



Labour market
integration
of third-country
nationals in **Croatia**,
the **Czech Republic**,
Hungary and
Slovakia

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Introduction

This report aims to provide an overview of existing national legal frameworks and labour integration policies in Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia targeting third-country nationals. It offers a perspective of integration policies with the focus on labour market integration policies, state approaches and measures, and measures conducted by the private sector. This synthesis report is based on national reports made by organisations In Baze, Centre for Peace Studies, Menedek and Mareena, through Erasmus + project, **Career Path**. National reports are based on data collected via interviews with third-country nationals, representatives of non-governmental institutions, state institutions, and human resources managers. Interviews allowed the authors of national reports to get feedback on policies and measures targeting labour market integration. Labour market integration policies are implemented differently in each Member State. This report will examine gaps between the aim and the implementation of labour integration policies and their direct impact on third-country nationals.



National Contexts and Legal Frameworks

The integration of migrants into the host society has been on the political agenda for years. While integration itself is a joint objective of the European Union, Member States have the autonomy to form and implement their own legal and policy framework promoting the labour market integration of third-country nationals (further in-text “TCNs”).

For countries analysed in this report it is characteristic that they experienced both emigration and immigration, and for some of this process is currently happening simultaneously. Free movement of labour to other EU countries led to labour shortages, which consequently encouraged governments to implement legislative amendments and promote labour migration of TCNs. This is why Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia issue the largest share of permits for remunerated activities.¹ To understand the common rationale behind national legal and policy frameworks focused on emerging labour demand, we will closely look into them to assess whether they aim to control the entrance or aim to attract as many TCNs as needed.

In **Croatia** employment of TCNs is regulated by the Foreigners Act (Official Gazette no. 53/20) and the Regulation on the status and work of third-country nationals in the Republic of Croatia (Official Gazette no. 116/18). Both the Foreigners Act and the Regulation on the status and work of third-country nationals as prerequisite set the obligation of obtaining the adequate residence permit. TCNs can work in Croatia based on stay and work permit and work registration certificate. There are exceptional cases in which TCNs can work without stay and work permit and work registration certificate and these are; if the person has been granted permanent stay, international or temporary protection, temporary stay for family reunification with a Croatian national, a TCN on permanent stay, an asylee, or a TCN who has been granted subsidiary or temporary protection, temporary stay on humanitarian grounds, temporary stay for life partnership with a Croatian national, autonomous stay, a status of a full-time pupil or student when they perform activities through the mediation of authorised agents, without entering into employment, temporary stay for scientific research under a hosting agreement. When the residence permit of the TCN is issued for employment purposes (thus the TCN obtained the stay and work permit), TCN can only work on those jobs for which she has been granted the residence and work permit or a work registration certificate and only with the same employer that provided her with that exact job. The above-mentioned stay and work permits are issued under the annual quota and outside the annual quota. The annual quota is deter-

1 European Commission (2019) “Labour Market Integration of Third-Country Nationals in EU Member States”, p.234. Available [here](#).

mined by the Government every year by the 31ST of October. Through the system on annual quota, the Government defines exact professions and the number of work and stay permits that can be issued for these professions. In exceptional cases, TCN can regulate her stay and work in Croatia based on the work registration certificate. The regulation of stay and work through the work registration certificate allows the TCN to stay and work in Croatia up to 90, 60 or 30 days a year. TCNs may work in the Republic of Croatia without a stay and work permit or a work registration certificate in exceptional cases.

In the **Czech Republic**, the primary legal act concerning the stay of migrants and TCNs in the Act no. 326/1999 Sb. on the Residence of Foreign Nationals in the Czech Republic. migrants seeking employment or those who have been employed in the past on the territory of the Czech Republic, as far as the legislature on the conditions of the labour market is concerned, fall under the Act no. 435/2004 Sb., The Employment Act. The fourth part of said Act, concerning the employment of foreign employees (§ 85 – § 103), deals with the conditions regarding the employment of TCNs and sets out selected groups with virtually direct access to the Czech labour market and also sets out the conditions and requirements for a work permit, employee cards, intra-company employee transfer cards and blue cards.

The options of entering the Czech labour markets are further governed by other legal acts. It is primarily the Act no. 262/2006 Sb., The Labour Code, which sets out the rights and duties of both employees and employers and applies in the same manner as it does with Czech citizens. Programmes of targeted labour migration are realised under the government decree no. 220/2019 Sb., which sets out the maximum amount of visa applications for stays which are longer than 90 days for business or applications for a long-term residence permit with the intentions of investing and applications for an employee card. Such quotas are evenly spaced out over given months. The purpose of these quotas is a transparent immigration policy for the area of economic migration, where the maximum number of TCNs and the priority source countries for any given type are known in advance. It is mainly citizens with different types of qualification from Mongolia, Ukraine, the Philippines, India and others. These programmes have a simplified proceeding, which shortens the process of entering the labour market for selected groups of citizens from selected third countries.

In **Hungary**, employment of TCNs is controlled by Act II of 2007 on the Admission and Right of Residence of Third-Country Nationals and by Act IV of 1991 on Facilitating the Employment and on Unemployment Benefits. Act II



of 2007 dictates which authorities handle immigration proceedings and in what capacity, along with the requirements for TCNs to obtain a residence permit. As a general rule, TCNs may only be employed if they hold a valid residence permit. There are exceptions from this rule: beneficiaries of international protection do not need any permit to be employed, in addition, long-term resident TCNs do not need any additional permit for work. The residence permit can be issued for several reasons including employment, seasonal work, studies, highly skilled employment and research. The residence permit for employment, seasonal work, highly skilled employment (i.e. Blue Card), and research are issued as a single permit for work and residence. Once issued, the residence permit for employment may be valid for a maximum of three years (but the validity cannot be as long as the validity of the consent of the employment authority, i.e. 2 years, so in practice, employment residence permits are only valid for a maximum of two years); for seasonal work, it is set to a maximum of six months. In general, for a migrant to obtain a residence permit, they must prove that they have two things - a stable source of revenue to support themselves, and appropriate housing. However, if a TCN loses their job, the residence permit shall be withdrawn.

In **Slovakia**, employment of TCNs is regulated by Law/Act no. 404/2011 Coll. On the Stay of Foreigners which Regulates the Conditions for Granting Temporary Residence to Third-Country Nationals for Employment; and the Law/Act no. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services, which specifies the conditions under which TCNs may be employed in the Slovak Republic. TCNs have a right to work in the Slovak Republic if the following conditions are met: they possess a work permit or a temporary stay permit issued for employment; the third-country national is an asylee who has been granted work permission through the asylum process. In 2018, primarily due to growing labour demand, the Slovak Republic adopted the Strategy on Labour Mobility of Foreigners in the Slovak Republic and prepared a list of jobs, which could not be filled with domestic labour. In 2018, amendments to the Act on the Residence of Foreigners and the Act on Employment Services, and the mandatory provisions of the European Directive on Students, Researchers, Trainees and Volunteers entered into Slovak legislation. On 7 December 2018, the Slovak Republic approved further legislative changes in the area of labour mobility, which, among other things, will expand the possibilities of TCNs entering the labour market through temporary employment agencies in the case of labour shortages.



Labour market integration of beneficiaries of international protection and asylum seekers

Since this report aims to understand the labour market integration of all TCNs, it is necessary to look into specific measures aiming at beneficiaries of international protection and asylum seekers who often fall under the different set of measures comparing to other TCNs.

In **Croatia**, beneficiaries of international protection and asylum seekers fall into the group of TCNs who may work without the stay and work permit or a work registration certificate. According to Article 61 of the Law on International and Temporary protection (Official Gazette no. 127/17), an asylum seeker can be employed only nine months after submitting her asylum application. Article 68 of the same Law states that a person who has been granted international or subsidiary protection has the right to adult training related to employment, vocational training and acquiring practical work experience, under the same conditions as Croatian citizen.

An important role in labour market integration of beneficiaries of international protection and asylum seekers has the Action plan for the integration of beneficiaries of international protection (2017-2019).² This Action plan recognises the connection between successful integration and finding employment. Through employment and establishment of financial security, beneficiaries of international protection have the opportunity to become active members of the society. For that purpose, following aims have been established: contribution in facilitating the exercise of the right to work, education of persons about their rights and obligations within the employment system, strengthening of the capacities of employees of Croatian Employment Service, implementation of active employment policy measures, improving access to employment. Exactly active employment policy measures initiated by the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy together with Croatian Employment Service should address the status-related vulnerability of beneficiaries of international protection and asylum seekers that hardens their process of integration to the Croatian labour market, as they face a wide range of bureaucratic and social difficulties. In 2019, refugees and persons under subsidiary protection became a targeted group of these measures. However, the number of beneficiaries of international protection and asylum seekers who were involved in these measures has been relatively low. Although the above-mentioned legal and policy framework provides substantive support through the integration process, there is still a question of its successful implementation and political will.

² In the moment of writing this analysis, the new Action plan for the integration of beneficiaries of international protection for the period of 2020 until 2022 has not been implemented.

In the **Czech Republic**, the status of asylum seekers, who have been granted international protection is governed by the Asylum Act (Act no. 325/1999 Sb.). The State Integration Programme (SIP), which is based on the Asylum Act exists to support the integration of TCNs, who have been granted international protection. This programme is realised by the Refugee Facilities Administration and therefore falls under the Ministry of the Interior. Non-profit organisations are involved with this programme and they provide services which aid in the integration of such persons (language courses, legal and social counselling among others).

The Act on Employment (435/2004 Sb.) states in Article 97 that an asylum seeker has a right to work six months after applying for international protection, with no regards to the current labour market situation. However, a work permit is still required for an asylum seeker or a person who has been issued with a certificate of non-voluntary stay in the territory of the Czech Republic (Article 97 number e)). If an applicant has been given asylum or subsidiary protection, according to Article 98(c) of the Act on Employment then the same conditions that apply to Czech citizens apply to such an applicant. In this context, a work permit, employee card, intra-corporate transferee card or a blue card are not required.

In **Slovakia**, the Integration Policy of the Slovak Republic (January 2014) deals with the employment of foreigners. The integration policy aims to improve multiple dimensions of integration in order to have a positive impact on the economic, demographic and social life of foreigners in the Slovak Republic. Individuals granted asylum or supplementary protection do not need a work permit for employment in the Slovak Republic. Legally, these individuals are treated as aliens with permanent residence. Persons who have been granted international protection in the Slovak Republic have a right to government-provided accommodations, language courses, as well as a monetary allowance. Furthermore, persons who were granted international protection reside at the integration centre in Zvolen for six months, before being provided accommodation. One major problem faced by asylees in the Slovak Republic is the lack of qualification recognition. Often, these individuals end up working in positions for which they are overqualified.

Statistics and relevant actors in labour market integration

Differences between legal and policy frameworks on labour market integration rise from their primary goal. While some countries opt for more controlling policies and focus on a certain group of newcomers, other countries have more welcoming policies that guide TCNs throughout the process of transition and integration. Often, a good indicator of what type of policy did a country opt for is its statistics.

Latest data collected by Eurostat confirm that all countries who are the subject of this report are recording growth in the number of TCNs. In 2019, in Croatia the number of TCNs almost doubled (comparing to the data from 2018), reaching 73,776. Growth was recorded both in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, almost by 20,000 TCNs comparing to 2018. Thus, 350,291 TCNs were living in the Czech Republic in 2019, and in the same year, 82,156 found home in Slovakia. There is currently no available data on Hungary and the number of TCNs living there in 2019, but comparing the numbers between 2017 and 2018, there is a visible trend of growth of the number of TCNs residing there. In 2018, 130,800 TCNs were residing in Hungary.³

Different policies on labour market integration assign different stakeholders who play a vital part in making national labour markets accessible to TCNs.

In **Croatia**, relevant actors at the national level are the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, the Ministry of Science and Education, Agency for Science and Higher Education, regional branches of the Croatian Employment Service and civil society organisations and Ministry of Interior. Ministry of Interior is the one which delegates the process of integration. However, an important role in the integration of TCNs to the labour market has the Croatian Employment Service. Their public officials hold consultations for TCNs. Croatian Employment Centre also has a pivotal role in matching current job opportunities with the skills of TCNs. Agency for Science and Higher Education provides information on the recognition of foreign primary, secondary or higher vocational education. The Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy developed a set of active employment measures that also targets persons who were granted international protection.

In the **Czech Republic**, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is responsible for the employment of TCNs and labour legislation and provides methodological guidance to the main actors such as Labour Offices, Czech Social Security Administration, State Labour Inspection Office, Regional Labour Inspectorates and for the Office for International Legal Protection of Children. The Ministry of

³ Data collected by Eurostat. Available [here](#).

Education, Youth and Sports provides information on the recognition of foreign primary, secondary or higher vocational education.

Labour Office grants TCNs an employment permit in the Czech Republic and provides other services facilitating the employment search. TCNs can take advantage of the offers and retraining offered by the Labour Office. The different strategy of individual branches of the Labour Office differs which reflects the situation on the labour market in the Czech Republic. Individual branches of the Labour Office, in cooperation with NGOs, ensure in particular the implementation of Czech language courses, business training, mediation of legal aid and socio-cultural courses. Some municipal and regional authorities, which provide information and counselling services, are also involved in the work integration of TCN.

The strategy to address the issue of TCNs reflects the work of the Centers for the Support of the Integration of Foreigners. The Refugee Facilities Administration of the Ministry of the Interior has since 2009 opened ten regional Centers for Support of Integration of Foreigners (hereinafter CPIC or Centers) following the government document “Concept of Integration of Foreigners”. The CPIC operation includes not only the regional capital but it also covers the whole region but has only an indirect link to the labour integration of foreigners.

In the Czech Republic, non-profit organizations are one of the key actors responsible for the practical implementation of the state integration concept in individual localities. Non-profit organisations cooperate in supporting the employment of TCN with local branches of the ÚP, CPIC and sometimes also with social affairs departments.

In **Hungary**, relevant actors are the national government, TCNs, asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection, non-governmental organizations that assist with the integration process, and private companies that hire third-country nationals. Relevant Ministries with the scope of work that covers labour market integration of TCNs are Ministry for Innovation and Technology, Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Human Capacities.

In **Slovakia**, labour market integration falls under the purview of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family. While the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family bears the primary responsibility for integration strategies as well as labour policies related to third-country nationals, the Ministry of Interior also plays an active role in the integration of foreigners. Non-governmental organizations and academic experts offer oversight and advice to state institutions.

Labour market integration in the eyes of third-country nationals

To evaluate labour market integration of TCNs each partner conducted 20 semi-structured interviews with TCNs residing in their countries. The interviews aimed to understand the experience of TCNs in the process of economic and social integration and to give them a platform to recommend what could be changed for the economic and social migration be more successful.⁴ However, it must be noted that TCNs are a very heterogeneous group and partners interviewed TCNs of different backgrounds. Given the fact that COVID-19 pandemic struck during the process of conducting interviews partners from the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia struggled with getting in contact with TCNs who work in factories, fields and other lower-income industries. National analyses allowed us to map out common obstacles and opportunities TCNs face when going through the process of economic and social integrations.

4 Methodology of every national analysis: In Croatia interviews with TCN were done both in person and online. Due to COVID-19 outbreak, it took longer than expected to conduct all interviews. All together 20 TCNs were interviewed; 13 of them are under international protection, one is a former refugee who was granted citizenship due to his engagement in the war, one is a refugee whose application for international protection was not approved so he managed to regulate his status through European Blue Card, 3 of them regulated their status through their spouses i.e. currently married, or were married with a Croatian national, one person regulated his status through work and stay permit, while one person came through a student visa. Unfortunately, it was very challenging to reach equal number of female and male TCNs. That is why they have gender disparity, most of TCNs are men (16), they managed to have interviews with only 4 women.

In Czech Republic national analysis included approximately 85% women and 15% men aged between 23 and 62 years from Ukraine, Russia, Mongolia, Moldova, Georgia and Uzbekistan. They spent 2-32 years living in CR with a secondary level of education as a minimum (7 of them study at university in CR). All of them are fluent in reading and writing in Czech, while 75% are employed (most of them in low qualified job) and 25% are unemployed.

In Hungary interviews with TCNs took place both offline and online. Due to COVID19, the major part of the interviews were conducted via ZOOM. This made access to the target group more difficult, but it did not weaken the quality of the research. The only downside of doing research during quarantine was that they could not reach blue-collar workers, since that would have required face to face meetings. They interviewed 20 TCNs who belong to the following categories: 2 former refugees, now citizen, 1 refugee, 1 person under subsidiary protection and 16 migrant workers with work residence permit. There were 11 women and 9 men among the interviewees.

In Slovakia of the 20 third-country nationals in their sample, 11 third-country nationals had, or were awaiting, temporary residence in Slovakia, 6 had permanent residencies, and 4 had either temporary or permanent residence due to the granting of some type of international protection. These respondents were anywhere from 25 to 46 years old (average age was 33), and came to Slovakia from countries as diverse as Taiwan, Kenya, and Peru. Most third-country nationals were employed, though some were still searching for work. Outside of several respondents from Ukraine and Russia, most had limited Slovak language capacity. The sample was 65 percent female

THE LACK OF ACCREDITATION OF JOB QUALIFICATIONS AND ASSESSMENT OF THEIR SKILLS IMPACTS THE POSSIBILITY OF TCNS TO FIND JOBS THAT ARE MATCHING THEIR QUALIFICATIONS AND CAREER ASPIRATIONS.



“
*They didn't trust my diploma
from back home was real.*
”

(TCN, RESIDING IN CROATIA)

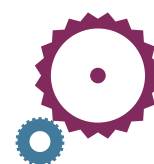
All national analyses showed that TCNs struggle with accrediting their job qualifications obtained outside of the European Union. Since this is an essential prerequisite for successful labour market integration, TCNs struggle to find a job that

is matching their qualifications or career aspirations. Consequently, TCNs are forced to accept precarious forms of work, short-term contracts, undeclared work, or hard manual labour that is often not adequately paid.

INFORMATION AND COUNSELLING IDENTIFIED AS A MAIN AREA OF SUPPORT OFFERED TO TCNS TO IMPROVE THEIR ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT IS OFTEN INADEQUATE.

“
*It is difficult to communicate with officials.
Sometimes we seem to bother them.*
”

(TCN, RESIDING IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC)



Analyses showed that TCNs do not have a substantial and positive experience with public employment institutions. In their experience, these institutions fail to facilitate their labour market integration. Most of TCNs expressed the need for more guidance through the process of finding

employment. TCNs perceive that there is no access to information and slow and over-bureaucratized procedures further strand them in the position of long-term unemployment. Some TCNs share a common feeling that public employment institutions perceive them as difficulty.

TCNS ARE FACING DISCRIMINATION WITHIN THE RECRUITMENT PROCESSES.



“
Employers need to tell the truth. Why can't they just tell me what the problem is? They do not like to employ foreigners. The priority is Slovak people – even if they say they do not care about nationality or language. They say one thing, but they do something else.

”

(TCN RESIDING IN SLOVAKIA)

In the experience of TCNs, prejudice plays a great role in lowering the possibility of getting employed. Specifically, respondents felt that companies provided little to no feedback on applications or hiring decisions. The lack of communication on the part of prospective employers led many TCNs to hypothesize about the possible reasons behind their lack of employment. This hypothesizing of-

ten led them to conclude prejudice was the determining factor, though many respondents also mentioned language and visa-sponsorship as potential reasons. TCNs believe that employers are not willing to take extra energy and employ them, but will rather opt for national candidates since they perceive them as “less complicated.”

LANGUAGE COURSES SHOULD BE A COMPLEMENTARY COMPONENT OF THE LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION POLICY.



“
All the TAX papers and contracts are in Hungarian.

”

(TCN RESIDING IN HUNGARY)

TCNs identify language competence as the main challenge in integration. States should put more effort into reconciling support in learning the language and finding employment that would allow TCNs to fulfil their full potential. Lack of language proficiency is often a major barrier to finding employment. TCNs experience change in the re-

actions of possible employers even for positions where the working language is English since the local language is still perceived as invaluable for forming connections with colleagues. Language proficiency would allow TCNs better access to information, and they would be able to tackle independently with often overly-bureaucratized national systems.

NETWORKS OPEN NEW JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR TCNS.



“
*Personal connections are everything. It is never
about what you know, but about who you know.*
”

(TCN RESIDING IN SLOVAKIA)

TCNs often rely on acquaintances or family members who are familiar with their new country of residence. Importance of networks was connected with understanding the local language and

finding employment. It is not unusual that TCNs manage to find employment through their community and network that can recommend them to interested employers.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN THE LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION OF TCNS.

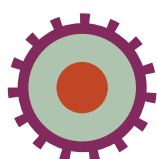
TCNs emphasize the crucial role non-governmental organisations have in filling in the gaps left by the public employment and state institutions. Organisations provide free counselling, CV work-

shops, and often through a different range of projects funded by the European Union, an alternative to qualification training that should usually be provided by the state.

EMPLOYERS SHOULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE INTEGRATION PROCESS OF TCN.

“
*Positive environment is needed
to fulfil your potential.*
”

(TCN RESIDING IN CROATIA)



TCN stressed the impact employers could have on their process of integration, specifically with integrating TCNs into the work-place. Building a working environment that enhances intercultural

relations, programmes and workshops on intercultural relations can build a healthy working environment in which everyone can fulfil his/her full potential.

Recommendations

Throughout interviews conducted while doing national analyses, TCNs gave a set of recommendations:

THE SYSTEM SHOULD BE MORE SENSIBLE TOWARDS TCNS SPECIFIC CHALLENGES THEY FACE WHEN SEARCHING FOR EMPLOYMENT.

PUBLIC OFFICIALS SHOULD HAVE AVAILABLE AND RELEVANT INFORMATION (INCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS) IN ONE PLACE FROM THE BEGINNING OF THEIR STAY, INCLUDING THE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED BY NGOS AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS.

PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT SERVICES SHOULD PROVIDE MORE IN-DEPTH GUIDANCE TO ALL TCN WHO COME FOR A CONSULTATION.

EMPLOYERS SHOULD PREPARE TCNS IN ADVANCE; THE PROCESS SHOULD START ALREADY IN THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND SHOULD INCLUDE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE ORIENTATION.

THE STATE NEEDS TO ORGANISE LOCAL LANGUAGE COURSES THAT WOULD ALLOW REFUGEES AND PERSONS UNDER SUBSIDIARY PROTECTION TO LEARN THE LANGUAGE, WHICH WOULD OPEN THE DOORS FOR FUTURE EMPLOYMENT.

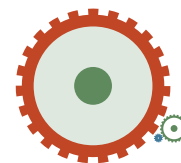
THERE SHOULD BE A SYSTEM IN PLACE THAT WOULD RECOGNISE QUALIFICATIONS OF TCN OR ALLOW THEM FURTHER SPECIALIZATION IN PROFESSIONS NEEDED AT THE LABOUR MARKET

SOCIETIES SHOULD BE MORE WELCOMING. THERE IS A LOT OF PREJUDICE TCNS NEED TO FIGHT AGAINST ON AN EVERYDAY BASIS. POLITICIANS SHOULD WORK TOWARDS BUILDING A NARRATIVE THAT DOES NOT VILIFY FOREIGNERS BUT PRESENTS THEM AS A VITAL PART OF THE COMMUNITY.

Labour market integration from the perspective of non-governmental organisations and state institutions

Labour market integration is an extensive process that includes cross-coordination among different stakeholders. For labour integration to be successful, concrete efforts must be put by state institutions, regional and local authorities, public employment services and non-governmental organisations. To understand internal dynamics between all these different stakeholders, national analyses included 5 to 7 semi-structured interviews with representatives of non-governmental organisations and state/public institutions.⁵ Their answers allowed us to map key challenges arising through the process of designing and implementing labour market integration policies.

5 Methodology of every national analysis: In Croatia they interviewed 3 persons from NGOs engaged with the topic of integration of TCNs, and 2 persons from state institutions who within their mandate are involved with the process of integration of TCNs into the Croatian labour market. In Czech Republic the interviews were conducted with representatives of the regional government and the NGOs, particularly those concerned with migrants and refugees and working in the areas of assistance, integration, protection of the human rights of migrants/refugees and advocacy. In Hungary partners interviewed 5 persons from NGOs and relocation agencies. Unfortunately, the governmental authority that would have been relevant for the research formally declined invitation for the interview. In Slovakia they conducted seven interviews with NGOs and public officials. Their sample includes representatives from a ministry, an international organization, a career counsellor, a legal consultant, a local politician, as well as NGO representatives.



LACK OF COORDINATION AND A LACK OF VISION CREATED A NEEDLESSLY COMPLEX AND ONEROUS LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION SYSTEMS.

“
*The system should be simplified and
manageable in an online platform*
”

(NGO REPRESENTATIVE FROM HUNGARY)

Both representatives of non-governmental organisations and state institutions stress a lack of policy coordination across various institutions and levels of government. This discord was generally attributed to a lack of a concrete vision

from the national governments. Representatives of non-governmental organisations emphasized that the whole process of labour integration is very slow, not customer friendly and over-bureaucratized.

THE RELEVANT LEGISLATION IS COMPLICATED. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR EMPLOYERS AND TCNS TO HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR STATUS, RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS.

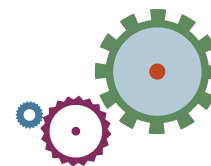
“
*You have to link laws. Just because someone
reads a law doesn't mean they can connect it with
another law that exists in connection to it.*
”

(RESPONDENT FROM SLOVAKIA)



Lack of continuous support by public employment services puts pressure on individuals to battle with often very hard to understand formal regulations. This does not only demotivate TCNs but also demotivates employers since not all of them have needed resources to invest in researching legal barriers. Public employment services should

guide TCNs and provide them with vocational training, qualifications and career counselling. They should serve as a mediator between unemployed TCNs and interested employers. Employers need to have accessible government sources of information about the process of hiring TCNs.



EFFICIENT AND SUSTAINABLE IMPLEMENTATION OF LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION POLICIES CAN BE DONE ONLY THROUGH AN EFFICIENT INSTITUTIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISM.

“
*Employment authorities and immigration
office should communicate more often.*
”

(NGO REPRESENTATIVE FROM HUNGARY)

Implementation of labour market integration policies is dependent on the state strategy and institutional coordination mechanism between all relevant stakeholders. Centralized source of information would help stakeholders coordinate

their actions, lessen misunderstandings and redundancies, and facilitate the integration process for third-country nationals. Relatedly, a greater degree of communication between different state institutions would reduce wait times.

WELL-MANAGED LABOUR INTEGRATION POLICY IS ESSENTIAL FOR EFFECTIVE INTEGRATION OF TCNS AND MAY HELP REDUCE NEGATIVE PUBLIC PERCEPTION, DISCRIMINATION, OPEN RACISM, AND XENOPHOBIA.

“
*The most important thing is to work on the
perception of citizens towards TCNs.*
”

(NGO REPRESENTATIVE FROM CROATIA)

Well-designed and implemented integration policies can expand economic growth, but most importantly build social cohesion. Through this

process, TCNs will be given a chance not only to contribute to economic growth but culturally enrich the whole society.



Recommendations

Throughout interviews conducted while doing national analyses, representatives of non-governmental organisations and state/public institutions gave a set of recommendations:

THERE SHOULD BE CONTINUOUS GUIDANCE AVAILABLE NOT ONLY TO BENEFICIARIES OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION BUT ALSO OTHER GROUPS OF TCNS WHO ARE STRUGGLING WITH INTEGRATION ON THE LABOUR MARKET.

STATE INSTITUTIONS SHOULD BETTER CONNECT WITH THE NGOS, AND PROJECTS THAT THEY ARE IMPLEMENTING.

PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT INSTITUTIONS SHOULD EMPLOY PEOPLE WHO SPEAK ENGLISH AND SHOULD EMPLOY TRANSLATORS FOR PEOPLE WHO DO NOT SPEAK ENGLISH AND THE LOCAL LANGUAGE.

PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ESTABLISH CONTACT WITH EMPLOYERS WHO WOULD OFFER PEOPLE THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK WITHOUT QUALIFICATIONS.

THERE SHOULD BE MORE EFFORT PUT IN PLACE BY STATE INSTITUTIONS TO RECOGNISE QUALIFICATIONS OF TCN OR ALLOW THEM FURTHER SPECIALIZATION IN PROFESSIONS NEEDED AT THE LABOUR MARKET.

THE CURRENT LEGAL FRAMEWORK SHOULD BE EXPANDED AND SHOULD MORE ADEQUATELY PROTECT TCNS FROM DISCRIMINATION AND XENOPHOBIA IN THE LABOUR MARKET, AND WHILE WORKING.

CITIZENS SHOULD BECOME FAMILIAR WITH THE CHALLENGES TCNS FACE. STATE INSTITUTIONS TOGETHER WITH NGOS SHOULD ORGANISE WORKSHOPS, PUBLIC EVENTS THROUGH WHICH THEY WOULD SHOW TO CROATIAN CITIZENS THAT TCNS ARE NOT “DANGEROUS OTHERS.”

TCNS SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN CREATING PUBLIC POLICIES THAT CONCERN THEIR LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION.

Labour market integration and the private sector

Labour market integration policies can only be successfully implemented if there is a strong partnership between the public and private sector. After all, the private sector is the one that aims more specifically at supporting the integration of TCNs into the labour work-force. The private sector has the opportunity to fill in the gaps left by the public measures, specifically due to limited funding. This is why national analyses included 3 to 5 semi-structured interviews with human resource managers and employers, which allowed us to see their perception of labour market integration policies and the collaboration between the public and private sector.⁶

6 Methodology of every national analysis: In Croatia this part of the research was the most challenging. Due to the fact that the research was mostly conducted in times of COVID-19 crisis, a lot of people they talked to were in risk of losing their jobs. That is why it was almost impossible to arrange interviews with their employers or HR managers. They tried to get in contact with bigger firms but unfortunately had no success. That is why they only managed to interview representatives of two medium to large sized companies. They had arranged two other interviews but they were cancelled last minute. The lack of respondents can be taken as an indicator that there is still a lot of work to be done in informing employers about TCNs, and them becoming a vital part of the work-force. In Czech Republic the interviews were done with HR managers from companies employing non-EU migrant workers and companies intending to employ non-EU migrant workers. The selection of companies/employers, which have been involved in the research, includes large multinational companies as well as local SMEs in various branches, e.g. retail, IT, manufacturing, consultancy and food/catering. The structure of the positions in the HR area consists of persons responsible for recruitment, HR business partner (including senior HR business partner), consultant and owner/partner responsible for HR in food/catering bistro. All companies/employers located where the research was made have experience with the employment of migrant workers. In Hungary they conducted five interviews with HR managers. They covered small, medium, and bigger companies as well. Unfortunately, they could not reach big multinational companies- due to their business policy, they were not able to share information with us. The respondents were all taking part in both in the recruitment of TCNs and in the application for work residence permit. In Slovakia they interviewed primarily large, multinational companies, as these are the largest employers of foreigners in Slovakia. They also conducted a few interviews with smaller, Slovak-owned enterprises. Generally, interviews were conducted with human resources representatives or with individuals in charge of hiring and recruitment.



PROCESS OF EMPLOYING TCNS IS VERY LENGTHY, COMPLEX AND BUREAUCRATIC.

“
*When I realized the process of employing
a TCN, I almost got a heart attack.*

”

(RESPONDENT FROM HUNGARY)

For all of the HR respondents, the main challenge was the slow and over-bureaucratized process of visa and work residence permit application. Companies would be willing to navigate complex rules

and subjectivity if it meant that they could hire workers quickly. Bureaucracy makes the hiring of TCNs costly, in both time and effort. Bureaucratic processes should be simplified.

HAVING INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES IN THE WORKFORCE CAN BE BENEFICIAL FOR THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT AND THE COMPANY AS A WHOLE.

“
*I am so happy to work in this international
environment. The process is slow, but once you have
a TCN colleague, you know it is worth the effort.*

”

(RESPONDENT FROM HUNGARY)

HR managers agree that TCNs bring high-quality professionalism, and are usually filling a gap that the labour market has at the moment. They also

point out the importance of having international experiences in the workforce.



Recommendations

Throughout interviews conducted while doing national analyses, HR managers and employers gave a set of recommendations:

PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT INSTITUTIONS SHOULD OFFER MORE SUPPORT TO BOTH TCNS AND EMPLOYERS.

THE INFORMATION PACKAGE RELATED TO THE LEGISLATION WHICH SHOULD BE PROVIDED BY PUBLIC/STATE AUTHORITIES FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS (EMPLOYERS INCLUDED) IS STRONGLY REQUIRED.

SPEEDING UP OF THE SOCIAL AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES WOULD ALLOW FASTER EMPLOYMENT. THE ACCREDITATION OF THEIR DIPLOMAS AND PAPERS WOULD ALSO BE VERY IMPORTANT.

THE PROCESS OF APPLYING FOR A WORK RESIDENCE PERMIT SHOULD BE FASTER AND CUSTOMER FRIENDLY.

How can we build more welcoming societies?

This report shows how heterogeneous labour market integration policies are, and how different countries can opt for different strategies. Nevertheless, lengthy bureaucracy procedures, lack of coordination among different stakeholders, and general lack of information on the process of employing TCNs seem to be a common problem all analysed states are currently going through.

Although these problems make it difficult for TCNs to successfully integrate into the labour market, their enthusiasm and contributions enrich societies with knowledge, culture, and diverse skills. Accordingly, TCNs want to build their lives in these countries which they envisioned as their new home. These countries, offer them security, safety, and in some cases possibility to rebuild lives which they almost lost due to war and conflict. Whatever their reasons for migrating to Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia are, whether that might be the search for safety, love, business opportunities, family, receiving countries should be open and welcoming. For TCNs to fulfil their full potential responsible institutions must assure easier access to language courses since through our interviews it was confirmed that the knowledge of the local language can open doors which are not so easy to open in the first place. Lengthy bureaucracy should not be used as a tool to deter TCNs for coming, it should rather be simplified and aim to further attract TCNs who offer a variety of different skills. The current national frameworks need to “widen their horizons” and take into consideration the globalised world in which we live. In times when the world has never been more connected, it is rather obvious that lengthy procedures block the much-needed exchange of different knowledge and skills. Diversity is the greatest gift that can enrich every society.

Although current national frameworks and policies do not correspond with the TCNs needs and challenges they are facing with while trying to be successfully integrated into the labour market, there is still a bright spot in this process of integration. Non-governmental organisations in all researched countries initiated different initiatives and projects that facilitate this process of integration, filling out the gaps often-times left by institutions. In order to present these good practices, project partners conducted interviews with representatives of NGOs and institutions who building opportunities for TCNs and their successful integration. You can read about these innovative initiatives in our second report, Best Practices Report, which shows the power of diversity and importance of recognising it and opening the doors of our societies.



IMPRESSUM

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