

Abstract

During the two past decades, the number of immigrants in the Czech Republic has grown significantly. The Czech Republic thus has to adapt various institutional arrangements to preserve social cohesion. This paper aims to highlight some of important changes that need to be accommodated when attempting to develop integral and efficient immigration policy in the Czech Republic. Following this, the paper explores the theory and practice of immigration policies in the Czech Republic and in European Union which highly influences the Czech immigration policy. The Commonwealth of Australia, a country with a long immigration history and well developed immigration policy is examined for comparison and, in some aspects, also for inspiration. This paper focuses on the three particular aspects which are: the strategy of integration, the role of culture and language, and the position of local governments in the process of integration.

Firstly, the paper deals with the most common types of integration: segregation, assimilation and multiculturalism. It is then argued that an important part of immigration policy is rooted in the way how people define "multiculturalism", how they conceive of the various meanings of this verb, and what they expect from the co-existence of more cultures.

Secondly, this paper overviews the development of immigration policies in the Czech Republic, European Union and the Commonwealth of Australia. Understanding these different immigration histories and attitudes towards immigrants enables to compare these countries according to three following criteria: (1) integrating strategy, its background and the correspondence of the officially defined key aspects of integration with the process of obtaining the permanent residence or citizenship, (2) the role of local governments in the process of integration, and (3) the possibilities for emigrants to learn more about

the culture, traditions and language of the host country.

By comparing according to these three criteria the situation of Czech Republic with that of Australia, the following changes in Czech immigration policy are suggested: (1) to create a conceptual immigration policy, (2) to simplify the legal and institutional framework of the process of integration, (3) to open classes of Czech language and classes about the Czech society for immigrants for free, (4) to connect the immigration policy with other policies, (5) to diminish discrimination on labor market, and (6) to establish counseling centers for immigrants on the level of regional governments and municipalities.

By comparing various aspects of immigration policy, this paper has covered some but certainly not all of key issues concerning the process of immigrant integration in the Czech Republic. It comes with suggestions of substantial changes which should improve immigration policy in the Czech Republic and help to preserve social cohesion.