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Review article

The economic consequences of the contemporary European migration crisis on the Czech Republic

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ABSTRACT

It is possible to state that every complicated question about dealing with the contemporary migration crisis has a simple but a wrong answer. From the constructivist perspective, the level of an objective grip of reality by the human mind is debatable, so, in this article, we can at least try to offer a certain (even simplified) view, particularly from the perspective of economics. Most economic analyses of the contemporary state of the Czech Republic appear very positive. In 2016, there was a record over profit margin in the state budget and unemployment in the Czech Republic was the lowest in the EU. Are such economic conditions a relevant factor for the integration of immigrants according to the system of the migration quotas of the EU, or is it possible that we cannot count on the long-term positive economic condition of the Czech Republic, because the economic condition of the state is not as positive as it seems? The low average income in the Czech Republic and large investments abroad do not add up to the positive economic picture painted in the Czech Republic. From an economic perspective, the Czech Republic is able to integrate the number of immigrants according to the EU quotas. If the quotas grow because it is not possible to determine the exact number of refugees, it can be assumed that the economic stability of the Czech Republic will be critical.

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Introduction

2015 was a breakthrough year for Europe in many ways. The headlines in the daily press focused on the issue of immigrants, who crossed European borders in great numbers. The Czech Republic did not become a target country; but it did become a transit one. In May 2015, the Czech Republic

recorded larger groups of immigrants from developing countries, who wanted to go on to Germany and Sweden. These people were offered the possibility of applying for international protection, otherwise their stay in the Czech Republic would be illegal. However, this offer was mostly refused by the immigrants.

The Czech Republic is one of the European countries that have a low number of asylum applications. In September 2015,

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the EU countries voted for the system of the obligatory disposition of immigrants to the EU countries. The system would facilitate the situation in Greece and Italy. Not all EU countries agreed with this suggestion. In particular, the countries belonging to the Visegrad group (the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary) came forward against the suggestion. On the 10th of April 2017, approximately one tenth of the planned number of applicants for asylum was admitted by the EU. The Czech Republic relocated 12 out of 2600 planned immigrants. The Czech Republic has since refused further relocations – the question is whether it has good reasons for such an attitude. Is it possible to consider the economic situation of the Czech Republic as stable enough in the long-term that it can manage the integration of a higher number of immigrants without problems? Are the people relocated to the Czech Republic economically contributive? What are the costs of integrating foreigners in the Czech Republic?

The goal of this article is the assessment of the economic consequences of the contemporary migration crisis on the Czech Republic. The crucial information for the assessment was the data published by the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic [1–5], Eurostat [6–10], the Czech statistical office monthly issue – Statistics and us [11–16], the Czech national bank [17–21], the Refugees office [22–28] and the Government of the Czech Republic [29,30]. For the assessment of the data, a secondary analysis was used.

Regarding the migration crisis in Europe, in September 2015, most European countries adopted the system of obligatory redistribution of the immigrants to the countries of the EU. The Government and the Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic [1] hold a negative stance about the redistribution. One of the crucial factors that influence the perspective of the redistribution of migrants is associated with the economic conditions of the Czech Republic and Europe. For this reason, it is necessary to assess the assets as well as the costs of the immigration.

The contemporary migration situation in the Czech Republic and Europe

The Czech Republic is a European country with few asylum applicants. Compared to most member states of the EU, the number of asylum applications in the Czech Republic is below

average. As the Czech statistical office monthly issue [11] states, this situation can change. Table 1 shows the increase in the number of applicants for asylum in Europe in 2015. If we speak about the European migration crisis in 2015, it is associated with a great number of immigrants arriving in the EU. The material of the Ministry of Interior for the Parliament of the Czech Republic from January 2016, speaks about the ongoing wave of migrants coming to the EU. The most burdened states are under constantly growing pressure [1]. While in 2014, according to Eurostat [6], the number of new applications for asylum was 562,680; in 2015, it was 1,255,600. Most of them are Syrians (29%), followed by Afghans (14%) and finally Iraqis (10%). Table 1 shows that Germany [7] had the most applicants. The analyst Schroth [31], from the International Organization for Migration, states that Germany was the main target even in the past.

In 2015, the Czech Republic had 1235 new applications. They were 565 Ukrainians (46%), 130 Syrians (11%) and 125 Cubans (10%) [6]. In May 2015, the Czech Republic recorded larger groups of immigrants from developing countries, who wanted to move on to Germany and Sweden. The first reaction of the Ministry of Interior was to offer these people the opportunity to apply for asylum. Otherwise they would have an illegal status in the Czech Republic. The offer was mostly refused by the immigrants [1].

Němec [32] states that, in the first six months, the Czech police detained approximately 3000 immigrants, which accounts for 0.02% of all immigrants in that period. In the same period, the Ministry of Interior registered 789 applications of asylum. According to Němec [32], this information shows that the immigrants are mostly uninterested in the Czech Republic. The Czech office for asylum is strict in comparison to other European countries, and only really threatened people are given the opportunity of asylum. In 2015, the immigrants' interest in staying in the Czech Republic was small.

The analyst Schroth [33], from the International Organization for Migration, adds that the number of foreigners in the Czech Republic has grown since the economic crisis in 2008 (at the end of 2016, there were 500,000 – nearly 5% of the population), but they are mostly Ukrainian, Slovak, Russian, German and Polish. The only larger community from a different cultural environment are the Vietnamese. The Czech

Table 1 – Total number of applications of asylum in the EU and the selected states of the EU [7].

Countries of the EU	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
EU	335,290	431,090	629,960	1,322,825	1,259,955
Czech Republic	740	695	1145	1515	1475
Germany	77,485	126,705	202,645	476,510	745,155
Sweden	43,855	54,270	81,180	162,450	28,790
Greece	9575	8225	9730	13,205	51,110
Italy	17,335	26,620	64,625	83,540	122,960
Hungary	2155	18,895	42,775	177,135	29,430
Austria	17,415	17,500	28,035	88,160	42,255
Poland	10,750	15,240	8020	12,190	12,305
Slovakia	730	440	330	330	145
France	61,440	66,265	64,310	76,165	84,270
Great Britain	28,800	30,585	32,785	40,160	38,785

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