

Acceptance of immigrants by majority in Slovakia

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Abstract: One of the most important moments in modern Europe - fall of the Berlin Wall - took place as part of a great historical change, which affected migration flows all around the region. Since the year 1989, “flow” of people crossing Slovakia (Czechoslovakian) borders experienced literally a U-turn. While people had been mostly trying to get from totalitarian rule during the “communist era”, when the borders opened, (Czecho)Slovakia began to welcome back repatriates and foreigners coming to the country with business offers or seeking job opportunities.

After integration of Slovakia into the EU, the “flow” of migrants strengthened, while people coming to Slovakia were mostly migrants heading further to the West. The situation is changing now – still more and more migrants chose Slovakia as their country of destination. However, the Slovak society is not ready yet. Even governmental offices often do not provide proper help and sometimes are even themselves “the problem”.

Key words: immigration, Slovak society, acceptance, general public, government.

Introduction

In the times of the biggest movements of Europe's population, when analysts openly talk about a migrant/refugee crisis, our goal is to present the attitude of Slovakia's public towards immigrants. We will try to answer the following research questions:

1. Can we characterize the official state immigration/immigrants' integration policy of Slovakia as welcoming/open, or rather as closed towards immigrants?
2. Is the general public "immigrants-friendly", i.e. can it be seen as welcoming/open, or rather as closed?

To answer these questions, we will approach the issue from two different perspectives: Since, in democratic countries, government shall be a representation of public's opinion, the parts 2 and 3 of the paper will describe an official state immigration and immigrants' incorporation policy of the Slovak Republic and its effective implementation in practise. While the chapter "2. Statistics" will show the development of the immigration to Slovakia through statistics as a reflection of the country's immigration policy, the part "3. Acceptance by the government" will focus on the acceptance of immigrants by the Slovak government, i.e. what are the migrants' possibilities to access nationality (citizenship), labour market, education, long-term residence, and nationality, as well as how they are protected against discrimination. Thanks to the Migration Integration Policy Index III¹, we will compare particular parts of

¹ HUDDLESTON, Thomas; NIELSSEN, Jan; CHAOIMH, Eadaoin Ni; WHITE, Emilie: *Migration Integration Policy Index III*, British Council and Migration Policy Group, Brusel 2011.

the immigration policy of Slovakia with those of policies of the other EU+² countries.

Slovakian public's attitude towards the immigrants will be described in the fourth part of this paper based on recent researches. The last part will describe the situation in the country after the recent events in the Mediterranean regions that raised awareness about the immigration issue in Europe.

Theoretical Approach

Taking into consideration the nature of the paper, our main methods used are to be: comparison and content analyses of secondary resources.

Based on the MIPEX^{3,4} index, an interactive tool, which “measures policies to integrate migrants in all EU Member States, Australia, Canada, Iceland, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey and the USA”, we will provide description of the effective immigration/immigrants' integration policy of the Slovak Government, and compare its attitude towards immigrants with the other studied countries.

² The index compares 38 countries altogether: EU member states plus some more countries like Switzerland, Norway, Canada, or USA.

³ HUDDLESTON, Thomas; NIELSSEN, Jan; CHAOIMH, Eadaoin Ni; WHITE, Emilie: *Migration Integration Policy Index III*, British Council and Migration Policy Group, Brusel 2011.

⁴ Accessible on internet: <http://mipex.eu/slovakia> [01.07.2015].

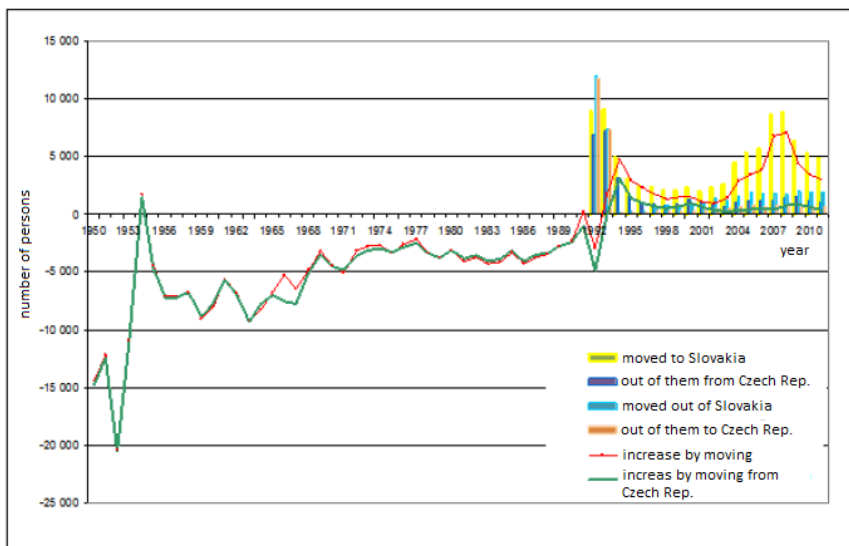
In the chapter “4. Acceptance by the public”, we will work with two recent studies focused on the public’s attitude towards immigrants. First of them was focused on “cultural diversity and how it was perceived by grammar school students in Slovakia” and the second describing “experiences of migrants with violence in Slovakia”. These two researches shall provide us with an overview of the actual attitude of the general public towards immigration and immigrants. A method that will be used here: content analyses.

Statistics

Before we describe the situation regarding the acceptance of immigrants, it is necessary to provide figures that would help to picture the recent development of migration (with accent on immigration) from/to Slovakia.

Year of 1989, the year of the Velvet revolution in Czecho-Slovakia, was a milestone in migration for both of the countries to be: While people had been mostly trying to escape the totalitarian rule during the “communist era”, when the borders opened, (Czecho)Slovakia began to welcome back repatriates and foreigners coming to the country with business offers or seeking job opportunities. This can be viewed in the Table Nr. 1. As shown in the Table, this development took place very gradually after the first big wave of emigrants leaving the country towards the West.

Tab. Nr. 1: Cross-border migration of Slovakia (1950-2011)



Source: KÁČEROVÁ, Marcela; HORVÁTHOVÁ, Radka: International Migration of Slovakia – Demographic And Spatial Aspects. In: Slovak Statistics and Demography 2/2014. p. 34.

After accession of Slovakia to the European Union in 2004, the “flow” of migrants strengthened, while people coming to Slovakia were mostly migrants heading further to the West. As shown in the Table Nr. 2, this was also the year, when the country recorded the highest number of applications for asylum.

Tab. Nr. 2: Asylum and Subsidiary protection granted in Slovakia

Year	Number of applications for asylum	Asylum granted	Asylum not granted	Subsidiary protection granted /not granted	Stopped procedures	Citizenship granted
1993	96	1	0		25	0
1994	140	8	2		65	0
1995	359	0	7		190	0
1996	415	2	2		193	4
1997	645	9	4		539	14
1998	506	3	6		224	22
1999	1320	6	76		1034	2
2000	1556	1	23		1366	0
2001	8151	8	30		6154	11
2002	9743	0	09		8053	59
2003	10358	1	31		10656	42
2004	11395	5	592		11782	20

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2005	3549	5	27		2930	2
2006	2849		61		1940	5
2007	2642	4	177	82/646	1693	18
2008	909	2	16	66/273	457	4
2009	822	4	30	98/165	460	1
2010	541	5	80	57/101	361	3
2011	491	2	86	91/47	270	7
2012	732	2	34	104/153	383	0
2013	441	5	24	34/49	352	7
2014	331	4	97	99/41	163	12
2015	109		1	31/14	91	0
Altogether	58 100	51	865	662/1 489	49 381	233

Source: Štatistiky. Accessible on the internet: <http://www.minv.sk/?statistiky-20> [15/08/2015].

These figures are especially in relation to the last part of this paper, in which we will assess current situation of the immigration issue in Slovakia.

According to the information provided by the International Organisation for Migration, the records from the following years show decrease of illegal and asylum based migration and threefold increase of legal migration. Even though the growth of foreigners in Slovakia was out of all EU member states the second highest in the years 2004-2008, the proportion of foreigners in the population remains low. Nowadays (2014), foreigners constitute 1,42 % of Slovakia's population (it was 5066 more persons than the year before). Altogether, there have been 76715 persons with residence permit living in Slovakia in 2014.⁵ The number of foreigners living in the country tripled since its accession to the EU in 2004. However, the proportion is still one of the lowest among the EU members.

Most of the foreigners living in Slovakia are citizens of the neighbouring countries, who are bond with the country by work, family and other social ties. Another significant minority is a group of citizens of South-East European countries (Romania, Bulgaria, Russia, Serbia). Migrants from Vietnam, China, South Korea, and Thailand (once a dynamically developing group of immigrants) represent less than 8% of all the foreigners nowadays (about 6000 persons altogether). Two thirds of all foreigners are citizens of the EU member states (with the biggest group of Czechs). Out of the third countries' citizens (29171 persons, i.e. 0,5% of Slovakia's population), Ukrainians constitute the biggest group, followed by citizens from Serbia, Russia, Vietnam, China and South Korea).

⁵ Migrácia na Slovensku. Accessible on the internet: <<http://www.iom.sk/sk/migracia/migracia-na-slovensku>> [15.08. 2015].

In 2014, 1304 persons crossed Slovakia's state borders into the country illegally. Taking into account the current situation in Europe, it is expected a raise of this number in 2015. However, since the main streams of immigrant coming to Europe from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq in recent months, have taken routes via Hungary and Slovenia, there are no records on a significant increase of the number of illegal immigrants coming to Slovakia yet.⁶

Acceptance by the government

In order to provide a comprehensive overview regarding the issue of acceptance of the immigrants by majority in the country, we have to describe the government's attitude, as government is a representation of the majority originated in democratic elections. Thanks to the MIPEX III (i.e. Migration Integration Policy Index 2015)⁷, we can (and will) compare the situation in Slovakia with other countries. We will focus on the issues as following: access to nationality (citizenship), access to labour market, access to education, access to long-term residence, access to nationality, and protection against discrimination with emphasis on the first field.

Access to Nationality

Conditions for foreigners for nationality (citizenship) to be granted became harsher by passing the last addendum to the Citizenship bill. Waiting

⁶ Migrácia na Slovensku. Accessible on the internet: <<http://www.iom.sk/sk/migracia/migracia-na-slovensku>> [15.08. 2015].

⁷ A rating comparing countries in individual parts of their immigration policies based on 148 different indicators. Accessible on internet: <http://mipex.eu/slovakia> [01.07.2015].

periods for naturalization process to be started are one of the longest in the EU. Applicants have to also follow restrictive and to a large extent subjective conditions. For example, they do not know how well they have to be able verbally to communicate in Slovak, as there is no bill to provide a language standard for this matter and no office neither provide sample questions, nor organize language courses for free. Situation with the necessary knowledge about Slovakia is very similar. The assessment of the knowledge is provided by non-specialized officers, which gives them room for their subjective assessments. The whole procedure can take up to 24 months and is one of the most expensive ones in the EU (663,50 EUR).⁸

Slovak citizenship is automatically granted after birth to a child, whose at least one parent is a citizen of the Slovak Republic, or whose parents are without any citizenship, or whose parents are citizens of other country (countries) and, after birth, the child is automatically granted citizenship of none of them. The gained Slovak citizenship remains untouched even if it is found out later that the the parent-citizen of Slovakia was not his/her parent. If there is no other citizenship known, the Slovak citizenship is automatically granted also to a child born or found on territory of the Slovak Republic, whose parents are not known and if it is not proved that he/she is granted citizenship of any other country.

The Slovak citizenship can be granted to an applicant:

- who, before applying for citizenship, had continuously stayed – based on their permanent residence – on territory of Slovakia for at least eight years;
- who is blameless;
- who has never been expelled by a court;

⁸ HUDDLESTON, Thomas; NIELSSEN, Jan; CHAOIMH, Eadaoin Ni; WHITE, Emilie: Ref. 1, s. 174.

- against whom there is no prosecution pending;
- who has shown his/her knowledge of Slovak language in speaking and writing, as well as his/her general knowledge about Slovakia;
- who meets all his/her obligations towards the state (paying medical and social insurance, paying taxes...)⁹

In case when migrant is a spouse of a citizen of Slovakia, the citizenship application can be submitted after already five years of living in Slovakia, if there are no immigration restriction applied against him/her at the moment. Access to citizenship is eased in case of persons with a significant contribution in favour of Slovakia in economic, scientific, technical, cultural, social or sport fields. The easier access would apply also in case of persons who continuously stayed – based on their permanent residence – in Slovakia for three years before becoming 18 years old, or who continuously stayed in Slovakia for at least 10 years and have already been granted permanent residence.

However, even after being granted citizenship, new status of the new citizens remains very unstable. By Slovak offices, they can be considered (pronounced) as never naturalized, regardless for how many years they have been Slovak citizens, or if they will stay without citizenship. The naturalized citizen can at least keep their original citizenship.¹⁰

According to the index, in general, the best rating was given to Portugal, Sweden, and Belgium. On the tail of the ranking, there are Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia is on the last place.

⁹ *Predpis č. 40/1993 Z.z. Zákon Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky o štátnom občianstve Slovenskej republiky. Ref. 22.*

¹⁰ HUDDLESTON, Thomas; NIELSSEN, Jan; CHAOIMH, Eadaoin Ni; WHITE, Emilie: Ref. 1, s. 174.

Access to labour market

According to the newest MIPEX 2015¹¹ ranking in access of immigrants to labour market, Slovakia is on 37th place out of 38 countries. Since the last MIPEX (III), no change in this field has been made. Therefore, access to labour market remains one of the biggest obstacles for immigrants living in Slovakia, especially for non-EU citizens, who are not granted the equal access, as it is a standard in many EU countries. Non-EU citizens are excluded from public sector, as well as from several regulated professions (unlike in almost all rated countries).

As non-EU qualifications are not being recognized by the Slovak authorities/employers, non-EU immigrants face significant problems while looking for jobs according to their skills. However, even education gained in Slovakia would not help them to public employment services, which are still restricted for non-EU citizens. Immigrants are restricted also in case of unemployment, maternity, disability, and housing benefits and non-EU citizen have to even leave Slovakia, if unemployed.

Access to education

There are neither integration strategies nor any support in Slovakia's schools, which would help immigrants' children to adapt to the new system and to catch up academically. Only children (of parents) with permanent residence can access full schooling and support for disadvantaged students. There are many children, who are excluded from the schooling system at all. There is a state support guaranteed to asylum seekers, but regular immigrant

¹¹ Labour Market Mobility. Accessible on internet: <http://mipex.eu/slovakia> [01.07.2015].

pupils are not protected by any measures. There is no financial or professional support for schools with newcomer pupils provided either.

Concerning multi-cultural education, this has been introduced in 2008 as a cross/curricular subject for all subjects. In order to implement this regulation, training on intercultural education for teachers has been introduced.

Slovak educational system does not take into consideration any new learning opportunities brought by immigration. Only EU citizens can take free lessons in their mother tongue, while non-EU citizens, none are granted. In general, immigrant pupils are put in disadvantaged schools together with low-educated mothers.¹²

Access to long-term residence

The process of granting permanent residence to immigrants is one of the most demanding and discretionary in Europe, MIPEX 2015 says. According to estimations, between two thirds and three quarters of non-EU citizens have lived more than 5 years (as required) in order to become permanent residents. Non-EU citizens must also to pass a “relatively restrictive and discretionary procedure” in order to become permanent residents. It is not possible to prepare properly for the language/integration conditions at renewal, as the authorities “exert wide discretion in implementing them”.¹³

Even being a permanent resident of Slovakia, one’s status is one of the most insecure of all assessed countries, as it still depends on discretionary

¹² Education. Accessible on internet: <<http://mipex.eu/slovakia>> [01.07.2015].

¹³ Permanent residence. Accessible on internet: <<http://mipex.eu/slovakia>> [01.07.2015].

decisions of the administration. Permanent residence can be withdrawn from the immigrant, who applies for a benefit in case of material distress. Another example is withdrawal after leaving the EU beyond 180 days without permission. In general, the procedure of granting the permanent residence is one of those lacking explicit rules, which gives discretion to the administration and means a risk of being abused. Temporary residents on tolerated stay are ineligible for permanent residence.

Protection against discrimination

In spite of existing anti-discrimination law, weak equality policies can be the cause behind the fact that “potential victims are poorly informed and supported to take even the first step in the long path to justice”.¹⁴ Slovakia has implemented significant changes in recent years in order to protect the population against discrimination. About one third of Slovakia’s population knows their rights as discrimination victims. However, low level of trust in police and justice system is the reason why immigrants, who only rarely naturalize, are less likely to report discrimination. In 2013, this phenomenon was an object of a research focused on “experience with violence of migrants in Slovakia”.¹⁵ The researchers paid significant attention to six main fields, where the violence is committed on immigrants: violence and hate conflict, violence at work, human trafficking, home violence, symbolic violence, and institutional violence. Their results confirmed the data from MIPEX 2015.

¹⁴ Anti-discrimination. Accessible on internet: <<http://mipex.eu/slovakia>> [01.07.2015].

¹⁵ BLAŽEK, Matej; ANDRÁŠOVÁ, Soňa; PAULENOVÁ, Nina: Skúsenosti migrantov a migrantiek na Slovensku s násilím. IOM Medzinárodná organizácia pre migráciu, Bratislava 2013.

Among the causes that led to the project, the researchers listed also lack of data. To illustrate the issue, they informed about their astonishing finding that "available police statistics did not show victims by nationality, but foreigners as perpetrators of crimes did recognize specifically". The authors of the research, basic documents of the Government on migration: the 2011 "Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic – Perspective until the year 2020" and the 2009 "Concept for integration of foreigners in the Slovak Republic". According to the authors, the conceptual framework of public policy sees migration "primarily as a security threat or a utilitarian tool in order to fulfill Slovakia's interests, not as a life situation of potential victims of violence and abuse". According to the current statistical overview, despite the upward trend in the number of residence permits granted between 2004 (22,108) and 2011 (66,191), Slovakia is the third last in the European Union in ratio of third country citizens in the population. Of all the member states of the European Union's position is drawn up on the basis of the share of third countries' nationals in the total population found itself in third place from the end (for Poland aa Bulgaria). In rating based on total number of migrants from third countries, Slovakia ended up even on the second last place (after Malta).¹⁶

Immigrants living in Slovakia in general do not see or experience support from state institutions. The researchers analyzed the question where immigrants look for help and support, if in need, and would bring results as following¹⁷:

¹⁶ BLAŽEK, Matej; ANDRÁŠOVÁ, Soňa; PAULENOVÁ, Nina: Skúsenosti migrantov a migrantiek na Slovensku s násilím. IOM Medzinárodná organizácia pre migráciu, Bratislava 2013.

¹⁷ BLAŽEK, Matej; ANDRÁŠOVÁ, Soňa; PAULENOVÁ, Nina: Skúsenosti migrantov a migrantiek na Slovensku s násilím. IOM Medzinárodná organizácia pre migráciu, Bratislava 2013.

How often do immigrants – forced labour victims – ask for institutional help:			
	Never	Sometimes	Often or regularly
Police	49,2	38,4	12,3
Doctor	20,9	52,7	26,4
Embassy	28,7	63,1	8,2
Aid organizations	64,1	31,7	4,2
Church	69,2	19,7	11,1

How often is adequate institutional help provided to forced labour victims, if they ask for it:			
	Never	Sometimes	Often or regularly
Police	53,8	34,5	11,7
Doctor	24,1	39,3	36,7
Embassy	31,8	51,2	16,9
Aid organizations	56,2	26,2	17,6
Church	69,7	17,3	13,0

How often do immigrants – home violence victims – ask for institutional help:			
	Never	Sometimes	Often or regularly
Police	45,1	42,6	12,3
Doctor	21,1	41,6	37,3
Embassy	31,6	55,3	13,1
Aid	43,8	42,1	14,1

organizations			
Church	56,3	35,8	7,9

How often is adequate institutional help provided to home violence victims, if they ask for it:			
	Never	Sometimes	Often or regularly
Police	56,3	36,1	7,6
Doctor	24,5	31,7	43,8
Embassy	24,5	53,4	23,1
Aid organizations	31,7	41,1	27,2
Church	56,3	32,7	11,0

As the figures show that immigrants trust doctors the most. Police for example is not an institution that would be asked for help or support very often. The lack of trust in police and other institution is caused by the fact, that even if the immigrants ask for help, they only rarely receive an adequate support or help. In general, immigrants trust NGOs (informal institutions) more than any formal institution, as it is shown in the following tables, using data for three most vulnerable groups of immigrants¹⁸.

¹⁸ BLAŽEK, Matej; ANDRÁŠOVÁ, Soňa; PAULENOVÁ, Nina: Skúsenosti migrantov a migrantiek na Slovensku s násilím. IOM Medzinárodná organizácia pre migráciu, Bratislava 2013.

How often is adequate help received from formal institutions:			
	Never	Sometimes	Often or regularly
Altogether	24,7	31,8	43,5
Ukraine	18,8	37,2	44,0
Vietnam	36,2	43,1	20,7
Thailand	35,4	56,9	7,7

How often is adequate help received from non-formal institutions:			
	Never	Sometimes	Often or regularly
Altogether	7,8	13,9	78,3
Ukraine	8,2	13,4	78,4
Vietnam	3,7	33,5	62,8
Thailand	15,6	42,8	41,6

Concerning specific problematic behavior of institutions, immigrants mentioned their experience with¹⁹:

1. Unwillingness to communicate in other than Slovak language, or to arrange translation
2. Refusal to help or to give advice
3. Refusal to communicate at all
4. Humiliation, making fun of

¹⁹ BLAŽEK, Matej; ANDRÁŠOVÁ, Soňa; PAULENOVÁ, Nina: Skúsenosti migrantov a migrantiek na Slovensku s násilím. IOM Medzinárodná organizácia pre migráciu, Bratislava 2013.

5. Intentional misleading or misinforming
6. Abuse of power
7. Asking for a bribe
8. Shouting
9. Threatening
10. Physical violence

Acceptance by the public

When a researcher wants to find out public's opinion on some issue, he/she shall try to get to the most sincere answers. In 2008²⁰, Slovak Center for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture decided to conduct a research addressing the most sincere respondents – pupils (of 8th or 9th grade, i.e. 13-14 years old). They had chosen the 955 respondents based on a principle of representation of the society according to their gender, size of their hometown and region. The researchers measured the overall attitude of the respondents to a cultural diversity in three dimensions:

1. Emotional (what feelings are awoken by cultural diversity);
2. Cognitive (up to what extent are the respondents in need of knowing minorities and migrants); and
3. Conative (up to what extent are young people willing to integrate with culturally different groups).

²⁰ Results of the research were published in 2009 in: GALLOVÁ KRIGLEROVÁ, Elena; KADLEČÍKOVÁ, Jana: Kultúrna rozmanitosť a jej vnímanie žiakmi základných škôl na Slovensku. Nadácia otvorenej spoločnosti – Open Society Foundation, Bratislava 2009

The results showed that, in general, 9-graders rather welcomed cultural diversity, than declined. It means that they are not a priori negatively set towards cultural difference and diversity, or they do not refuse it at least. The researchers pointed out an interesting finding that their attitude was not related to the fact whether there were any minorities or migrants living in their environment, or how often the respondents met them. A positive relation was found in cases when pupils had had an experience directly from their families, or among their friends. The way the pupils see minorities and migrants, is very much influenced by the fact whether they learn about them at schools. At schools, where topics as migration, ethnic minorities, human rights, cultural diversity, the pupils (more than 70 %) saw cultural diversity much more positively than the ones (about 60 %) from schools, where they do not pay attention to these topics. Even though, in general, knowledge of pupils about migrants and minorities is weak, most of them (more than 70 %) do not see as necessary to learn about them more.

In the conative dimension, when asked about willing to meet or even to stand up for members of culturally different groups, the most differentiating factor was gender, as more than 80 % of girls answered positively, while only little more than 54 % boys did. Again, the responses were influenced by having or not having learning about different cultures in the pupils' curriculum.

Apart from that, a general view of pupils toward migrants and minorities is influenced the most by their contact with the groups. The more they meet them (in their family, among friends...), the more tolerant towards cultural diversity they were and the more positive their responses in general were.

In relation to refugees, Slovakia's society is often influenced by prejudice and fears. Among pupils, one third stated that refugees impose danger to Slovakia. However, 70 % respondents said that refugees should be given a chance to start a new life in Slovakia. More than 76 % of 9-graders said

that refugees were people, who had to leave their country, because they were afraid that their life was in danger and that is why we must help them.

However, 45 % respondents said that refugees transmit diseases. Almost one quarter sees refugees positively, while 9,3 % negatively.²¹

When talking about the acceptance by the public in Slovakia, I shall come back to the already mentioned research focused on “experience with violence of migrants in Slovakia”.²² In general, it is not easy to declare an overall satisfaction of immigrants with that how accepted they are in Slovakia, as it can be also seen in the following table:

How much accepted do you feel to be in Slovakia? (in %)					
	1 Fully accepted	2	3	4	5 Not accepted at all
er Altogeth	30,2	26,2	28,0	8,9	6,8
and Eastern South- Eastern Europe	39,7	25,7	22,2	8,0	4,3
and Eastern South- Eastern Asia	15,7	15,8	39,9	12,7	15,9

²¹ GALLOVÁ KRIGLEROVÁ, Elena; KADLEČÍKOVÁ, Jana: Kultúrna rozmanitosť a jej vnímanie žiakmi základných škôl na Slovensku. Nadácia otvorenej spoločnosti – Open Society Foundation, Bratislava 2009

²² BLAŽEK, Matej; ANDRÁŠOVÁ, Soňa; PAULENOVÁ, Nina: Skúsenosti migrantov a migrantiek na Slovensku s násilím. IOM Medzinárodná organizácia pre migráciu, Bratislava 2013.

Concerning their feelings about whether they have the same rights and duties as Slovak citizens, immigrants replied as following:

Can you say that you have the same rights and duties as Slovak citizens? (in %)		
	...rights	...duties
Yes	46,0	37,6
No	54,0	62,4

When analysing violence committed on migrants, we can distinguish between three main types of violence: physical hate attacks, verbal hate attacks, and hate threatening. The research²³ brought us the following results:

Physical hate attacks experienced by immigrants in Slovakia (in %)	
Groups of migrants according to their descent	Experience with the violence
Altogether	6,1
Eastern Europe	4,6
Eastern Asia	2,0
Muslim countries	9,9
African community	18,7

²³ BLAŽEK, Matej; ANDRÁŠOVÁ, Soňa; PAULENOVÁ, Nina: Skúsenosti migrantov a migrantiek na Slovensku s násilím. IOM Medzinárodná organizácia pre migráciu, Bratislava 2013.

Verbal hate attacks experienced by immigrants in Slovakia (in %)	
Groups of migrants according to their descent	Experience with the violence
Altogether	21,3
Eastern Europe	23,9
Eastern Asia	8,5
Muslim countries	27,1
African community	37,5
Men from Ukraine	36,6

Hate threatening experienced by immigrants in Slovakia (in %)	
Groups of migrants according to their descent	Experience with the violence
Altogether	8,2
Eastern Europe	8,5
Eastern Asia	4,1
Muslim countries	10,3
African community	14,6
Men from Ukraine	12,2

Immigrants coming to Slovakia are coming for work or other economic opportunities. They face violence caused by the majority, even though most of them (70 %) work. They are often threatened or simply ignored by the public. On the other hand, they often do not see it as violence (verbal attacks, threatening), as they compare their situation with the one they were experiencing back at home.

Recent events

Europe is facing a humanitarian crisis caused by failing of the European governments as well as the European Union effectively to approach the hundreds of thousands of migrants coming to their borders on boats or by foot. Some analysts would call it a migrants' crisis, but as most of the migrants are fleeing Syria and Eritrea, they shall be rather considered as refugees. Of course, their status should be confirmed during individual asylum process, but taking into account the percentage of Syrians and Eritreans among the migrants, they shall be called (and treated) more like refugees, so a "refugee crisis" would be more accurate for the current situation.

Position of Slovakia in the crisis is "to refuse and to ignore". When it has been decided in Brussels that all the EU member states should help Italy to redistribute 40,000 Syrian and Eritrean asylum seekers, Slovakia was one of the few countries, which refused the "quotas". According to them, Slovakia was about to arrange an asylum process to about 700 seekers. The government refused to accept any of them. Later, the Slovak government gained the international community's attention (and shame), when they decided to accept a couple of hundreds of Christian families from Syria. The following quota (based on the new numbers of migrants coming to Europe counted by hundreds of thousands) announced later by Brussels as obligatory, was refused by Slovakia as well.

Apart from that, a recent survey²⁴ showed that after unemployment (43,1 %) "problems with immigrants" were stated by 39,7 % respondents after

²⁴ *Prieskum: Najväčším problémom Slovenska je nezamestnanosť*. Accessible on internet: <<http://www.sme.sk/c/7936858/prieskum-najvacsim-problemom-slovenska-je-nezamestnanost.html>> [29.07.2015].

being asked, what are the biggest problems that Slovakia is facing at the moment.

Conclusion

Even though Slovakia (Czechoslovakia) had experienced decades of negative migration, when Slovaks were fleeing the country in order to start a new (free, better...) life abroad, current Slovak Government's and society's attitude is not accepting, not welcoming. The attitude of the government can be seen from the MIPEX ratings, where the country in almost all the fields remains on one of the last places for years. No significant changes are being done and foreigners coming to Slovakia are rather being harassed by the offices, instead of being welcomed and helped to start a new life. Asylums are almost never being granted and any status of immigrants in Slovakia is very fragile. Therefore, based on our research, we can answer the first research question by conclusion that the official state immigration/immigrants' integration policy of Slovakia is openly closed towards immigrants.

As there are only a small number of foreigners living in Slovakia, the majority does not know them and often does not see a necessity to know more about them. Even though young people (mostly from schools with inter-cultural education) are more willing to accept and welcome foreigners in the country, their neighbourhood or school, adults are able to point immigrants out as the second biggest problem of Slovakia. The second research question should therefore be answered negatively as well: the general public in Slovakia cannot be described as "immigrants-friendly", i.e. it is rather closed than welcoming/open. On top of that, the government is not even trying to change this situation.

Slovakia and Europe is standing on doorstep of a new era – the numbers of immigrants fleeing the war zones towards the Old Continent will

only rise – and it is essential for the Government to change its attitude, while there is a time to deal with the situation. On the other hand, it is an obligation of us – the researchers – to provide a possible alternative based on relevant research.

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