THE LOCAL INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS: EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

The paper focuses on the issue of migrant integration at the local level in Czechia. The number of legal migrants in the Czech society reached 5%, and their integration has become challenging. The state framework of migrant integration is formulated in regularly updated “Conception of Integration of Foreigners in the CR”. Nevertheless, the role of the state in this area is often substituted by the civil society actors. The paper focuses on the key role of local governments in migrant integration, which remains to be understudied in the CEE. The paper aims to analyse the present development of migrant integration policies with emphasis on the local level. Based on empirical research, it explores selected regions and their approaches to migrant integration. By drawing on the typology of multilevel governance and the theory of network governance, the study is based on empirical research of migrant integration policies at the level of local governments. Using an example of two selected regions (the Liberecky region and the South Moravian Region) and the capital Prague, it analyses the current development in migrant (local) integration in the CR. Furthermore, it compares these three self-governing bodies from the perspective of their structural approach towards migrant integration. The study uses interviews with stakeholders, content analysis of documents, comparison and generalisation as the main research methods. The visualisation of regional networks in the area of migrant integration is used to analyse and demonstrate the capacity of selected regions to deal with migrant integration. Finally, the conclusion discusses both practical and theoretical implications for integration policies in the Czechia and possibly in the V4 region.

Keywords: Czech Republic, integration policies, local integration, migrants, network governance

Points for Practitioners: will be added

1. Introduction

During the last thirty years, the migration to the Czech Republic (CR) have been almost constantly increasing, and the number of immigrants reached 5.2 % of the population in 2018. Although the country remains highly reluctant to accept any refugees, the economic migration has accelerated in speed and scale, and the CR has become more diverse in terms of migrants’ characteristics and patterns of spatial distribution (cf. Martinelli, 2014). The trend towards more diverse society is likely to continue. Current economic situation attracts an increasing number of economic migrants and the experience from the economic crisis in 2009 shows that regardless of the economic situation, the number of migrants is not likely to decrease. Also, the number of migrants with the permanent permit (which ensures much safer status) is gradually growing, and family migration is on the rise. The regions (in particular cities) witness an increase in the population with a migrant background. However, they also experience what Vertrovec (2001) calls the superdiversity: an increase in the scale of diversity from the perspective of different migration motives, different backgrounds, groups and other characteristics such as religion or culture. It is primarily regions and cities that need to develop a response to more diversified society and that face the challenge of integrating a significant number of people with different migrant backgrounds. Many scholars (e.g. P. W. A. Scholten, Collett, & Petrovic, 2017) claim that migrant integration involves a highly politically contested issue. In the case of the CR, this is valid only partly. Despite the increasing diversity of the Czech population, the (national) migrant integration policies exist but remain largely neglected and do not receive much significant political attention. We might suggest, that the limited attention is partly caused by the structure of the largest migrant groups, which are Ukrainians (131 700), Slovaks (116 800) and Vietnamese (61 100). The two largest groups are linguistically and culturally close to Czechs (and thus their integration does not appear that challenging), and Vietnamese have developed specific but rather efficient own integration strategies (for more see Freidingerová, 2014). Possibly, these aspects and the absence of security issues such as terrorist attacks or higher criminality lead to the situation when the migrant integration policies remain invisible.

Nevertheless, the influx of migrants still poses critical challenges in terms of local governance of migration-related diversity. In the past, the migrant integrations studies were preoccupied with studies of the different types of national integration models (Bertossi & Duyvendak, 2012; Joppke, 2007) and later with the vertical aspects of migrant integration governance which assumed top-down mechanism of coordination. In consequence, several studies revealed that “local governments not only in developing their own integration policies but also in setting
their ideas on the agenda of national governments and sometimes even the EU” (P. Scholten & van Nispen, 2015, p. 974). Scholars also paid enormous attention to local dimensions of integration policies and understanding how and why local integration policies developed in response to specific local challenges (Caponio & Borkert, 2010; P. Scholten, 2018; P. Scholten & van Nispen, 2015; Zapata-Barrero, 2015). Still, very few studies on migrant integration policies have focused on the horizontal relationship between different actors within particular local governments.

Although the (Czech) national government plays a key role in local, national and transnational policy processes on migrant integration, it is nevertheless to some extent “de-governmentalized” (Sorensen & Torfing, 2005, p. 195) since the local level response to particular challenges and thus sets also its own agenda. Besides, the formulation and implementation of local migrant integration policies take places through various interactive forms of governance, and many actors such as NGOs, quasi-non-governmental agencies, international networks, quasi-markets or public-private partnership are involved (ibid). Like in other European countries, the migrant integration in the CR became an issue of multilevel governance as the coordination of policies becomes a complex process involving multiple actors at various levels and across numerous policy domains (P. W. A. Scholten et al., 2017).

The article aims to examine the role of Czech local governments in migrant integration policies. The study especially stresses their activities, capacities, strategical documents and networks in the investigated area. Furthermore, it seeks to understand to what extent and if so, why do vertical relations trigger frame alignment or rather divergence from the national policies. The Scholten’s (2013) typology of four types of multilevel governance is used to analyse this alignment or divergence. The article also applies the framework of network governance to understand the complexity of actors’ involvement and the dynamic behind these policies. We believe that the comparison of different network schemes together with the analysis of local policy programs will also shed light on the abilities and needs of local governments to answer the challenges of diversifying society.

Following case studies of three Czech regions, the article analysis both their migrant integration policies (policy programmes and measures) and their governance of integration (policy coordination and policy networks). The article addresses these two main research questions: Which migrant integration policies (programs, measures) were adopted at these local levels? What are the characteristics of networks in selected regions that foster migrant integration?

We organise the paper as follows. First, we explain the four types of multi-level governance typology and introduce the theory of governance networks. Second, we present the methodology. Third, we outline the development of Czech migrant integration policies and the empirical findings from three selected Czech regions with the stress on both form and informal networks in these regions including their visualisation. Finally, after the discussion of results we provide several policy implications and suggest future directions for research on local migrant integration policies.

2. Theoretical framework

The paper uses the typology of multi-level governance outline by Scholten (2013) (who builds on Sabatier’s (1986) findings), and the theory of governance networks to better understand the role of Czech local governments in migrant integration.

In his study on migrant integration policies and the multilevel governance Scholten (2018; 2015; 2013) defines various ways in typology that distinguishes between four ideal type configurations of relations between government levels: centralist (top-down and state-centric), localist (bottom-up, with local governments taking an entrepreneurial role in relation to other policy levels), decoupled (polices at different levels that are barely mutually coordinated) and multi-level governance (weak central policies and differentiated perspective on problems but adequate vertical relations between various levels). Scholten (2018, p. 18) stresses that the local turn of integration policies holds several implications for multilevel governance. Under the centralist model, the local government primarily implements national policies and uses state funding to fulfil state goals. The decoupled type model also implements its policies and usually sends different messages to the same policy target groups. In this case, the local and national policies may disconnect (due to politicisation at the national level and problem-solving at the local level). More localist types often become increasingly active and make an effort for political measures at the national (or European) level. Scholten (ibid.) notes that in some countries (e.g. Germany) institutionalised relations between national and local governments have evolved towards his definition of multi-level governance and various multi-level venues for coordination of integration policies (e.g. regular national conferences) were established.
The theory of network governance was developed as a response to transformations of state and society that have increased the importance of governance networks in formulating and implementing public policy. Governance networks are formed at the local, national and transnational levels, and produce new forms of multi-level governance (Scharpf, 1999). The networks can be understood as a broad generic category with a great number of sub-categories (Carlsson, 2000). Torfing (2005, p. 307) defines the governance network as: “(1) relatively stable horizontal articulations of interdependent, but operationally autonomous actors who (2) interact with one another through negotiations which (3) take place within a regulative, normative, cognitive and imaginary framework that is (4) self-regulating within limits set by external forces and which (5) contributes to the production of public purpose”. Networks differ in size, length of duration, composition, an intensity of communication, patterned relations, density, and other structural properties. They can either be self-grown or initiated from above; they might be dominated by loose and informal contacts or take the form of tight and formalized networks (Sorensen & Torfing, 2005, p. 197).

Although there are several approaches to network governance (see Jones, Hesterly, & Borgatti, 1997), all of them assume that whether or not governance is conducted in networks makes a crucial difference for individual and collective learning and, indirectly, for the quality of governance outcomes (Head, 2008). The structural properties of a governance network have an impact on individual and collective learning in the context of environmental management. Nevertheless, with rare exception (Carlsson, 2000; Newig, Günther, & Pahl-Wostl, 2010; Sandström & Carlsson, 2008), the “impact of networks” received very little attention. Sandström and Carlsson (2008), using SNA techniques, partly elucidate the relationship between network structure and network performance. They propose that “if policy networks are too dense and homogeneous, they might be less innovative; if they are too heterogeneous, they will get little done, inability to mobilize the necessary resources (not only in the monetary sense) to solve particular policy problems could be referred to the absence of involvement of relevant actors” (ibid, 518).

3. Research questions and methodology

The investigation of local governance in terms of migrant integration policies is highly understudied not only in central and eastern Europe. Thus, the article aims to examine the role of local governments in migrant integration policies in the Czech Republic. Specifically, we asked the following questions:

1) What is the approach of local government to migrant integration?
2) What are the formed networks at the local level in terms of migrant integration?
3) To what extent and if so, why do vertical relations trigger frame alignment or rather divergence from the national policies?

In terms of case selection, this article focuses on three Czech units: Prague (the capital), South Moravian Region (situated in the east-south part of Czechia and including the second biggest city Brno) and Liberecký Region (located in the north of Czechia). Although the local integration policies towards migrants in the CR are only evolving, significant differences towards migrant integration are already apparent. These three regions were selected to capture and compare the difference. Prague (the capital) deals with the highest number of newcomers. Its integration policy is (concerning the situation in CEE countries) reasonably developed and stems from its strategic document on migrant integration. South Moravian region with its third highest number of migrants represents a region, where some integration policies have evolved but still struggle to reach a more systematic level. The last region – Liberecký, represents a case with no official policies on integration but still with some integration activities.

In terms of methods, this analysis is based on three in-depth studies of Czech regions, which were conducted in 2018. These studies have been commissioned from the author and in all three cases were based on the same template methods: document and statistical analyses, frequent region visits (including observation during meetings of a local platform on migrant integration) and interviews (see below). A specific attention was paid to review the key policy documents and to various integration activities of the main stakeholders. In addition, we focused on both formal and informal networks between all involved actors. In each region, three main semi-structured interviews were held: one with authority from the local governance, one with the (presumably) most active local NGO and one with the representative of the regional centre for the support of the integration of foreigners (or similar institution). Besides these key interviews, we conducted three completive interviews with other actors (e.g. representatives from municipalities) at each region. Except for Prague, no local politicians were dealing more deeply with the topic of migrant integration to interview. In total, we conducted 19 interviews.
4. Migrant integration policies in the CR

In the EU, migrant integration is a national competence of each Member State. However, since the signature of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007, European institutions have the mandate to support and to provide incentives (including some financial resources) for integration of third-country nationals. Nonetheless, the EU periodically set (non-binding) priorities and goals such as Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU and provides the Member States with supportive guidance and materials (e.g. Handbooks on Integration). The Czech integration policies are based on the Principles of Policy for the Integration of Foreign Nationals in the Territory of the Czech Republic from 1999. These Principles consist of 15 principles, which stresses the principle of equal treatment and opportunities for migrants, the active role of the (national) government and society, the support to migrant communities or the role of local governments, including the statement that “activities [of local governments] are organizationally and financially supported by the state government” (Principle 11). These Principles are, especially from the current perspective, well-designed and migrant favourable (cf. Pořízek, 2018). Nevertheless, their goals have appeared to be far too ambitious.

The first State (migrant) Integration Concept was adopted in 2000 and updated in 2006; the following Integration Concepts were adopted in 2011 and 2016. A Report on the Implementation of the Policy for the Integration of Foreign Nationals including the Action Plan for the upcoming year is presented to the government on an annual basis. The particular Integration Concepts and Action Plans set the key areas of integration, which always include: (1) knowledge of the Czech language, (2) economic and social self-sufficiency, (3) socio-cultural orientation within the society, and (4) relations among communities. Surprisingly, it is no easy to identify the target groups of integration measures as the target group was subjected to changes in Integration Concepts. The primary target group consist of third-country nationals with long term residency. (Although in practice, some measures include migrants who stayed less than one year in the CR). Since 2011, limited integration measure might also be applied to EU citizens and certain aspect Czech citizens become the target group as well because the migrant integrations were characterised “as a two-way process and its assumption is mutual interaction between foreigners and the majority”.

The responsibility to coordinate migrant integration is allocated to the Ministry of Interior, which rely on the involvement of several ministerial departments. Opposite to many other European states, there is any legal regulation in the CR, which would deal with the migrant integration. This also means that to integrate is not migrant’s (legal) duty. Since 2009, the only legal obligation is set for third-country nationals (TCN). The TCN is obliged to submit a document providing the knowledge of the Czech language at level A1 to obtain permanent residence. (To obtain permanent residence is in most cases possible after five years of stay in the CR). Nevertheless, the Czech government currently negotiates over the amendment to the Act on the Residence of Foreigners introduces an obligation for all foreigners with the long-term and permanent residence to undergo adaptation-integration course (Valentová 2018).

Concerning the local dimension of integration, the level and scope of involvement in the migrant integration is a full competence of the region The State Concept merely defines the conditions for the regions to fulfil it, offers methodological support and coordinates the integration of migrants. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Interior tries to promote and coordinate the migrant integration agenda at the local level. The Ministry of Interior is not only responsible for the earlier mentioned Integration Concept, but it also distributes money from the Asylum, Integration and Migration Fund (AMIF). This source of financing is used to support (so-called) integration centres in all 14 Czech regions, but the rules of the AMIF allow to support only third country nationals. 10 out of these 14 centres are run by The Refugee Facilities Administration of the Ministry of the Interior, other two (in Prague and South Moravian Region) are established by regional councils, and the last two are operated by NGOs. The representatives of these all centres meet regularly. The other financial means to support migrant integration at the local level are limited. The most important source is the Projects of Municipalities to Support the Integration of Foreigners. The projects, funded from the state budget, are again distributed via Ministry of Interior and support integration activities in approximately 15 municipalities every year.

According to the last Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) survey in 2015, the CR ranked 23rd out of 38 countries with the lowest scores in the categories of political participation of migrants and their access to educations. It should be noted, that the MIPEX evaluation is mainly based on institutional and formal settings of policies (such as laws, policy documents etc.) Although the Czech score slightly exceeds other CEE countries, the report claims that the CR is not strong in any area of integration and not much is known about the effectiveness of

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1 We do not focus on integration of asylum seekers or recognized refugees in this article. Recognized refugees are subjected to specific State Integration Program.
policies in practice (MIPEX 2015). However, the question about the effectiveness and implementation of migrant integration policies is hard to answer due to the lack of (at least partly complex) studies. The number of analysis of Czech integration policies seems to be extremely limited. The rare exception is recent Pořízek’s (2018) study in which he assesses the “splendours and miseries” of migrant integration. Pořízek (2018, p. 49) summarizes exemplifying failures of governmental failures as follows: relevant Ministries suffering from being understaffed or insufficiently involved; insufficient involvement of municipalities in integration activities; and delays in implementation of a wide range of integration measures (such as participation of children of third-country nationals in the national health insurance scheme or enabling the foreigners permanently residing in the territory). In spite of these hindrances, Pořízek (ibid.) concludes that (so far) migrants demonstrate an ability to access labour market; the percentage of foreigners collecting social benefits is negligible; the co-existence of the majority with migrants lacks conflict and nothing indicates that migrants represent a threat to national security.

5. Results

Liberecky region (LR)

The Liberecky region (LR) is the second smallest region in the CR. The number of migrants in LR is gradually growing and reached 19 790 people in 2017. The migration population gradually increases and reached 4.48 % of the population in LR in 2018. In terms of nationality, the region copies the situation in the Czech Republic: The most represented groups are Ukrainians, who make up more than a quarter of migrants, followed by Slovaks (24 %) and Vietnamese (10,3 %) and Poles (7,3 %). The region also experiences significant cross-border migration among the CR, Poland and Germany. The demographic development shows that the region is dependent on immigration, both in terms of the region’s population growth and in terms of sufficient labour force.

The agenda of migrant integration

Migrant integration in LR receives minimal attention in the region and is not perceived as a problematic issue by the key actors. From the region's attitude, it is evident that it applies this issue primarily to the question of social services and the social department. Integrally, integration is enshrined in the form of a Coordinator for Affairs of National Minorities and Foreigners (from now on referred to as the coordinator), who is part of the Department of Social Affairs, the Social Care Department. It is an employee who primarily deals with the issue of the Roma minority. Only 0,1 of his workload focuses on two other groups: national minorities and migrants. Thematically, the issue is also dealt by other departments such as education or health care, but the coordinator admits that the agenda is not given enough space and attention, which is related to the size of his/her workload.

The Regional Council has also set up the Liberecky Region Commission for National Minorities, Foreigners and Social Inclusion. The Commission is governed by the South-Moravian Regional Council, and the commission members are nominated based on political affiliation and expertise. The Commission has been set up to transfer information between the different actors involved in the integration of foreigners and national minorities within Liberecky region and has the power to impose tasks on the Secretary and make recommendations to the South-Moravian Regional Council. The Commission approves and promotes subsidisation procedures to support the integration of national minorities and foreigners. An analysis of the 2017 and 2018 meetings shows that the issue of national minorities (especially the Roma minority) is the dominant topic. The most obvious exception was approval of a specific grant program for migrants and national minorities. Nevertheless, the members of the Commission stated that the Commission seems to have only a minimal impact on concrete practical and strategic changes in the region's measures towards target groups.

The main actor in the area of migrant integration in the LR is the Centre for the Support of Foreigners' Integration (CPIC), which is operated by the Refugee Facilities Administration of the Ministry of the Interior. The CPIC operates under projects funded by the Asylum, Integration and Migration Fund (AMIF). About funding, the Centre’s services focus on legally residing foreigners from third countries (TNC), which means that services are not (primarily) provided to non-residents, EU citizens, people with visas or short-stay visas, undocumented migrants etc. CPIC provides social counselling, legal counselling, interpreting services (mostly Mongolian, Vietnamese, Russian, Ukrainian), Czech language courses and socio-cultural courses, an internet workplace and a library.
Within the region, CPIC is perceived by other actors as the most critical organisation providing integration and other services to migrants. Both CPIC itself and other addressed entities consider the services to be sufficient and available within the target group. The problematic aspect of the functioning of CPIC is mainly the narrower target group, which is repeatedly mentioned by some actors (region, NGOs).

There is also a branch of the Centre for the Integration of Foreigners (an NGO) that provides professional social counselling and Czech language courses and a volunteer program. It focuses primarily on the target group not covered by the CPIC, i.e. EU citizens and their family members.

**Strategical documents**

There is no conception of migration integration at the Liberecký regional nor mainstreaming of the topic in strategical documents. Migrants are omitted in most of the strategical documents with a minor exception of those related to social services. A brief reference to migrant integration can be found only in the Human Resources Development Strategy of the Liberec Region 2014+ which identifies shortcomings in the area of availability of Czech language courses.

The political support for the topic of migrant integration is quite sporadic, and this lack of vision or willingness to pay attention to the subject is evident in the absence of institutional and strategic support for the integration of migrants in the region. This mainly mirrors the topic of migrant integration is perceived as problem-free.

**Networking**

The primary networking body is the Regional Advisory Platform on the Integration of Foreigners in the Liberec Region, which is established and coordinated by CPIC as a part of the AMIF project. The regional platform meets 3-4 times a year and is perceived as an opportunity for members to get information about the topic rather than networking in terms of communicating news or development by all actors. The platform is not based on the principle of closed membership, but participants are invited to the meeting according to the relevance of the topic.

Scheme 1: The involvement of actors of integration in Liberecký Region

The Liberec Region and its network of migrant integration actors are the simplest of the regions under comparison. The state-run Integration Centre (CPIC) plays a significant role here, where the involvement of local, regional actors is limited. This is due to the limited capacity of the Regional Coordinator for Migrant Integration. The networking activity remains low and initiated mainly by the CPIC. In particular, rural districts are showing no involvement.
The LR migrant integration policies are close to the centralist model described by Scholten (2013), and the LR region does not indicate any divergence from the state integration policies. The district does not come up with any integration (or mainstreaming) policies even in cases where state policies are missing or failing. The only exception is new granting opportunities for NGOs. Migrant integration is perceived as problem-free, but there are no studies which would confirm or contradict this “problem-free” image. Some issues such as availability of Czech language courses, lack of some social services or access of migrant children to schools receive none or minimal attention.

**South Moravian region**

The number of migrants in the South Moravian Region (SMR) has doubled since 2004 and reached 46,574 in 2017. The migrant population reached 3.9 % of SMR population, and 63 % of SMR migrant population lives in Brno (the second largest Czech city). In terms of nationality, the region copies the overall situation in the CR. The most represented groups are Ukrainians, Slovaks and Vietnamese. Nevertheless, the share of migrant workers in the category of managers and specialists is in SMR well above (24 %) the national average (15 %). The higher number of qualified migrants reflects the regional policy to attract foreign investment. The slow population growth in the region is mainly due to immigration.

**The agenda of migrant integration**

Migrant integration in South Moravian Region receives (some) attention. The most important actor in migrant integration is South Moravian Regional Centre for the Support of the Integration of Foreigners, which operates under the South Moravian Regional Council. The activities of the Centre towards the third country nationals are financed mainly by AMIF (similarly to CPIC in Liberecky region) and the activities towards other groups (especially European citizens) are mostly funded by the Regional Council. The Integration Centre offers free social and legal counselling, Czech language courses and other activities such as seminars or assistance during meetings at official agencies. The Integration Centre also uses other grant opportunities to support specific activities such as courses for parents with small children etc. Most of the project activities are implemented in cooperation with partner organisations (e.g. Organization for Aid to Refugees). The Integration Centre consists of 4 employees and several other co-workers. Although the Integration Centre itself is located in a different building than the Regional Council, the office of their financial manager is at the Regional Council, which is important also from the perspective of support of the agenda. The Integration Centre actively seeks to open topics related to migrant integration with other departments (e.g. education), but the willingness of various departments to cooperate is usually limited. Often, the issue of migrant integration is not considered necessary, and all the tasks are understood as part of the Integration Centre agenda. The Regional Council does not have any specific grant schemes aiming at migrant integration, but it supports the Centre when needed.

There are also several highly active NGOs in Brno City (e.g. Nesehnuti) which influences the agenda of integration by their services for migrants or specific projects.

Recently, the Brno City (especially the Department of Social Care) has become a strategical partner for the Integration Centre. The partnership is essential not only from the perspective of shared projects but seems to be a strategical one. The topic of migrant integration receives higher support from both institutions (Brno City and Regional Council) if the other council is present.

Brno Expat Centre is the last key actor in migrant integration in South Moravian Region. Its purpose is to facilitate the integration of highly qualified migrants in Brno. Although the Expat Centre is funded by the Brno City Council, its existence stems from regional strategic documents. There is a certain tension between the Brno Expat Centre and the (regional) Integration Centre. From the political and strategical point of view, the Expat Centre, which deals with the desirable (highly qualified) migrants, has a much more comfortable position. Opposite to it, the Integrate Centre must advocate their existence much more.

**Strategical documents**

There are several regional strategical documents, which focus on migrant integration. The Integration Centre initiated the development of document called: Program of Targeted and Long-Term Support for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the South Moravian Region 2011 – 2015. This conception was part of the AMIF regional project. Although it was agreed by the Regional Council, there was no support to update this document in the following period. Instead, the migrant integration becomes part of the Human Resources Development Strategy of the South Moravian Region 2016–2025. This strategy elaborates the topic into five priorities: (1) the development of human potential and social inclusion, (2) the coordination of the process of integration of migrants,
raising awareness in the field of integration of foreigners, (4) the development of social and related services for foreigners (5) education of foreigners. The Strategy is regularly evaluated and includes two-year short-term Implementation Plan.

The Medium-term Plan for the Development of Social Services in the South Moravian Region for the period 2018-2020 includes migrants among the target group for planning its social services, namely the target group “Roma and foreigners at risk of social exclusion”.

The last strategical document dealing with migrant integration is the Regional Innovation Strategy of the South Moravian Region 2014–2020, which sets priorities for the work of the Expat Centre and focuses only on highly qualified migrants.

From the perspective of strategic partnership, it should be mentioned that the Brno City Council includes migrant integration in several documents concerning social services and social inclusion. Currently, Brno City is developing its conception of migrant integration.

Networking

The Integration Centre also organises the Regional Platform of Actors Dealing with Integration of Migrants (funded by the AMIF project). The Platform meets four times a year and focuses on various topics such as the access of migrant children to school or migration and statistics. In the past, the platforms were mainly informative. Currently, the Integration Centre aims to stress the networking aspect much more. The platform consists of several “core” members (such as the representatives of Brno City), and participants are invited to the meeting according to the relevance of the topic.

An active informal platform: #MigrovatBrno group plays a significant role in networking as well. The platform has a non-hierarchical form, meets once every six weeks and the members (mainly representatives of NGOs but also some officials of public administration) vote whether or not accept other potential members. This platform aims to share information and discuss various migration/integration issues.

Scheme 2: The of involvement of actors of integration in South-Moravian Region
In the South Moravian Region, the network of actors is relatively developed, has a relatively long history and is the most complex of the regions under comparison. It contains a wide range of local actors - the region, municipalities, the city of Brno and its self-governing city districts. The most significant network deficit is its great fragmentation. The regional authority has an agenda of the Integration Centre directly in its structure. The question remains how to integrate several subnets: the City of Brno, the informal network #MigrovatBrno and, above all, municipalities and municipal districts to systematically link with other actors of migrant integration. A specific feature of the regional integration network is then the historically given artificial distinction between expats and other migrants. The challenge for the local network of actors is how to deal with the dominant position of the city of Brno so that more cooperation than the competition will proceed.

The South Moravian Region’s migrant integration policies are close to the centralist model with some appearing aspects of the multilevel-governance model. On the one hand, the local government primarily implements national policies and uses the state funding to fulfil the state goals. On the other side, it starts to seek its policies and solutions. Especially in the last two years, its networking becomes more intensive. The networking is primarily about information sharing, but it (slowly) attracts more and more relevant actors. Next, the local integration policies frame alignment of the state policies, but some divergence appears. The most striking difference is the focus on “expats” (highly qualified migrants) and some integration policies concerning the access to education or smaller innovative project of the Integration Centre.

Prague

The agenda of migrant integration

The City of Prague is the region with the highest concentration of migrants in the Czech Republic. According to the Czech Statistical Office, 195 000 foreign nationals lived in Prague at the end of 2018, representing 15 % of the total population of the city (compared to the national average of approximately 5,3 %), and 37 % of all migrants living in the Czech Republic. This ratio has not changed in the last five years. At the same time, the number of migrants residing on the territory of the City of Prague has been growing steadily, even in the period of economic crisis after 2008. On a nationwide scale, Prague, as the capital city, has long been the most significant regional concentration of migrants.

Within the Czech Republic, the capital city of Prague is the pioneers of integration policies among the regional governments. Several NGOs has been involved in the implementation of integration activities since the 1990s. However, migrant integration activities have been locally fragmented for a long time, lacking co-ordination and not fully covering the needs of migrants living in the territory of the capital. On the institutional level, the Commission for the Integration of Foreigners was established in 2003 by the City Council. However, without the creation of its principles, its work was mainly based on the national concept of migrant integration. Prague lacked any conceptual work in the field of integration until 2012, although the city's population of migrants continued to grow. In 2012, the situation changed: Integration Centre Prague was established, and it started to coordinate all stakeholders in (so-called) the Regional Advisory Platform (see more below).

Within the Prague City Council, the agenda of migrant integration is entrusted to the Section of National Minorities and Migrants, which is under the Department of Culture and Tourism. This section consists of five employees. However, only one is specifically responsible for migrant integration agenda. This person coordinates the implementation of the Prague concept and is responsible for some activities which are about Prague Council. When dealing with the issue of integration of foreigners, cooperation between individual departments of the Prague City is necessary - especially with the Department of Education and Youth, Department of Health, Welfare and Prevention, Sports and Leisure Department, Department of Culture and Tourism, Communication and Marketing Department and Crisis Department management. This cooperation is not always successful. The most active is the cooperation with the Department of Education and Youth and with the Department of Social Care and Prevention. In 2012, the Prague City founded by the Prague Integration Centre (ICP), which is financed from the AMIF. ICP has the role of an information and community centre and is the implementer, initiator and coordinator of integration measures within the City of Prague. ICP - together four partner NGOs (SIMI, OPU, InBaze and PPI) - offers a wide range of services for both migrants and professionals. In addition to its activities focused on the integration of foreigners (Czech language courses, socio-cultural courses, information campaigns, etc.), including the provision of free advisory services, field and intercultural work. ICP is also responsible for organising activities Regional Advisory Platforms. The drawback of the ICP’s role is the fact that, as with other regional centres funded by the EU Asylum and Migration Fund (AMIF), the Centre cannot support or advise EU citizens.
The Council of the City of Prague Commission for the Integration of Foreigners was re-established in 2017 and is a permanent advisory and initiating body of the Council, which usually meets once every two months. The commission's task is to advise the Council on procedures, to give expert opinions, to propose solutions and also to deal with the announcement of grant proceedings.

The Prague City Council Commission for Grants in the Area of National Minorities and Foreigners lays down conditions for grant proceedings of the Prague City Hall for the area of integration of foreigners, approves, recommends and also evaluates submitted projects. The Commission occasionally meets when grants are announced or approved, followed by an application for an individual grant or grant procedure.

**Strategic documents**

Stakeholders the Regional Advisory Platform initiated the creation of a conceptual document in 2012. The Concept of the City of Prague for the Integration of Foreigners (hereinafter referred to as the “Prague Concept”) was subsequently approved by the Prague Assembly for the period 2014–2017 and set five priorities for the integration of migrants in the City of Prague: 1) the need to investigate the position of migrants in the territory of the City of Prague; 2) financing the integration of foreigners on the territory of the City of Prague; 3) information; 4) education and 5) access of migrants to social and related services. For each of the conceptual priorities, it contained appropriate recommendations on how to achieve them as effectively as possible, as detailed in the Annual Action Plans. As far as the individual objectives are concerned, the Prague concept follows the goals set out in the national conception. Also, when defining the target group of integration activities, the Prague concept is primarily reflected in the national concept of the Ministry of Interior, and primarily refers to "legally residing third-country nationals". Nevertheless, it does not exclude any category of migrants from its scope and explicitly states that "there is a need to address the integration of all groups of migrants and provide adequate funding for the future to finance integration activities towards all migrants". At the end of 2017, a concept update for the years 2018-2021 was prepared in a participatory manner. The updated concept maintains three separate areas as separate priorities: 1) information and awareness; 2) migrants’ access to social and related services; 3) education and 4) coexistence of the majority society and migrants, which was newly included as a priority area.

The implementation of the Prague Conception is ensured through its Action Plans, which set out specific activities within the proposed measures of the individual priorities of the concept. And the evaluation tool for the Prague Conception is the Report on Implementation of the Concept of the City of Prague for the area of migrant integration.

Another crucial strategic document dealing with the integration of migrants is the Prague Strategic Plan. In this plan, migrant integration support is one of the priorities within the Social Cohesion chapter. The Plan stresses the benefits of migration and the importance of inclusive education. The importance of migrant integration is also mentioned in Crime Prevention Concept and several documents related to social services or education (e.g. Plan for the Development of Social Services or Regional Action Plan for Education in the Capital City of Prague).

**Networking**

As mentioned above, the Regional Advisory Platform is the most critical platform for the integration of foreigners in Prague. The platform brings together representatives of all subjects involved in the field of migrant integration in Prague - the Prague City Hall, city districts, state institutions, NGOs, academia, migrant associations, school educational institutions and international organisations. Typically, around 50 representatives of these entities meet at platform meetings. Platform meetings are held once in two months and are called by the Prague Integration Centre. The role of the platform is particularly informative and cooperative.

In 2013, the City District Platform was created. The city districts believed that they would be better able to deal with issues of immediate concern to them. Occasionally, issues that are more connected with NGOs or migrants are discussed at the Regional Advisory Platform. The platform regularly organises mutual awareness among Prague City officials and Prague City Hall, sharing experience and examples of good practice in the area. The involvement of city districts is generally not very large. Recently, The Prague City Hall, which calls the platform, has initiated the journey of this platform through individual city districts to increase the engagement of city districts.

In 2016, the Platform of Representatives of the Education Departments of the City Districts of Prague, which operates under the coordination of the City of Prague, began its activities. The platform focuses explicitly on the education of children and pupils with a different mother tongue, respectively — children and pupils of migrants.
Scheme 3: The involvement of actors of integration in Prague

Compared to other regions, the capital city of Prague has the great advantage that there is only two-tier self-government, a city and a city districts, as opposed to a three-tier, e.g. in Brno. The main coordinating role in the network is provided by the Integration Centre Prague (ICP), which is the established organisation of the City of Prague and fulfils the role of the Regional Integration Centre. ICP has long been able to engage a wide range of migrant integration actors, and for several years the strategic planning process has been working with outputs and commitments approved by the capital.

The network of actors is thus relatively mature and stable, accustomed to the implementation of planning processes so that coordination efforts are shifted more to the emphasis of optimising planning and evaluation procedures to better exploit the potential of the network. The local actors' network does not avoid urban areas as well - ICP has branches in urban areas with higher numbers of migrants and particular emphasis on networking city districts. The city districts are very differently involved, as are their activities. Still, the network of integration actors is actively developed, even at several levels.

Prague migrant integration policies are in between the centralist and multilevel-governance model. Similarly to South Moravia region, the Prague City implements national policies and uses the state funding to fulfil the state goals. On the other hand, it aims its policies and solutions where the state policies fail or are missing. This is especially evident in the area of education. The networking is intensive and, in some cases, it leads to new policies and responses to particular issues. The cooperation among involved stakeholders is productive and aims to include other relevant actors. The support of the topic from the City Council proves to be essential. Similar to the situation in other regions, the local integration policies mainly frame alignment of the state policies. The divergence appears mostly in topics which are omitted on the state level – especially access of migrant children to education: special language courses, preparatory classes or courses for teachers. Generally, the integration policies appear to be more inclusive than in the other two regions with less stress on a migrant category. This is probably caused by the extensive involvement of several NGOs and their more inclusive approach to integration, which is also reflected by the local authorities.

6. Discussion and conclusion (uncompleted)

Several studies (Penninx et al. 2004; Dagger 2014) indicate that local governments do not just implement national policies, but that they increasingly formulate policies as well. Selecting three regions with relatively large migrant
populations with different regional integration approach allows us to capture differences in the local dimension of integration. The results from our study indicate that the Czech migrant integration policies are, with the specific exception of Prague, close to the centralist model described by Scholten (2013), where the formulation of own policies is limited. The Liberecky region presents a case of regional government, which expects CPIC to manage the agenda of migrant integration with very little involvement of local bodies. EU migrant, as well as the key dimension of integration, receive no or almost limited attention. Some network exists, but their purpose is mainly informative. Opposite to it, the South Moravian Region approaches the agenda much more actively. Although the agenda does not receive significant attention, there is fundamentally important structural support of the agenda from the South Moravian Council. This is also because the Integration Centre operates under the local council. Such support enables the development of necessary specific policies. Although the involvement of municipalities in the region is limited, the cooperation with Brno City fortifies the topic. The South-Moravian region amplifies the national difference between the EU and non-EU, but the (financial and other) support of integration of EU citizens suggest a much more inclusive approach than the state policies.

Furthermore, the focus on “expats” presents also an apparent divergence from the state policies. The networking is on the rise and suggests more peculiar integration policies in the future. Lastly, Prague offers a case with developing migrant integration policies with stable networks, which aspire to engage its actors also in active policy planning. The shift towards the multilevel-governance model is partly necessary from the perspective of several stakeholders but also because Prague faces the challenges of missing of failing policies the most. The development of new (different or missing) policies is enabled due to support of some departments of the Prague Council (or other actors, e.g. schools), the involvement of NGOs and reachable funding (e.g. European Social Fund).

The article offers an overview of three regions and their approach to integration policies. It shows that the involvement and support of local self-government are crucial and also has a significant impact on the functioning of the local network of actors and their commitment. On the other hand, all the regions surveyed (with greater or lesser intensity) lack state policies in various areas and little involvement of municipalities.

Bibliography:


