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## Review article

# Situation of the integration of immigrants in Slovakia

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## ABSTRACT

Immigrants in the Slovak Republic do not belong to the most numerous groups of clients, however, immigrant integration represents an area where there is a need for research studies and suitable measures to streamline that process. The submitted survey study is focused on mapping the studies to identify obstacles in the integration process of immigrants in the Slovak Republic. We describe the results from each area of the integration process that is perceived as integrating immigrants into society. The survey study selectively maps the results of research in the area of employment, housing, education, language and social and health care in relation to the identification of immigrants needs; the fulfilment of which influences the effectiveness of immigrant integration into Slovak society. An analysis of available resources indicates that individual areas of integration policies do not reflect the needs of immigrants. This leads to an increase in barriers at various levels of the integration process, which also affects the effectiveness of integration as a whole. According to the above stated results, the need for a draft of measures relating to the reformulation of the social service delivery system for immigrants, their adequate implementation, and proposals for the institutions competent to provide social services for immigrants is of importance.

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## Introduction

Compared to the financial crisis of 2008, after joining the European Union in 2009 a faster growth of incoming immigrants occurred [1]. At present, the Slovak Republic is not a country with a large number of immigrants, and looking at current immigration trends, immigrants from the Ukraine,

Russian Federation and Vietnam have the largest representation. The Slovak Republic is obliged, by means of integration policy measures, to ensure the integration of these persons into the society [2]. In evaluating integration policies, Slovakia ranks 34th of the 38 comparative countries, with no significant shift in integration in the last four years, as only a minimalistic approach to the basic standards of the European Union has been applied [3].

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The realization of societal research investigating the integration process of immigrants in the Slovak Republic is not represented to a sufficient extent. In addition to the above-mentioned study, *Integrácia migrantov v Slovenskej republike/ Integration of immigrants in the Slovak Republic* (by Bargerová and Divinský) [4] belongs to the most recent publications of Slovak specialists, which is the basis of the concept of Slovak integration policy and offers recommendations for policy-makers.

Another publication is *Mladí migranti v slovenskej spoločnosti/ Young immigrants in the Slovak Society* (by Štefančík and Lenč) [1], which provides an overview of the results of integration of young immigrants into the society. Despite the low representation of monographs, there are a number of studies that are being published in conference proceedings or in scientific journals. It is also possible to observe an increase in the number of projects aimed at examining the conditions of the integration of immigrants. The aim of this survey study is to provide an overview of the results of the immigration integration researches, showing the insufficient reflection of their needs in the various areas of integration policy. In line with this goal, it is necessary to operationalize the notion of state of integration, which in this context is perceived as identifying the obstacles immigrants encounter in the various parts of the integration process. The integration policy of the Slovak Republic states that there is no necessary relationship between the length of stay of an immigrant on the territory of Slovakia and the level of their integration. However, in our opinion, with the increasing length of stay, the selected components in terms of the area of integration of immigrants are also improving, and therefore we affirm that the state of integration is influenced by the length and the type of their stay. However, it is necessary to draw attention to the risk of interpretation, which is related to the fact that the mapping of barriers within the components of integration does not have to reveal the actual state of integration of immigrants in the Slovak Republic.

## Materials and methods

In searching for information related to the integration of immigrants at individual levels, we used the Proquest, Science Direct, Springer Link, and Web of Science databases. We searched for the information in these databases through the keywords integration, immigrants and Slovakia. Based on these keywords we found 7097 links in total. In the Proquest database, a total of 5329 sources were found. 467 sources were available in the Science Direct database, 1299 sources in the Springer Link database, and 3 sources in the Web of Science database.

We have searched for additional information through specialized monographs dealing with immigrants and the process of their integration, and studies mapping the state of integration process in the Slovak Republic. The study of available resources ran from November 2016 to July 2017. Subsequently, we selected 19 of these sources of information on the basis of our chosen criteria. These selection criteria were as follows: the realization of the research in the conditions of the Slovak Republic; the target group of immigrants; the

research was carried out in the time period after the accession to the European Union, and the results had to include the findings within the individual measures implemented by the integration policy in Slovakia – housing, education and language integration, social and health care. The definition of the individual components is stated in the chapters below. In the selected research, we focused on the primary target group of integration for legal immigrants, who are either granted permanent, long-term or temporary residence permits (immigrants with subsidiary protection), are granted asylum and citizens who have been granted citizenship.

## Access of immigrants to employment in the Slovak Republic

In the Slovak Republic, equal access to employment and to work is declared, with immigrants acquiring the same rights and obligations as citizens [5]. Despite this fact, many research findings imply that immigrants have a difficult time accessing employment in the Slovak Republic [1,4,6–9]. According to Chudžíková et al. [6], the application of immigrants into the labour market differs greatly from the situation of the domestic population. The main differences are in terms of the socio-economic and demographic characteristics, the cultural working habits and the level of education or qualifications. A study conducted to investigate the integration of immigrants at the local level shows that the difficulties immigrants have in accessing the labour market stems primarily from the non-recognition of documents by the Slovak Republic [7]. In this context, Kováts et al. [10] point out that in many cases immigrants have years of practical experience, are university educated, understand foreign languages, and yet their diplomas are still not recognized. This is confirmed by Dustmann et al. [11], who point out that the working skills of immigrants acquired in their home country are often not only non-transferable, but also inapplicable in the conditions of the Slovak labour market. The mentioned study also shows that the factors that make it difficult for immigrants to gain access to employment in Slovakia are relatively complicated. There are costly administrative tasks associated with obtaining employment permits and residence permits and an absence of information on employment conditions [7]. The research findings of Bargerová and Divinský [4] also show the absence of more detailed business and labour relations information, inadequate offers of retraining courses, complicated handling of trade, as well as the discrimination against colour and the bureaucratic approach to the provision of relevant documents.

In 2012, research was carried out by Štefančík and Lenč [1], which focused on examining integration for young immigrants. Generally, the employment of young people in Slovakia is very complicated as they lack sufficient practice and experience. In the case of young immigrants, there are larger problems related to the labour market. The above-mentioned research findings, aside from the problems with the acquisition and recognition of documents, show that the decisive factor in relation to their application to the labour market is an insufficient level of knowledge of the Slovak language.

Within the Slovak Republic, a study was carried out mapping the state of integration of immigrants with complementary protection. As the employment issues for this

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