

CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Sociological Studies

Department of Sociology

Valeriia Galushkevych

‘Czech people’ coming from Ukraine, their understanding of national identity

Thesis abstract

Key words: Czech Republic, integration, migration, national identity, perception, push and pull factors, resettlement, Ukrainian migrants.

In this thesis, I analyze various aspects of migration from Ukraine to the Czech Republic under the resettlement program of ethnic Czechs introduced by the Czech government in 2015. This program was initiated upon the request of the Czech society in Ukraine in response to steady economic decline and worsening living conditions in Ukraine.

The population of my study is ethnic Czechs living in Ukraine and who moved to the Czech Republic within the resettlement program. I study the determinants of their move, speed of integration in the Czech Republic, progress on the Czech labor market, migrants’ satisfaction with life in the destination country, discrimination and their plans for the future. I collect qualitative data from individual interviews mostly conducted in hotel rooms where the migrants temporarily reside.

A significant distinguishing feature of this study is that I analyze migrants with Czech roots who moved to the Czech Republic under the resettlement program. This particular feature distinguishes my research from many existing studies in that these migrants have different

starting conditions when compared to typical migrants usually described in migration literature. The major difference is how these migrants are treated by the receiving country – the Czech Republic. The government has created favorable visa conditions for their arrival and support for integration. This includes temporary accommodation, language classes and some financial support. Average migrants described in the literature do not usually have this kind of support, and hence I find that the migrants from the sample analyzed integrate faster in the Czech society.

Migration literature finds that labor migration determinants usually center around economic determinants. Migrants move from one country to another because they expect to obtain higher discounted income abroad than in a home country. I extend the determinants of migration to include national identity factor. I hypothesize that migrants move not only because of the differences in income between the Czech Republic and Ukraine but also because their perception of national identity connects them to the Czech Republic. Thus, individual identity, or perception of thereof, is a significant determinant for the migrants who arrived under the program.

I develop a theoretical model, which builds on existing definitions of a migrant in empirical data. I find many cross-country discrepancies in the definitions of who can be considered as a migrant. This alone poses a big challenge to researchers because it invalidates cross-country comparison of data. Luckily, OECD (2014, 2015) and UN (2015) have made tremendous progress in harmonizing international migration data.

Further, I build on the foundations of national identity theory developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979). The authors claim that, on the one hand, national identity is a collective product. On the other hand, national identity is part of individual identity. In my model, national identity becomes a migration determinant when individual perception of identity matches the group identity of a destination country. This is clearly the case for the respondents analyzed since all of them enrolled in the program because they had Czech

roots. This statement, however, does hold for the spouses of the migrants because they came under family reunification conditions.

From the data collected, I find strong effect of migration networks on how fast the migrants integrate in the Czech community. Most migrants rely on the networks to help them find jobs and accommodation once they leave the premises of temporary residence. Connection to exiting migrant networks also helps the respondents feel homesick less.

Another interesting finding is that at the stage of interviews most migrants displayed mixed or ever blurred perceptions of national identity. This is clearly related to the fact that the migrants have left Ukraine, but have not yet fully integrated in the Czech society. Their history until now remained in Ukraine, but their expectation of the future lies in the Czech Republic.