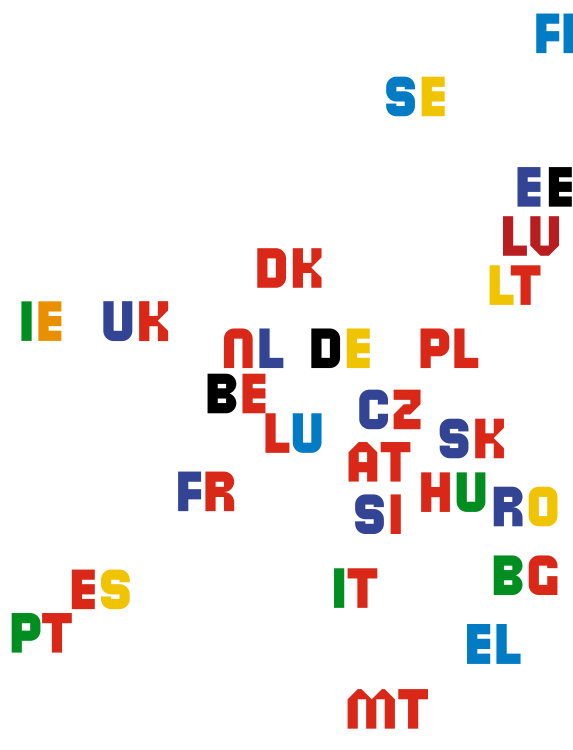


Integration of foreigners in the Czech Republic

Czech Presidency
of the Council of the EU



Integration of Foreigners – Brief History

1989 – Fundamental change of the social system in the Czech Republic; opening of borders resulting in stronger and more diversified migration flows

1990's – Integration of foreigners falling under the competence of the Ministry of the Interior

1999 – Integration of foreigners becomes a part of the government's policy (based on Czech Government Resolution No. 689 of 7 July 1999)

Definition of 15 fundamental "*Principles of Foreigners Integration Concept in the Territory of the Czech Republic*"; emphasis placed on the social aspects related to integration of foreigners

1 January 2004 – Responsibility for the implementation and coordination of the Foreigners Integration Concept was delegated from the Ministry of the Interior (MoI) to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA)

2002 – Foreigners Integration Department set up at the MoLSA

2003 – Department for Migration and Integration of foreigners set up at the MoLSA

1 August 2008 – Responsibility for implementation and coordination of the Foreigners Integration Concept was delegated back from the MoLSA to the MoI; the Foreigners Integration Unit merged with the Unit for Migration of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

State Integration Programme

This is a programme coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior. It is designed for asylum seekers and operational since 1999.

Within the programme:

- Non-governmental non-profit organizations provide Czech language courses to the asylum seekers, free of charge, and develop teaching materials in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports;
- The state provides assistance to the asylum seekers when searching for accommodation;
- Individual action plan: assistance provided by the unemployment offices when the asylum seekers enter the labour market.

I. Integration mainstreaming

In matters falling under its competence, MoLSA applies the principle of "integration mainstreaming", i.e. it takes into account the potential impact on the integration of foreigners when developing the particular departmental policies, legal regulations and measures. In 2007, these included, in particular, an amendment to Act No. 117/1995 Coll., on State Social Support, as amended, and to Act No. 111/2006 Coll., on Assistance in Material Need, as amended, which form part of Act No. 379/2007 Coll., as well as a draft act on equal treatment and legal remedies for protection against discrimination, Bill concerning the state citizenship of the Czech Republic, and Act No. 108/2006 Coll., on Social Services. Following in 2008 was primarily an amendment to Act No. 435/2004 Coll., on Employment (Act No. 306/2008 Coll.).

II. Simplification of the administrative burden related to the employment of foreigners

● System of developing and regularly updating local lists of jobs or professions, as appropriate, which prove difficult to fill in the long run

Effective as of 1 January 2009 and in the context of the so-called "green cards", if a vacant post announced by an unemployment office remains unfilled for a certain period of time (at least 1 month), this post is automatically seen as a job, for which a green card can be issued. The same applies accordingly to jobs, which are identified by the Ministry of Trade and Industry as suitable for key staff.

● Extended validity of work permits

With the adoption of the amendment to Act No. 435/2004 Coll., on Employment (Act No. 306/2008 Coll.), work permits can be issued or renewed, as appropriate, for a period of up to two years, effective as of 1 January 2009 (the current regulation provides for issuance of permits for a period of not more than 1 year).

● Simplification of rules on issuing permits to recruit employees from abroad or work permits, as appropriate

In addition to the above-mentioned possibility to extend the validity of a work permit for up to 2 years, the amendment to Act No. 435/2004 Coll., on Employment (Act No. 306/2008 Coll.), no longer requires a **medical certificate** on the foreigner's

health condition to be attached to the work permit application form. In addition, this amendment facilitates the employment of foreigners-graduates of secondary schools and universities in the Czech Republic, who no longer need work permits. The amendment includes also certain simplifications as regards the arrangements for posting foreigners-employees to work outside of the work location specified in the work permit.

The issue of **liberalizing access to the Czech labour market for foreigners studying at Czech schools and universities** was also dealt with. The final text of the new provision is, once again, included in the amendment to Act No. 435/2004 Coll., on Employment. It stipulates that foreigners studying on a daily basis in the Czech Republic to prepare for their future profession are no longer required to have a work permit for foreigners.

In order to further simplify the employment of foreigners, the above-mentioned amendment has also abolished the **institute of permits to recruit employees from abroad**, significantly reducing the administrative burden of employers who employ foreigners.

Act No. 326/1999 Coll., on the Residence of Foreigners in the Czech Republic, was also amended, allowing foreigners whose employment is terminated, without their fault, before the expiration of the work permit to stay on the territory of the Czech Republic and use the **protection period (of 60 days)** to look for a new job, provided they comply with applicable requirements. For foreigners who have worked in the Czech Republic for a certain period of time¹⁾ and lost their job without their fault, their long-term residence permit for work purposes can be withdrawn only if no new work permit is issued to them within 60 days after the day following after the employment termination date.

In view of the fact that, after the loss of their job, the foreigners will no longer meet the statutory requirements to be entitled to use health care services in the Czech Republic based on their participation in the public health insurance scheme, they will be forced to take out a commercial health insurance policy for the duration of the so-called protection period. In the event that a foreigner fails to take out such policy, the potential health care costs will not be covered, which might constitute

¹⁾ I.e. if, as of the employment termination date, a foreigner was staying in the Czech Republic for work purposes: a) for a period of at least 1 year, provided that this period was immediately preceding the employment termination, or b) for a period of less than 1 year if, as of the employment termination date, the foreigners has been residing in the Czech Republic continuously for a period of 3 years; in such cases, the period of continuous residence shall include any periods under long-stay visas (longer than 90 days) and long-stay permits.

the grounds for the proceedings to withdraw the permit for the foreigner's long-stay in the Czech Republic, even during the so-called protection period.

In the context of introducing the institute of protection period, the employer is required to inform the unemployment office on the reasons for employment termination, if the loss of job is not caused by fault on the part of the foreigner.

III. International context and engagement in international institutions

Representatives of MoLSA participate in the meetings of the European Commission's expert group on the **National Contact Points on Integration**, as well as in the technical workshops of this group. In addition, MoLSA representatives are involved in the activities carried out by the expert committees of the Council of Europe. MoLSA representatives also cooperate with the Czech Ministry of the Interior in providing the opinions of and the participation of representatives within the Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum (SCIFA) and the Migration and Expulsion Working Group of the EU Council.

The **assistance system for employment of Ukrainian citizens in the Czech Republic** was developed with the support of MoLSA and Mol. Assistant centres provide advice on the possibilities of legal employment for Ukrainian migrants in the Czech Republic, contributing to better awareness of the risk related to illegal employment among both the Czech employers and the citizens of Ukraine coming to or already staying in the Czech Republic. In addition, they provide assistance to the potential work migrants by keeping in contact with the potential employers, the embassy of the Czech Republic as well as with other bodies involved in their departure for work purposes to the Czech Republic in order to reduce the cases of abuse of these persons by entities operating outside of the legal framework.

IV. Information resources on foreigners integration and for foreigners

<http://www.cizinci.cz>: This website is operated by MoLSA since 2004. It is designed to provide information to state administration and self-government officials, non-governmental non-profit organizations, the academic public as well as the foreigners themselves and general public. An *overview of non-governmental non-profit organizations providing counselling to foreigners* was published in the section on "Information materials and guides".

This website includes also a direct link to the website of the **Czech Public Administration Portal** **<http://portal.gov.cz>** where, given the identified need to ensure sufficient information guaranteed by the state administration for third-country nationals, the section "**Foreigner**" was reviewed in 2007 in order to ensure that it efficiently serves the purpose.

Since the transfer of Coordination of the realization of the Concept of Foreigners Integration has been made both MoLSA and Ministry of Interior contribute to the content of this website.

During 2007, MoLSA prepared the second edition of the **Information Guide for Foreigners in the Czech Republic**.

In addition, an information document called "**Information for Foreigners with Permanent Residence in the Czech Republic**" was published by MoLSA in 2007 and updated in 2008. The aim of this document is to provide to the foreigners well-structured information concerning the rights and duties arising to them from the permanent residence status in the Czech Republic. The publication is intended for foreigners from non-EU countries who obtained permanent residence. The information materials include also an address book of non-governmental non-profit organizations providing counselling to foreigners, broken down by region.

Providing information on the access of foreigners to the Czech labour market on the part of the unemployment offices is, at the national level, implemented primarily through the MoLSA integrated portal at **<http://portal.mpsv.cz>** in the section called "*Foreign Employment Matters*" where information is available in several languages. Information materials are provided to unemployment offices on a continuous basis – a leaflet on "*Employment of foreigners in the Czech Republic*" was issued, with a multilingual version of leaflets on "*Important forms*

related to employment of foreigners" and "Do you want to know more about employment of foreigners in the Czech Republic?" as well as an updated leaflet on "Employment of Foreigners in the Czech Republic" being in preparation.

V. Enhancing the Czech language skills of foreigners

In 2006 and during 2007, MoLSA was engaged in a very intensive cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the MoI in order to define the conditions for teaching and testing the knowledge of the Czech language. Pursuant to Act No. 326/1999 Coll., on the Residence of Foreigners in the Czech Republic, a foreigner is – from 1 January 2009 – required to submit a permanent residence application accompanied also by a certificate proving that he/she has successfully passed a Czech language test.

VI. Support for research in Integration of Foreigners

- In the framework of the European Fund for the Integration of Third-country nationals (INTI), the Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs (RILSA), in cooperation with the Institute of Ethnology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, is implementing a research project on "INTERFACE-Immigrants and National integration strategies: developing a Trans-European Framework for Analysing Cultural and Employment-related integration".
- In cooperation with the Faculty of Social Studies at the Masaryk University in Brno, RILSA is also implementing a project on "Migrants in the Czech Republic - Position on Labour Market and Social Integration" – the completion date has been set for June 2010.
- A research on "Efficiency of Services Provided by Non-governmental Non-profit Organizations in Foreigners Integration", financed from public funds to support research and development, was completed in August 2008.
- In December 2007, a three-year research project on "International Migration and Illegal Work of Migrants in the Czech Republic in a Broader European Context" was completed by the Charles University as part of the program for "Modern Society and Its Transformations".

- A "Research on the Intentions of Third-Country Foreigners Coming to the Czech Republic to Work under a Work Permit as regards their Longer-term or Permanent Settlement in the Czech Republic" was completed in September 2007.

- With the funds provided from the European Social Fund and the Czech national budget, MoLSA implemented a qualitative and quantitative research on the "Analysis of the Access of Female and Male Immigrants to Education and Labour Market in the Czech Republic" between the end of 2006 and first half of 2007.

- In early 2007, a research project on the "Employers' Approach to Foreigners Employed in the Czech Republic (diversity management)" was completed.

VII. Support for non-governmental non-profit organizations

MoLSA supports the involvement of non-governmental non-profit organizations in the process of integrating foreigners. A continuously updated section on "Financial resources" is available at the MoLSA website www.cizinci.cz, providing an overview of basic financing resources and, thus, serving as a transparent signpost for information on the national budget and EU funds dedicated to foreigners integration. The links to the websites <http://www.esfcr.cz/> and <http://www.equalcr.cz/> include also opportunities to get involved in the cooperation in the form of the National Thematic Network F – Integration of Foreigners to the Labour Market. The possibility for non-governmental non-profit organizations to participate in international projects was supported, in particular, through IS EQUAL providing a framework for international partnerships. For the period of 2007-2013, this principle of international cooperation and international partnerships was transferred to the Operational Programme "Human Resources and Employment".

In the framework of the EQUAL Community Initiative Programme, MoLSA participated in the development partnerships HELIX and HEDERA – *Work in Prague and Work in Czech*. These projects were aimed, in particular, at supporting, in a systematic way, the work opportunities of asylum seekers and foreigners living on a long-term basis in Prague and in the Czech Republic, respectively – the development and testing of the concept for such support.

VIII. Financing of foreigners integration projects from EU funds

An overview of foreigners integration projects financed from the European Social Fund (ESF) is provided at the website www.cizinci.cz in the section on "NGO projects". In the period of 2007-2013, foreigners integration in the framework of the Operational Programme "Humans Resources and Employment" will be supported primarily under priority axis 3 – Social integration and equal opportunities. Non-governmental non-profit organizations will be one of the groups of eligible beneficiaries.

MoLSA is involved in the ESF financing of projects implemented by non-governmental non-profit organizations to support foreigners integration also through the Section of Employment Policy and Labour Market, being the final beneficiary in the implementation structure for measures 2.1 of the Operational Programme "Humans Resources and Employment" (2004-2006) or, more specifically, its part related to employment, as well as through the Department of Social Services, being the final beneficiary for measures 2.1 – part concerning social services (*Integration of foreigners and specific groups of population vulnerable to social exclusion*).

In 2007, the Ministry of the Interior prepared – in cooperation with MoLSA – multi-annual and annual **plans of the 2007-2013 Fund for the Integration of Third-country nationals**. Together with ESF, this Fund is expected to be one of the key resources to finance the integration of foreigners in the Czech Republic.

IX. Financing of foreigners integration projects – grant tenders of MoLSA

For 2008, MoLSA announced a **grant tender in the field of support for foreigners integration** in order to provide grants from the national budget to non-governmental non-profit organizations performing activities in public interest in the field of foreigners integration. The aid provided under this programme was aimed at supporting the following:

1. *Activities to improve the knowledge of the Czech language and activities to facilitate the entry on the labour market* – e.g. Czech language courses, introductory courses for social and cultural patterns in the society, such as training of skills – motivation courses, writing a CV, courses to acquire basic PC skills. Emphasis was placed on projects enabling the parents to participate in the above-mentioned courses thanks to a child care being arranged for their children;
2. *Activities focused on integration of vulnerable groups of immigrants, particularly women* – with special attention paid to women with no family background, women from countries with a different social and cultural environment, youth, as well as projects to raise awareness of the relationships between men and women and of the position of women in the Czech society, to promote gender equality and family life;
3. *Activities to provide social and legal counselling for foreigners* – i.e. providing social and legal counselling, including psychological advice, where appropriate, to foreigners, providing information on the possibilities and ways to find a job, assistance to foreigners when dealing with the authorities, when coping with administrative formalities related to social security or entry on the labour market – in particular to those who have no experience with the labour market, accompanying the foreigner also after finding a job, assistance in a difficult personal or family situation, etc.;
4. *Development of relations between foreigners and members of the host society* – support for the development of mutual relations and mutual understanding between foreigners and the majority society in the Czech Republic, as well as for the awareness of the majority as regards the conditions for and issues related to foreigners living in the Czech Republic.

Statistical Data²⁾

Population of the Czech Republic: 10,424,926 persons

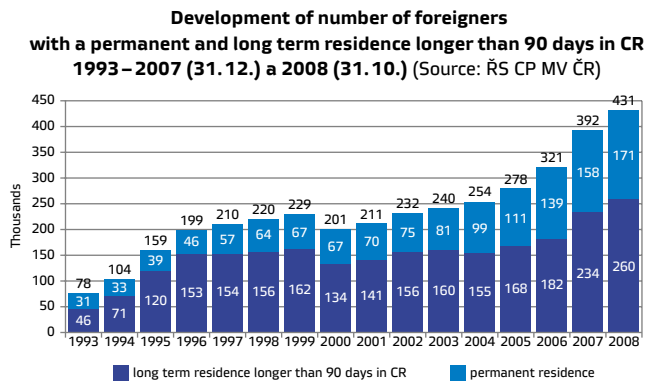
Total number of foreigners registered in the territory of the Czech Republic: 431,215 persons

Number of foreigners with permanent residence: 171,418 persons

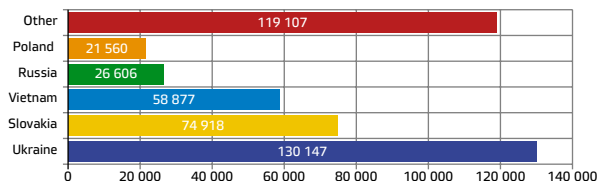
Number of foreigners with some type of long-term residence above 90 days: 259,797 persons

The five largest groups of foreigners include the following nationalities:

| | | |
|-----------|---------|-------|
| Ukraine: | 130,147 | (30%) |
| Slovakia: | 74,918 | (17%) |
| Vietnam: | 58,877 | (14%) |
| Russia: | 26,606 | (6%) |
| Poland: | 21,560 | (5%) |



5 most numerous foreign nationalities in CR – as per 31 October 2008 (Source: ŘS CP MV ČR)



²⁾ Statistical data as per 31 October 2008;
source: http://www.czso.cz/csu/cizinci.nsf/kapitola/ciz_pocet_cizincu

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