



Migration Profile

CZECH REPUBLIC

A. Executive Summary

Until the end of the past millennium, Czech Republic, also known as Czechia, was pre-eminently an emigration country due to communist oppression, especially following the 1968 invasion by the armies of the Warsaw Pact. It is estimated that approximately 2-2.5 million people with Czech roots or backgrounds live abroad. In addition, since the fall of the iron curtain in 1989, another 200,000 Czech citizens are known to have settled abroad. Conversely, by 2015 there were only around 250,000 holders of a Czech passport living abroad, comprising less than 2.5% of the country's overall population.

Regarding immigration flow, in 2019 the total number of immigrants represented 5.3% of the Czech population and were employed mainly in manufacturing and semi-skilled jobs. In the same year, beneficiaries of international protection were 0.02% of total immigrant, mostly men, who also comprised 71% of all applicants. Although the highest number of applications were received from countries that were formerly part of the Soviet Union, asylum is also granted to people from China, Syrian Arab Republic and Ukraine. Czech Republic is also a transit country for people from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Iran and Yemen who want to reach Germany and France.

The Republic is also a transit country for both foreign and Czech victims of sex trafficking who are exploited in the other European countries. Foreign and Czech victims of trafficking are also exploited within Czech Republic's labour market, particularly in construction, agricultural, forestry, manufacturing, and other service sectors, including in domestic work, and also prostitution.

B. Country Profile

I. Basic Information

Czech Republic's landscape is hilly and covers an area of 78,866 square kilometers. The population is 10,707,839 inhabitants and most (73.8%) live in urban settings.

In 2020, Czech Republic ranked as the world's 8th safest and most peaceful country. Furthermore, people have freedom to declare membership in a national minority and are able to enjoy the rights related to that status. Traditional national minorities include Slovaks, Poles and Germans.

In 2015, close to one-third of the population (31.5%) was Christian, with Roman Catholics the largest Christian denomination, at 27.1% of the population, and Protestants at 1.0%, and other Christians at 3.4%. Atheists accounted for 25.8% of the population, with a larger number, 38.6%, declaring themselves as agnostics/irreligious.

The national government is a unitary parliamentary constitutional republic.

II. International and Internal Migrants

In 2019, the number of immigrants with a regular permit of stay was 593,000; women represented 43.7% of the total. From January to September 2020, a reported 41,500 immigrants entered to the country, which was 6,600 fewer people than the previous year. The top countries of origin are Ukraine (131,302 persons), Slovakia (116,817), Vietnam (61,097), Russian Federation (38,033), Poland (21,279) and Germany (21,267).

Most of the male immigrants are between 35 and 39 years old, and the female immigrants are slightly younger, between the ages of 30 and 34. Most of them work in manufacturing in demanding and often dangerous low-paid jobs. A significant number of them are employed in semi-skilled jobs such as administrative and support service activities. Within this category, data show that while the median gross monthly salary for country's population is 33,011 koruna (\$1,500), immigrants with high levels of education receive salaries that are greater than or very similar to those of the native population. Slovaks earn 38,869 koruna, Ukrainians 27,010, Poles 29,268, Russians 33,154 and Bulgarians 30,753. Finally, one in five migrants (20%) have a study visa.

The capital city, Prague, is where 37% of the country's migrants reside; others have settled in various large Czech cities and also in the border areas. During the first six months of 2020, about 21,000 people moved to Prague (of these, 11,000 arrived from abroad and 10,000 from other Czech regions), while nearly 16,000 moved out of the capital city.

With regard to media narratives about migrants, an analysis conducted by People in Need found that media typically portray migration in terms of crises and as a security issue rather than a humanitarian or social concern.

III. Emigration and Skilled Migration

From January to September 2020, emigration increased as 25,900 Czechs emigrated, which is an increase of 8,900 persons. Almost half (47.8%) migrated to Germany, followed by 8.1% to Austria and 5.1% to Switzerland. Data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs show that by 2015 there were an estimated 250,000 holders of a Czech passport living abroad, less than 2.5% of the overall population.

IV. Forced Migrants (internally displaced, asylum seekers and refugees)

In 2019, there were 2,809 applications, up from the previous year. In 2018, with more than 1,700 applications, asylum status was granted in only 47 cases, and most frequently to citizens of China, Syrian Arab Republic and Ukraine. Most of the applications were received from countries that were previously part of the Soviet Union: Ukraine (418 applications), Georgia (169), Uzbekistan (98) and Armenia (117). Others were from Cuba (154) and Vietnam

(100). Almost all were related to escapes from civil war and humanitarian crises.

Among applicants, males are a large majority: 71% of all applicants in 2018. The largest age group is 25–34 years; 34.1% of male applicants and 25.9% of female applicants are in this grouping. The 0–14 age group represented 26.3% of the total in 2018.

Czech Republic is not only a destination country for forced migrants, the majority of whom arrive by train from Hungary, but is also a transit country for illegal migration from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Iran and Yemen that is mostly headed to Germany and France.

Reception centres are situated in Zastávka, in the Brno–venkov District, and at Václav Havel Prague Airport (Prague–Ruzyně). There are also accommodation centres in the municipalities of: Havířov, in the Karviná District, in Zastávka, in the Brno–venkov District, and in Kostelec nad Orlicí, in the Rychnov nad Kněžnou District. Integration asylum centres provide temporary accommodation to foreigners who have been granted international protection and these are located in Brno, in the Brno–město District, in Jaroměř, in the Náchod District, in Havířov, in the Karviná District, and in Ústí nad Labem–Předlice in the Ústí nad Labem District.

The State integration program (SIP) helps refugees learn the Czech language, find a job and a place to live, and to become self-sufficient. Furthermore, the Czech system treats refugees as equals to citizens on important issues, such as providing them with access to property, employment and healthcare. Despite this, their integration remains difficult because of prejudices concerning their status as beneficiaries of international protection. In this regard, a media analysis conducted by People in Need found that the language used by media for immigrants including refugees effectively obscures their presence and focuses on stories about them as victims.

V. Victims of Human Trafficking

According to the 2020 US Department of State Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, Czech Republic fully meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, remaining on Tier 1. In 2019, there were 15 new victims (11 men and 4 women) who entered the State Program, a decrease from 17 in 2018 and from 24 in 2017. Six were from the Philippines, one was from Slovakia, and eight were Czech citizens. Police referred 11 victims and NGOs referred another 4 victims. In 2019, government-funded NGOs provided services or other support to 259 victims or potential victims, a significant increase from 180 in 2018 and 137 in 2017.

Over the past five years, human traffickers have exploited domestic and foreign victims in Czech Republic, and also exploited Czech victims abroad. Traffickers exploit women, girls, and boys from Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, Nigeria, the Philippines, and Vietnam in sex trafficking in Czech Republic, and also transport victims through Czech Republic to other European countries for sex trafficking. Men and women from Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Mongolia, Nepal, Nigeria, the Philippines, Russia, and Vietnam are exploited in forced labour in Czech Republic, mostly in construction, agricultural, forestry, manufacturing, and service sectors, including in domestic work.

The Czech government officially recognizes only victims who participate in the Ministry of the Interior's Program of Support and Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking. Assisting in the criminal case is a prerequisite for participation in the program after a period of 60 days of reflection. The Program provides medical care, psychological and crisis counselling, housing, legal representation, and vocational training as well as other specialized services.

Foreign victims accepted into the program can receive temporary residence and work visas for the duration of the relevant legal proceedings. Victims can receive assistance to return to their country of origin at any time, or they can apply for permanent residency upon completion of the program.

Victims who are unwilling to assist law enforcement are eligible to access MLSA-funded welfare benefits, including housing, in-person and telephone crisis help, social counselling and rehabilitation, a drop-in centre for children and youth, as well as social services for families with children. There is nevertheless a difficulty in effectively screening vulnerable populations for trafficking and adequately identifying domestic or foreign victims. Furthermore, program-funded shelters often lack the capacity to house victims who have children and must make other arrangements for them.

VI. National Legal Framework

The Department of Asylum and Migration Policy of the Ministry of Interior is the office dealing with most related matters, such as setting up a regime for residence and return, running the asylum system and fostering both refugee and migrant integration. Among the other central institutions involved in migration governance and integration policy are the Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs, Education, Industry and Commerce, Foreign Affairs, Justice, Health, as well the Ombudsperson's Office and the Office of the Government.

The principal national law concerning migration is the Foreigners Act (Act No. 326/1999) on the Residence of Foreign Nationals in the Territory of Czech Republic. Refugee matters are governed by the Asylum Act (Act No. 325/1999). Both these laws are amended frequently, up to three times per year (Caritas, 2019). Since 2004, trafficking for sexual exploitation or forced labour is governed by the Czech Criminal Code, which was amended in 2010 and in 2014. The GRETA report (2020) advocates that trafficking in children should be included in the legislation as an aggravating circumstance setting penalties for human trafficking.

The Czech government ratified 70 of the International Labour Standards ILO Conventions, all of which apply to upholding protection and decent work for migrants. Furthermore, in 2013 the government ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. In 2001, the Czech government ratified the Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

VII. Main Actors

The State

The Inter-ministerial Coordination Group for Combating Human Trafficking is responsible for coordinating activities with respect to human trafficking. It also serves as a platform for exchanging information on the current situation and ongoing activities, as well as for submitting proposals and recommendations for taking particular measures at the inter-ministerial level. Its members collect data and prepare documents for the annual Status Report on human trafficking in Czech Republic. (GRETA, 2020)

The Department of Asylum and Migration Policy of the Ministry of Interior provides information on legal issues and services for migrants and asylum seekers such as the Centres for Support of Integration of Foreigners that serve as information contact points for foreigners.

The Catholic Church

The Bishop responsible for pastoral care of migrants on behalf of the Czech Bishops' Conference is His Excellency Msgr Martin David, Auxiliary Bishop of Ostrava-Oprava.

Caritas of the Archdiocese of Prague deals with the issue of human trafficking within two programs. The first is the Magdala program that focuses on helping women and child victims of trafficking or domestic violence. Its Human Trafficking Prevention Program offers counselling and support to migrants and refugees. The Magdala network performs its activities throughout Czech Republic through the collaboration of various diocesan offices.

The second is RENATE, Religious in Europe Networking Against Trafficking and Exploitation, a program operated by Talitha Kum, the International Network of Consecrated Life Against Trafficking in Persons. It helps victims of human trafficking by providing a range of different services.

Salesian Missionaries operate primary and secondary schools and provide particular services for migrants.

The International Catholic Migration Commission is engaged in migration and refugee issues.

The Sant'Egidio Community provides services for migrants and refugees.

The Sovereign Order of Malta is involved in the health care of disadvantaged people.

International organizations

La Strada organization has been active in Czech Republic since 1995. The aim of the organisation is to provide support and protection to persons who are exploited and trafficked through asylum or shelter houses and telephone crisis aid.

The Diaconia of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren is a member of Eurodiaconia (the European federation of organisations, institutions and churches) and provides shelter for men, couples and women, who are victims of labour trafficking.

IOM participates in related activities in aiding voluntary returns and in the field of prevention.

UNHCR provides legal advice, awareness-raising activities and supports the various programs of NGOs such as the Organisation for Aid to Refugees (OPU).

Germany's KARO e. V. carries out outreach work along the German-Czech border. It has been tackling forced prostitution, human trafficking and the sexual abuse of children since 1994. It works on consciousness raising and sensitisation, and also provides food, counselling, shelters and safe drop-in centres.

Other organizations

The Organisation for Aid to Refugees (OPU) provides legal assistance to asylum seekers and visits administrative detention facilities.

The Association for Migration and Integration provides legal, social and psychosocial counselling to foreigners living in Czech Republic.

The Consortium of Migrant Assisting Organizations is an umbrella organization founded in 2003 in Prague. At present, it brings together 20 NGOs that either assist migrants directly or are involved in the integration of foreigners in other ways.

VIII. Other Important Issues

Czech Republic is one of the five countries that voted against the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration in December 2018.

December 2020

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