a lack of language skills. The uncertain legal status of the immigrant and the lack of social ties in the destination country also play a significant role. The legal status of immigrants at the very beginning of their stay is often associated with limited mobility in the labour market, as well as with a limited ability to assert their labour rights and claim social support, unemployment assistance, or retraining. Migrants with permanent residency are twice as likely to find a skilled job and have half the risk of ending up at the bottom of the labour market compared to long-term migrants. Institutional barriers can thus be seen as an important determinant of migrants' job status. The lack of social ties in the majority population is often compensated for by participation in the so-called ethnic economy, which, while it may have a positive impact on

general employment, may also lead to a greater risk of over-qualification among skilled immigrants. Ethnic economies are often oriented toward low-skilled jobs and are associated with labour market segregation. Another important barrier to the application of an immigrant's qualifications is the recognition of education obtained abroad. For example, according to research carried out in Prague, up to 68% of male and 40 % of female migrants answered that they did not have nostrification of their diploma (OPU, 2016). The issue is, however, not related only to the institutional recognition of foreign education but also to the limited transferability of some types of education and the subjective recognition of the quality of foreign education and qualifications by employers. Many experts point out that the phenomenon of the overqualification of foreign workers is, along with other types of discrimination (or inequality), a natural part of many labour markets in destination immigration countries. Nevertheless, I consider the overqualification of foreign workers to be a significant problem that causes a loss of human capital for both the host and source country and for the workers themselves. (Leontiyeva, 2014; Leontiyeva & Pokorná, 2014; OECD, 2018; Sokačová, 2014; Valenta & Drbohlav, 2018b)

If we look at how many immigrants are overqualified, data from 2016 show that almost 60% of university-educated foreign workers found employment in jobs requiring a university degree. The remaining 40% are thus not using their educational potential to a greater or lesser extent. 15% of university-educated foreign workers are active in positions requiring a secondary education with a high school diploma. In addition, almost 11% of foreign workers with a university education are active in positions requiring primary education. We observe differences between the nationalities. Generally, people from non-EU countries are much more likely to work in jobs that do not align with their level of education, not only compared to the majority population in Czechia but also to the immigrants from EU Member States. But there are exceptions to this general notion. Over 80% of college-educated Indians apply their educational potential adequately. For comparison, almost 76% of Germans use their educational level. However, less than half of similarly educated Ukrainians do so. Significantly, more than a quarter of university-educated Ukrainians work in jobs requiring only primary education. Vietnamese are in a specific situation, as their high education and knowledge of the Czech language do not have the same impact on gaining employment opportunities as it does for other groups of the population. This is largely because Vietnamese in the Czech Republic operate in an ethnic economy, i.e., they often work within their community and family businesses. (Leontiyeva & Pokorná, 2014; Sokačová, 2014; Valenta & Drbohlav, 2018b)

The “search and match theory” explains the difference between educational attainment and the qualifications needed for employment as only a temporary phenomenon that is prevalent upon entry into the labour market and that derives from unawareness, lack of experience, language barriers, etc. (Valenta & Drbohlav, 2018b). Hence, it assumes that over time, migrant workers will find new positions closer to their educational background. Contrary to this assumption, Valenta and Drbohlav (2018a), in their research conducted between 2009 and 2016, revealed that highly educated Ukrainian workers in the Czech Republic struggled to advance in their careers. While there was an improvement in some workers getting more skilled jobs that better matched their education, progress was limited. The study found that the type of job these workers first got when entering the Czech job market was crucial in shaping their future careers. They often get stuck in lower-skilled or unskilled jobs if they start in these positions. This pattern suggests that many educated Ukrainian workers remain in jobs below their skill level, unable to fully use their education and abilities in their careers in the Czech Republic. If looking at the same problem from a broader perspective, we can identify the causes that led to this development. Migrants’ acceptance of low-skilled positions upon arrival in the Czech Republic is largely influenced by migrant policy and the rules of entry and residence. Consequently, their migrant status and precarious position in the country keep them in the same job. The situation of the migrant gradually becomes permanent for many different reasons, psychological, such as a possible loss of motivation or because the migrant gradually loses skills during the period when he works outside his original sector. The interruption of the career trajectory emerges as a significant determinant that increases the chances that a migrant will not do a job that matches her qualifications (Leontiyeva & Pokorná, 2014). Overqualification, therefore, may be a permanent attribute of immigrants. It should not be associated only with individual factors or the type of labour migration to the Czech Republic, as it may also indicate a failure of integration processes. Integration policy should encourage migrants’ upward mobility and provide them with means to improve their skills, thus ensuring a way to enhance the quality of their economic opportunities exists. It should not be omitted that the full labour integration of migrants would not only benefit them but would also result in higher contributions to national pension schemes, national welfare, etc.

To close this section, I would like to mention the Neoclassical economic theory in the current context of the migrants’ limited possibility of using their full potential and economic opportunities. It assumes that migration is initiated to improve the migrant’s quality of life and to gain economic profit through the possibility of finding suitable employment while

anticipating the opportunity to utilise their education and professional skills (Ezzeddine-Lukšíková et al., 2006). However, the complexity of the migration can be seen in the example of Ukrainians, who often do not use their qualifications in their jobs, perceive the dissimilarity of their working conditions, and yet are satisfied with their work situation. I believe that it should also be considered that migrants have even fewer economic opportunities in their country of origin, so accepting seemingly unsuitable employment still represents upward social and economic mobility. Equally, it must be considered that the decision to migrate was their own, autonomous, and voluntary (although voluntariness is not dichotomous, the lack of options to ensure economic security may not give other options than migration). The motivation for this step is to try to improve their situation, which for most of them happens. As a result, we can see that although many foreigners are unsuccessful in finding suitable work opportunities, most still wish to remain in the Czech Republic (Schebelle et al., 2013).

5. Gender and the specific situation of migrant women

At the beginning of this part of the text, I would like to briefly mention global inequalities that are at play. Seemingly neutral migration policies can have gendered impacts. By prioritizing formal skills and education, which women are less likely to have due to global gender inequalities in education, these policies effectively create barriers for women seeking to migrate. It not only limits their migration opportunities but can also affect their ability to seek asylum or establish residency in the country, as the migration policy is set up in such a way that prioritises migrants who are considered skilled. We can also observe the effects of structural conditions that may force women to leave their children in the country of origin to ensure the transfer of money to the family in the country of origin. Often, she does it in the process of labour migration through care for another family in the destination country (ENoMW, 2020; Ezzeddine, 2019).

If we then look at the situation of migrant women, we see that there is a need to recognise the intersection of gender inequalities and health, ethnicity, religion, nationality, and migration status and seek to address the multiple forms of disadvantages in all areas of political, economic and social life migrant women face. They rank among those at high risk of poverty. Due to a combination of factors, they are often pushed into a vulnerable position in the labour market and accept substandard working conditions and lower-skilled jobs despite their qualifications. Their disadvantaged position makes it harder for them to assert their rights or seek better opportunities. Working in precarious employment also translates into other social disadvantages as it, for example, means losing the right to social benefits, such as holidays, sickness benefits, maternity benefits, and attendance allowance (CEDAW, 2016; Hašková, Křížková, Dudová, 2015; Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2021). Migrant women are disadvantaged in the area of health, too.

Their health is worse than that of migrant men. They face the combined weight of socio-economic (worse position in the labour market, more at risk of discrimination) and gender-related challenges (a heavy strain of household and care responsibilities), along with the effects of marginalisation. All these factors are added stressors with potentially negative effects on migrant women's health. Gender appears to be a more influential parameter than migration status if examining health outcomes on people, as women have worse health outcomes than men, whether they are migrants or not. Furthermore, exclusion from public health insurance of migrants from non-EU countries disadvantages migrant women more than migrant men,

especially in relation to gynaecological and obstetric care. (CEDAW, 2016; Drbohlav & Džúrová, 2017; Džúrová & Drbohlav, 2014; Gkiouleka & Huijts, 2020; Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2021)

Another major disadvantage women are more likely to face stems from the migration policy regarding family reunification since women more often come through a family migration scheme. Migration policy that enables this migration route then creates a relationship of dependence on the “sponsor,” which most often leads to women’s dependence on men (FRA, 2019b; Herrera, 2013). Migrant women are typically dependent on men not only for their residence permits but also financially and socially because of the lack of a social network of contacts. Due to these multiple dependencies, migrant women end up in a very vulnerable position, especially related to domestic violence. The problem is that the temporary residence permit of family members of third-country nationals is linked to the purpose of residence. If the victim of domestic violence comes to the country for family reunification and decides to leave the joint household or start divorce proceedings, he or she does not fulfil the purpose of their residence permit anymore. The inability to provide proof of the continued purpose of stay then may become a reason for initiating proceedings to revoke the residence permit or may be a reason for not extending the residence permit. A foreigner is entitled to apply for a change of purpose of stay only after three years in the territory. In the case of domestic violence within the marriage, it is exceptionally possible to consider a change of purpose according to the provision that sets out the conditions for divorce, namely the condition of five years of marriage and at least two years of residence in the Czech Republic. But even then, it is often difficult for the migrant when applying for an extension of stay since the foreigner must prove a relatively high means of residence. Family members of EU citizens are in a different position as their residence permit can be retained if the divorce is due to particularly grave circumstances, which explicitly include domestic violence. The administrative authority has an explicit obligation to examine the proportionality of the impact of the decision of residence revocation on the foreigner’s private and family life and to consider the occurrence of domestic violence and take them into account in the decision process. If the marriage lasted less than three years and the family member became a victim of domestic violence during the marriage, the administrative authority will not revoke the temporary residence. Similarly, this protection is provided in the event of the dissolution of the partnership. Permanent residency, as well as residency of EU citizens, are not tied to fulfilling a purpose, so their status is equalized in the context of domestic violence with the position of Czech victims. The impact of this system setup is documented by

the proportionally decreasing willingness of migrants to endure oppression from their partners with increasing length of stay in the Czech Republic and the fact that migrants who already have permanent residence in the Czech Republic show the greatest willingness to address the issue of domestic violence. (Duba, Faltová, Macková & Nečasová, 2016) The complex interplay between immigration status and vulnerability to domestic violence emphasises the need for more comprehensive protections for migrants, especially migrant women in abusive situations.

5.1 Socioeconomic status and migrant women position in the labour market

To understand the economic situation of migrant women, I will first present the situation of women in the Czech Republic in general and then move on to the specifics of the situation resulting from the combination of migrant status and gender. According to the EIGE (2022), progress in gender equality in the Czech Republic is slower than in other EU countries. The Czech Republic performs particularly poorly in the domains of work (segregation and quality of work) and power (political and economic decision-making). CESCR (2022) recognised key disadvantages of women in the Czech labour market, i.e., 1) persisting gender pay gap, 2) women's lower participation rate in the labour market, 3) the high representation of women in professions and labour sectors traditionally viewed as "female," 4) continuing underrepresentation of women in managerial and decision-making positions, 5) women face more problems with work-life balance as they take on the role of household carer, and specifically encounter various obstacles when returning to the labour market after maternity leave. The employment opportunities of women who become mothers, are further limited by the unavailability of flexible working arrangements (e.g., the share of part-time employment in Czechia is below average among the EU countries) and affordable childcare services for children below two years. Even public childcare services for older preschool children are not always available due to the limited number of places in these facilities. It is typical for women with young children to work under less secure conditions – on fixed-term contracts, agreements, or even without a contract. Precarious forms of work involve insecurity and harm women's economic situation, leading to their economic non-sufficiency. The disruption of women's career path in connection with motherhood poses a threat to their future careers and employment opportunities but also increases the risk of poverty in old age. Women's disadvantage in the labour market is grounded in the socio-cultural environment, whether it is the influence of cultural patterns and gender stereotypes (for example, the "male breadwinner concept" and the

perception of the unimportance of women's income, which is thus, seen as supplementary, or the stereotype about the lower productivity of mothers of young children), low involvement of men in housekeeping, childcare and care of other family members. (Deloitte Advisory, 2020; Hašková, Křížková, Dudová, 2015; Koldinská, 2015; Křížková, Hašková, Pospíšilová, 2018)

According to the Statistical Office, the gender pay gap in the Czech Republic was 18.8% in 2019, while the unjustified gender pay gap (i.e., the difference in remuneration for the same work in the same workplace), according to various surveys, reaches around 11%. This value is among the highest within the EU, and the Czech difference in the remuneration for the same job is significantly higher compared to EU countries, where it averages around 5%. The GPG persists despite the existence of the Anti-Discrimination Act and other relevant legislation like the Labour Code that should guarantee equal treatment to all employees. The main reason for the persistence of the gender pay gap is the vertical and horizontal gender work segregation. Wage levels in typically male occupations are higher than in traditionally female occupations when comparing similarly skilled workers as occupations considered female tend to be undervalued financially or even seen as low-skilled since these skills are often perceived as naturally acquired by women through socialization. Sectors where women predominate are, for example, finance (GPG 38%), education (GPG 22%), and health and social care (GPG 24%). At the same time, women mostly do not reach managerial and decision-making positions, with only 25% of managers and 15% of top executives being women. The gender pay gap reaches the highest levels at managerial positions, positions where men predominate, the wages are higher, and the highest degree of qualification is required. For comparison, the GPG for people with primary education is 15%, whereas for persons with a university degree is 26%. Hence, even as the educational attainment of women in the Czech Republic increases (women, on average, achieve higher educational attainment than men), the GPG has been widening. The fact that gaining knowledge and skills does not translate into a better labour position for women is illustrated by comparing their situation after completing vocational training with that of men. While men who complete the training are likely to move into better-paying jobs, women tend to end up in low-paying jobs in feminised fields such as care services. The GPG also varies by age group. It increases significantly from 30 onwards and peaks among those aged 35–44, indicating a substantial maternity-related penalty for women. (CESCR 2022; Deloitte Advisory, 2020; Greve et al., 2016; Koldinská, 2015; Křížková et al., 2021; Misra, 2021; Spadavecchia & Yu, 2021)

Let us proceed to the specifics of the situation of migrant women. They often face multiple layers of disadvantage and unique barriers in the labour market due to both gender and their migratory status. Therefore, migrant women may face even more disadvantages than either non-migrant women or migrant men. Within migrant communities, women fare worse economically than men from the same communities (Ezzeddine, 2011; Gasper & Truong, 2013; Heymann, Sprague & Raub, 2023). Even when employed, they often have jobs that are insecure, temporary, or otherwise vulnerable. Foreign-born women often have to accept lower-skilled jobs despite their qualifications. Therefore, they are more likely to work in jobs below their skill or educational level if compared to other groups. It is illustrated, for example, by data from the EU that show that 40.7% of migrant women are overqualified for their jobs. The share is much higher in comparison with the share of 21.1% among the natives (ENoMW, 2020). Overqualification is particularly prevalent among women who came through a family reunification scheme. This is because they tend to have lower proficiency in the Czech language, weaker social networks, and more responsibilities in terms of childcare and household chores (European Commission, 2020; Spadavecchia & Yu, 2021). Women are also primarily the ones who give up their career aspirations to accompany men who pursue their careers, which is perceived as a priority (Ezzeddine, 2011; Spadavecchia & Yu, 2021). Another significant variable that changes the situation of many migrant women is motherhood. It intersects with migratory status and gender and thus, creates an added obstacle to their successful participation in the labour market. Migrant women are more likely to have an insufficient support network in the new country and, therefore, motherhood may have an even more negative impact on their ability to participate in the labour market than for other women, for whom the effect is already substantial (Spadavecchia & Yu, 2021).

Migrant women are characteristically segmented into several economic sectors, traditionally female-dominated. They occupy the marginal spheres of the economy and even tend to hold certain typical job positions, such as cleaning, nursing, hospitality, care for the elderly and persons with disabilities, or domestic help. Hence, many of them face a lower appreciation of their capital, which is typical for skills viewed as feminine. Furthermore, there's a high proportion of informal, unregulated, or irregular work in these sectors, especially domestic work. Migrant women often show higher performance and willingness to work under conditions that are worse than those of Czech female workers. The segmented labour market is associated with low socio-occupational mobility, i.e., there is little to no improvement in the employment situation associated with the length of stay in the country. Economic pressures and lack of

childcare support restrict migrant women's access to education, skills assessments, integration programmes, retraining, and professional development, as they usually do not consider the fact that women are involved in childcare. It should also be taken into account that many migrant women come for family reunification and that the policy on access to health services (the need to pay for commercial insurance in the event of unemployment, which also has to be paid to the children) and the requirement to prove high financial resources to stay, forcing them to keep their jobs even if they are substandard. Thus, migrant women often remain in vulnerable positions in the job market and face a higher risk of unemployment, leading to the creation of a cycle of marginalisation and exploitation. Migrant women are also more likely to face discrimination in the workplace, as exemplified by data that show that 29% of Ukrainians vs. 4% of Czechs among men and 38% of Ukrainians vs. 7% of Czechs among women experienced work-related discrimination. (Dzúrová & Drbohlav, 2014; European Commission, 2020; Ezzeddine, 2011; Ezzeddine, 2014; Ezzeddine et al., 2014; Greve et al., 2016; FRA, 2011; Kofman et al., 2009; OPU, 2016)

6. Discussion

The intersectional analysis reveals both the potential and current limitations of policy approaches to migrant integration in the Czech Republic. While intersectionality may be used as a powerful tool for policy design, capable of highlighting complex interactions between various forms of disadvantage, current policies tend to address inequalities in isolation. For instance, frameworks targeting poverty and social exclusion overlook the critical dimensions of ethnicity and citizenship status. Moreover, there is a notable absence of a systematic evaluation of integration policy outcomes, emphasising the need for improved monitoring and assessment of existing programmes (Jelínková & Valenta, 2022; OECD, 2018). The scarcity of intersectional considerations in migrant integration policies perpetuates obstacles in securing formal rights for immigrants and addressing multiple intersecting forms of discrimination. Although policymakers increasingly recognize the unique challenges faced by migrants at the intersection of various categories – as evidenced in documents like Social Inclusion Strategy 2021–2030 by MoLSA or the Concept for Integration of Foreigners by MOI – the awareness rarely translates into concrete policy proposals. The gap between acknowledgment and action raises concerns about the potential depoliticization of intersectionality, where it risks being reduced to a mere checklist of identities without due consideration of the underlying power dynamics and social structures (Bastia, 2014). Such an approach could critically undermine efforts to address how different forms of oppression intersect and reinforce each other, ultimately limiting the effectiveness of integration policies.

The approach to migration in the Czech Republic is significantly influenced by a security-focused discourse primarily framed by the Ministry of the Interior. A shift towards policies that prioritize the needs of foreigners from an integration perspective is crucial. Current restrictive immigration policies have led to the systematic marginalisation of certain migrant groups, particularly those in precarious labour situations. The approach, which aims to maximize economic benefits from migration at minimal cost, overlooks the importance of long-term integration. The resulting uncertainty for foreigners hinders their ability and willingness to engage with the Czech language, culture, and society. A more holistic view of migration is needed, one that goes beyond labour market optimization and economic growth. Instead, policies should focus on fostering integration, encouraging migrants' engagement in various communities, and promoting overall social cohesion (OPU, 2016). The state bears the responsibility for creating conditions beneficial to foreigners' inclusion and supporting their

active participation in social life. However, the current weak systemic anchoring of migrant integration, characterised by a heavy reliance on project-based funding, creates uncertainty and discontinuity in integration efforts (Baglioni & Calò, 2023; Jelínková & Valenta, 2022). This approach undermines the long-term effectiveness of integration initiatives and needs to be addressed to ensure sustainable and comprehensive integration policies.

The intersectional analysis carried out in the current thesis highlighted a particularly vulnerable group – migrants whose residence permits are tied to a single employer. This dependency creates a power imbalance that can lead to exploitation and abuse. It is crucial to remove the link between residence permits and specific employers. Allowing migrant workers to change employers freely would foster competition among employers and significantly reduce migrants' vulnerability to exploitation. One potential solution is the implementation of sector-based permits, which would enable migrants to switch jobs within their fields without jeopardizing their residence status. Additionally, considering short-term residence permits for job-seeking in cases of exploitation could provide a safety net for vulnerable workers (FRA, 2019a). The state must also intensify efforts to enforce labour laws effectively, ensuring the protection of migrant workers' rights and guaranteeing adequate working conditions. While increased labour inspections are necessary, it is equally important to create an environment where migrants, regardless of their legal status, feel safe reporting abuses without fear of deportation. Labour authorities should prioritize worker protection and labour rights over immigration enforcement. This approach would encourage victims of severe labour exploitation to come forward, report abuses, and seek help from monitoring authorities or law enforcement, ultimately leading to better protection for all workers and a more equitable labour market.

Another highly disadvantaged group consists of migrants who lack access to public health insurance. These individuals face significant gaps in healthcare coverage, reduced access to essential medical examinations and treatments, and consequently, an increased risk to their overall health. This setup disproportionately affects migrants with pre-existing health conditions or chronic illnesses, as well as women, particularly in relation to pregnancy and maternal care. Upholding the fundamental right to health requires ensuring equal access to healthcare services for all migrants, regardless of their legal status or documentation. This can be achieved either by extending access to public health insurance or implementing regulations that prevent private insurance companies from imposing unreasonable conditions on migrant policyholders. Such measures would not only protect the health of individual migrants but also contribute to public health outcomes and promote a more equitable society. Addressing this

healthcare disparity is crucial for upholding human rights standards and fostering the successful integration of migrant populations.

The last disadvantaged group I would like to discuss is migrant women. Despite the acknowledgment of gender dimensions in documents like the Government's Strategy for Gender Equality and the Concept for Integration of Foreigners, migration policies in the Czech Republic remain gender imbalanced. The seemingly "gender-neutral" approach often overlooks the implications of gender-segregated labour markets and socioeconomic structures, which results in policies that reproduce traditional gender roles and fail to address the specific challenges faced by migrant women. While the Concept (MOI, 2015; MOI, 2024) for Integration of Foreigners expresses interest in the status of migrant women and recognizes their vulnerable position and lower economic activity, it is insufficient in specifying concrete problems and proposing targeted solutions. The lack of comprehensive measures to promote equal opportunities and integration for migrant women, coupled with insufficient monitoring and evaluation of existing initiatives, hinders progress towards gender equality in migration contexts.

Several key actions are necessary to address these shortcomings. Firstly, there is a need for gender-disaggregated data to facilitate a deeper understanding of the gender dimensions of migration issues. Consistent and targeted anti-discrimination efforts, coupled with regular monitoring, are crucial for identifying and addressing the specific problems faced by migrant women. Migration and integration policies should be reevaluated to improve migrant women's position in the labour market, working conditions, and social integration. It includes ensuring access to vocational training, language courses, and education, with considerations for childcare needs and family responsibilities. However, we must avoid regressing to a mere equal opportunities approach that neglects structural strategies (Lombardo & Verloo, 2009). Additionally, residence permit conditions should be reviewed from a gender equality perspective, addressing issues such as the dependent status of women in family reunification schemes. Importantly, provisions should be made to protect victims of domestic violence by granting independent residence permits, ensuring that fear of losing residency status does not trap women in abusive relationships. By implementing these measures, the Czech Republic can work towards a more equitable and inclusive approach to migration that recognizes and addresses the unique challenges faced by migrant women.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, examining the Czech migratory context and the situation of migrants residing in the country reveals the complex interplay of factors shaping migrants' experiences. By applying an intersectional approach, we've uncovered how factors such as migratory status, socioeconomic conditions, gender, and perceptions of "foreignness" create unique challenges for different migrant groups.

Current policy practices often target migrants as a homogeneous collective, overlooking crucial differences within this diverse population. However, this oversimplification can lead to ineffective policies that fail to address the specific needs of those at the intersection of multiple axes of differentiation. The intersectional approach employed in this study has proven valuable in uncovering these nuanced experiences, demonstrating its potential as a tool for developing more informed and effective migration and integration policies. By recognizing the distinct needs, causes, and routes to migration for various subgroups, policymakers can create more tailored and impactful interventions.

However, the scarcity of comprehensive data on various aspects of migrants' lives in the Czech Republic is a significant limitation of this approach. To fully leverage the benefits of an intersectional approach and address the multifaceted challenges that migrants face, it is crucial to implement more systematic data collection practices. It would enable a more nuanced understanding of the diverse migrant experiences and support the development of policies that truly reflect the needs of all subgroups within the migrant population.

In essence, while the intersectional approach offers a powerful lens for understanding and addressing the complexities of migration, its full potential can only be realized through improved data collection and a commitment to recognizing the diversity within migrant communities. By incorporating this approach to policymaking, we could work towards more inclusive, effective, and equitable migration and integration policies.

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