

Social inclusion of refugees and migrants – reality and perspectives*

Włączenie społeczne uchodźców i migrantów – rzeczywistość i perspektywy

Abstract: The article presents some basic aspects of the social integration and social inclusion of refugees and migrants in European Union countries over the past few years. Facts that reflect the real situation are presented, as well as comments related to them.

Keywords: *social integration, social inclusion, refugees, migrants*

Abstrakt: W artykule omówiono niektóre podstawowe aspekty integracji społecznej uchodźców/migrantów w krajach Unii Europejskiej w ciągu ostatnich kilku lat. Przedstawione są fakty odzwierciedlające rzeczywistą sytuację, a także związane z nimi uwagi.

Słowa kluczowe: *integracja społeczna, uchodźcy, migranci*

In the last years the increasing number of migrants, part of them – refugees, is an reality for Europe. There are a variety of reasons somebody to come to borders of the European Union to ask to enter – legally or illegally. When migrants enter the territory of some European country, number of issues regarding their integration and inclusion arise.

Some main topics – prerequisites for effective integration of migrants in the host society will be presented in this paper.

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Providing access to information related to their social orientation in the new society in the language (s) that are spoken by migrants

This is a necessary condition for them to know the availability of different opportunities for housing, labour market realization, cultural adaptation etc. Some comments on the situation in Sofia/Bulgaria illustrate rather insufficiency of information resources in this direction: "... information about resources and services online is rarely available (translated) in English beyond the option to choose a language. There is an inconsistent design of webpages of different national agencies which further impedes the communication process between city administration and TCN¹."; "...there are no standard procedures and practices for provision of information materials available at the offices of the main institutions such as the Employment Agency and the network of employment bureaus, the Agency for Social Assistance. Information materials in Bulgarian, Russian and English have been prepared and are disseminated only through the Information center for Migrant Integration run by the International Organisation for Migration [Lozanova, Voynova, Gabova, 2018, p. 11]".

Housing as a condition for social integration

Housing is a very important for migrants/refugees to feel more secure in the new place of living. Some towns have a decisions regarding number of places that could be used from such people. Here is an illustration of such practice in Slovakia: "The City of Košice provides five rental apartments (social housing) to TCN, specifically for people under international protection (asylum seekers or holders of subsidiary protection). These apartments are located in the middle of heavily populated urban residential area ("where there are mostly high-rise blocks of flats"), in close proximity to local inhabitants. The City of Košice has outsourced the housing services and operation to a non-profit Marginal, which provides services to clients on a daily basis. The price of rent is 1/3 or 1/2 of the commercial rent, but clients complain about the low quality of the apartments. However, the number of such apartments for people in need is very low due the limited number of social housing units in the City of Košice [Czikková, Mačáková, 2018, p. 30]."

The presence of a concentration of migrants from the same nationality or culture in some urban districts is an issue that is commented in the literature. For example, "Prague has not (yet) registered the phenomenon of migrant neighbourhoods, occupied predominately by a specific migrant community",

¹ Third country nationals.

“The distribution of migrants across the Prague region is fairly even, although most of them have settled in the wider centre of the City /.../ (suburban city districts are much less occupied by foreigners than those closer to the city centre) [Covrigová, Kožíšek, Spiegelová, 2018, p. 7].”

Social inclusion by optimal realization in the labour market

Realization in the labour market is very important not only because the salary/earnings that are necessary for everyday life of the migrant/refugee and his family. The working place creates opportunities to meet with other people, not only with your status, your nationality or mother tongue. Communication with citizens from the host country is very important also for the learning the language of the new country. It could be presented a good example from Slovakia: “In Košice, some of the “new” TCN communities (e.g. Turkey, Syria, Iran, Ukraine & India) are more active and visible to the public and local inhabitants. People from these communities are better integrated into local life and the interaction has become natural (falafel or kebab restaurants, shisha bars and other businesses owned by Syrians, Turks, Israelis) [Czikková, Mačáková, 2018, p. 31].”

Data from distribution of foreigners at the labor market in Italy presents social places of migrants` activity: “Over a third of foreign residents (35.6%) perform non-qualified jobs, 29.3% work as a skilled worker, while only 6.7% are qualified professionals.” Here are “the percentages of immigrants employed in the following sectors: 74% of domestic workers, 56% of carers and 51% of street vendors, 39.8% of fishermen, shepherds and woodcutters, 30% of construction workers and agricultural laborers”. 1 million from 9.5 million working women, are foreigners [Segato, Capello, 2018, p. 12].

Attitudes to foreigners/migrants/refugees

Attitudes of the citizens of the host country as prerequisites for the social integration of migrants/refugees are very important. They could reflect on the citizens` behavior to migrants/refugees – as readiness to communicate, to interact, to help or unwillingness to do something for/with unwelcome foreigners.

Results from a “study of safety from 2015, which has been initiated by the City of Prague, Czech inhabitants of Prague consider migration and terrorism a problem and they are generally distrustful of Muslim immigrants. On the other hand, the best perceived group of immigrants, according to the study, were the Vietnamese. The vast majority of respondents stated that they feel safe around their homes [Covrigová, Kožíšek, Spiegelová, 2018, p. 9,7].”

It's very interesting to observe changes in attitudes to the people that migrate to European countries. One of the reasons is the intensity of the migrant streams last years and how different facts and situations with their participation reflect on social opinions. An example: according to "a media and perception analysis conducted by Leone Moressa Foundation, over the last years the term "foreigner" has gradually been replaced by the term "immigrant" in Italy's media discourse. The term "immigrant" is often used to negatively describe a not well identified group of foreign people linked to crime." The differences in attitudes to representatives of migrant groups are based on the opinion of Italian citizens on some indicators: "willingness to work", "honesty", "wealth" and "threat/ competitiveness". The results show that "Italian citizens generally perceive immigrants as poor people" and form "a picture of the more or less "accepted" nationalities in Italy": "the most popular nationalities are those best known and with whom Italians have daily relations: Philip-pines for domestic services and Ukraine for personal care services. The Chinese, who are well known and respected because they are very present in the urban fabric, are perceived as a threat especially due to their economic expansion (through the opening of shops or the acquisition of bars and restaurants). The least appreciated nationalities are the most numerous ones: Romanian, Albanian and Moroccan [Segato, Capello, 2018, p. 11]."

This change of terms – from "foreigners" to "migrants" provokes some additional comments and interpretations. The reasons to come in other country are different. You could be tourist, student, labor migrant, asylum seeker, refugee – each of these social roles are related to the word "foreigner". The first is more "temporary" than others (he/she will be in my country only some days and their stay is good for my country from economical point of view).The status of labor migrant, asylum seeker, refugees is different – the duration of the stay in the host country depends from different factors. This should be taken into account in the design of approaches for changing negative attitudes toward this group of foreigners.

Social interaction between representatives of different cultures

Communication and interaction between majority and minorities, representatives of the host country and refugees/migrants is necessary for mutual understanding and willing for common activities. This is a condition for social inclusion of foreigners to the everyday life in the new country.

But sometimes this interaction is embarrassed because of the unwillingness of the migrants to communicate with people from different communities than theirs and the vice versa.

Such conclusion is made for some of the migrant communities in Rubano, Italy where “there is no common will to cultivate relationships between different cultures aimed to foster mutual exchange and understanding”. For immigrants is more typical when they have some problems “to rely on their own family networks and TCN communities” (including issues related to children). In contrast to “their parents, foreign children do not experience particular problems in terms of integration, as they are usually fluent in the Italian language”.

Some national groups are “internally divided into different ethnic groups”, for example – Nigerians are divided into Ibo and Oruba. This “poses an additional challenge in their relations with the Italian people”. “Immigrants from Senegal generally refuse to be involved in the events organized by the Municipality. Immigrants from Cameroon are generally well integrated into the Italian society, although they tend to spend their time among themselves [Segato, Capello, 2018, p. 23].”

Some perspectives for optimal social inclusion of refugees and migrants in European countries could be outlined on the base of presented results from studies in 5 countries of the European Union:

- Realization of a “cross-sectoral local integration” approach that include components as “housing, education, employment, health social support...” to create “highly participative process involving different stakeholders”. Thus “city authorities will take leadership in creating multicultural atmosphere, encourage civil society engagement to provide social support and create new networks, facilitate local stakeholders, insure preparation and education for schools and health service providers, adopt local institutions to better reflect diversity and create inclusive local policies for the future” [Havelka, Relić, Poljak, 2018, p. 27]. It’s necessary because “the process of integration is multi-faceted” and the city administration “needs to work in collaboration with all stakeholders (relevant national authorities such as ministries, businesses, schools etc.), in order to meet national standards and integration priorities and to use sparse resources more efficiently”. This includes also “a stronger collaboration with the civil society sector and the expertise of NGOs” [Lozanova, Voynova, Gabova, 2018, p. 23].

- It's very important "to support migrants and refugees in finding a job, engaging in education (whether they are children or adults)" and learning the official language of the host country [Havelka, Relić, Poljak, 2018, p.27].
- For prevention of "spatial segregation in the future", "cooperation with employers seems to be crucial in order to manage economic migration" [Czikková, Mačáková, 2018, p. 47].
- Working on elaboration of different information resources for refugees and migrants "about all aspects of the integration process (legal, economic, social, cultural, etc.)".
- Develop activities to foster "intercultural sensitivity, facilitating intercultural dialogue and raising the awareness" of citizens from the host country "to live and work in an increasingly multicultural environment" [Lozanova, Voynova, Gabova, 2018, p. 23].

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