



On behalf of the
European Commission
DG Employment,
Social Affairs and Inclusion

Gesellschaft für
Versicherungswissenschaft
und -gestaltung e.V.



Social Impact of Emigration and Rural-Urban Migration in Central and Eastern Europe

Executive Summary

Czech Republic

April 2012

**Authors: Dušan Drbohlav
Miroslava Rákoczyová**

Neither the European Commission nor any person acting on behalf of the Commission may be held responsible for the use that may be made of the information contained in this publication.

In the post-revolutionary era, internal migration has had no dramatic effect upon population development in the Czech Republic. Out-migration has never entailed large numbers of the population, and there are thus far no large areas characterised by strong and permanent population outflows. Similarly, the estimated number of emigrants having left the Czech Republic has so far been rather low. With the exception of the specific case of Roma emigration and circular labour migration along the border at the beginning of the 1990s, emigration has had negligible impact on the society as a whole.

The exact number of Czech emigrants is unknown. Estimates of Czech citizens (including Roma) living abroad on a long-term basis vary from 101,000 to 250,000. An estimated 35,000 to 70,000 Roma have emigrated from the Czech Republic since 1989, which suggests that the incidence of emigration among Roma is much higher than that among the majority population. Both attempts to emigrate permanently (some of them as asylum seekers) and circular migration among Roma can be interpreted as strategies in dealing with a disadvantaged socio-economic position. Economic incentives generally play a primary role; often-cited push factors such as ethnic tensions, extremism and security risks are rather ancillary, and usually not rooted in migrants' individual life experience. Roma migration involves the wider family and bears, in principle, the character of family migration. Roma families face difficulties with housing, employment and indebtedness when emigration is unsuccessful. In addition, returning Roma children have performance problems in education, given their absence from the Czech school system.

Emigration is also a relevant factor among the Czech Republic's highly qualified labour force. In 2010, an estimated 700 doctors emigrated, and threats of mass emigration among Czech doctors was used to leverage (primarily wage) demands. Although these 700 doctors comprise only a small portion of medical doctors working in the Czech Republic, their emigration exacerbates the growing disequilibrium in this segment of the labour market. There are also an estimated 3,350 to 5,800 researchers and scientists of Czech origin (i.e., 10%-17% of Czech research and development professionals) working in other OECD countries. Emigration among Czech professionals is predominantly temporary in nature, and their work experience abroad has facilitated the increase of human and social capital in the Czech Republic. Nonetheless, some high-skilled migrants face difficulties and mental stress in re-adapting to life in the Czech Republic. In fact, the highest rate of work-related dissatisfaction was identified among medical doctors. The risk of brain-drain remains relevant for the Czech Republic.

Internally, suburbanization processes have crystallized and since 2000 become a decisive factor influencing migratory relations within the country. Suburbanization has been pronounced around primary centres since 1995 and growing in smaller, secondary centres since 2001. Also since 2001, migratory growth has begun to take place in rural municipalities as has deconcentration targeting small municipalities. Migration losses have become typical of most cities with more than 10,000 inhabitants. Municipalities in internal peripheral areas (mostly in Central Bohemia around its border with other regions and the area bordering Bohemia and Moravia) have also begun losing inhabitants to migration. Generally, migration into suburban areas is comprised of mostly young people of high social status and with high education and income levels. Those individuals with a lower educational level generally move to more distant suburban areas or rural areas. The internal migration of Roma and other groups facing social exclusion tends to exacerbate their disadvantaged position in society by creating concentrated communities that are excluded from the larger population. These localities do not provide the conditions needed to ensure quality of life. Furthermore, their emergence and/or growth in size leads to increased tensions between the majority population and these socially excluded groups, which in turn undermines social cohesion and fuels social unrest. In short, the current state of "selective" internal migration in the Czech Republic contributes to growing socio-spatial inequalities.

Policies addressing the risks of internal peripheries' deepening social exclusion should aim to stabilise the local population and mobilise local human resources. The Rural Development Programme of the Czech Republic for the period 2007-2013 includes measures focusing on human resource development. However, the programme has failed to reach targets in some

areas, in particular job creation, which is the most significant problem of (de-populating) internal peripheries. But the programme has had a positive impact on the quality of life in rural areas, specifically in the smallest settlements. Local Action Groups (LAGs) have also helped (micro) regions activate their endogenous potential, improve living and working conditions, and enhance their image. The Strategy of Regional Development of the Czech Republic also includes measures addressing “problematic” rural and peripheral areas. However, the cohesion policy’s contribution to resolving specific problems of rural and peripheral areas is limited. Small (de-populating) settlements in the peripheral regions need improved access to the grants supporting larger development projects. The criteria for awarding the grants should include an “impact on population in disadvantaged regions” clause. Small and disadvantaged settlements could also benefit from lower co-financing requirements.

Roma represent the largest group for whom social problems and migration are closely inter-related. All measures aimed at improving the socio-economic situation of Roma in the Czech Republic are key to preventing their emigration, as well as their internal migration and concentration in socially excluded localities. The Czech government has adopted a complex set of measures intended to improve conditions for the Roma population, in particular their most disadvantaged. The government should now focus on implementing already formulated policies effectively, which includes allocating adequate financial and human resources, and strengthening local governments’ capacity to handle issues of social integration.

The risk of a brain drain among Czech professionals poses two major policy challenges: stimulating the return of professionals with international work experience and ensuring favourable employment conditions upon their return. Yet social policy has not responded to the outflow of the highly-qualified labour force, and programmes focusing on the return of highly skilled migrants are still new and underdeveloped in the Czech Republic. Recent measures include a national programme, “Návrat” (“Return”), aimed at attracting top researchers back to the Czech Republic after long-term research experience abroad, and a regional grant scheme, the South Moravian Programme for Distinguished Researchers, which supports the return and re-integration of Czech researchers in the region. We suggest this policy area be expanded to national, regional and organisational levels and the target population be broadened to include other segments of highly qualified individuals. Finally, whereas programmes in support of highly-skilled return migration are relevant, improving overall working conditions (including fair wages) are crucial in preventing the permanent emigration of highly skilled professionals and motivating their return to the Czech Republic.