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### INTEGRATION OF HIGHLY QUALIFIED SUB-SAHARAN IMMIGRANTS IN PRAGUE;

#### *Comparison with the Situation in Paris, London and Liège*

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#### Thesis Summary

The aim of the thesis named *Integration of Highly Qualified Sub-Saharan Immigrants in Prague: Comparison with the Situation in Paris, London and Liège* was to analyse similarities and differences in the process of socio-economic integration of highly qualified Sub-Saharan immigrants that have been residing on a long term basis. The conducted research evaluated in what areas are usually highly qualified Sub-Saharan immigrants socially marginalized and in what areas are their personal or professional qualities – thanks to the implementation of adequate integration policies – optimally valorised. The ambition of the thesis was not to provide an exhaustive analysis of the integration process of all Sub-Saharan communities living in Europe, but rather to give an insight of certain aspects of the integration reality of Sub-Saharan immigrants through an example of 68 respondents living in selected cities – against a background of national integration policies of the respective host society.

Premises of research:

1. *International migrants usually prefer to choose big towns and cities as their place to live in the host country, from which we can deduce that the number of Sub-Saharan immigrants residing in the capital city of Prague will increase in the future.*
2. *Direction of migration flows is maintained through social networks, created between communities living in the country of origin and the host society. The existence of these*

- “transnational” networks plays an important role not only in terms of the decision-taking process whether or not to emigrate, but also tends to affect the way how the integration process will subsequently proceed in the host society.
3. *Identification of best practices of local (or regional) integration policies that are well-established in France, Great Britain and Belgium, may serve as valuable source of inspiration for a creation of integration strategies in the Czech cities and regions.*
  4. *Selected strategy of local (or regional) integration policy has significant effects not only on the way the integration process of immigrants is proceeded, but also on the way how are the immigrants appreciated in the eyes of a mainstream society.*

The thesis is based on the results of a field research, evaluating the integration process of highly qualified Sub-Saharan immigrants living in Prague and in selected European cities (i.e. Paris, London and Liège). In Prague, the empirical research was conducted in the period from 1<sup>st</sup> September to 15<sup>th</sup> November 2006 (altogether 37 Sub-Saharan respondents were included in the research), and in Paris, London and Liège, the empirical research was conducted in the period from 1<sup>st</sup> September to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2007 (altogether 31 Sub-Saharan immigrants were included in the research). With the majority of the selected respondents semi-structured interviews were carried out (using pre-prepared questionnaires), and the rest of the selected respondents were asked to fill in questionnaires on their own at home (usually those who were afraid of their residence status by declaring some details from their privacy, but still were interested to share their experience with their integration process). The target group consisted of university graduates of Sub-Saharan origin who have been residing in the host country for at least 1 year – on the basis of acquired citizenship, permanent or long-term residence permit or a deposited asylum request.

The data obtained by the semi-structured interviews and the questionnaire survey were evaluated by means of factor analysis and analysis of main components with the help of a computer program StatView (the main objective of these analyses is to replace a large number of input features by fewer components / factors without loss of information). For the purpose of this thesis, variables that had showed a lower degree of variability than  $< 0.440$  were excluded from further interpretation). For an easier interpretation of qualitative (or quantitative) relations among variables, only those variables that had the highest load factor value, i.e.  $> 0.440$  have been used. The selected components / factors were analysed on a confidence level  $\alpha < 0.05$  (i.e. 5 % probability of error).

Given a small number of respondents, research findings cannot be considered as fully representative. The aim of the factor analyses was to illustrate the reality of 68 Sub-Saharan immigrants living in respective areas. Research outcomes indicate that the inclusion of selected Sub-Saharan immigrants in the Czech Republic is characterized by certain assimilative elements (it means a complete suppression of their cultural identity is according to the chosen respondents quite essential for a successful integration into the major society). By contrast, the integration of Sub-Saharan immigrants into the society in Western European countries follows rather communitaristic model of integration (i.e. Sub-Saharan diaspora provides its members with a basic socio-economic background, necessary for their integration into the major society). However, the situation of Sub-Saharan immigrants in selected

Western European countries is not homogenous: to a large extent their socio-economic situation depends on the applied concept of national (vs. local) integration policy (i.e. assimilative integration model, multicultural model, etc.); the type of granted residence status; degree of openness of the labor market; the willingness to recognize migrant's formal qualifications as well as his or her previous professional experience; the stage of economic cycle; the place of residence (larger cities usually offer more possibilities of economic inclusion and other socio-cultural activities).

One of the fundamental differences between Sub-Saharan respondents living in France, Great Britain and Belgium, on the one hand, and Sub-Saharan respondents living in the Czech Republic, on the other hand, is a lack of community life within the latter group related to a specific geographic area. While in Western European cities, African quarters<sup>1</sup> can be found there quite easily, Sub-Saharan communities established in the Czech Republic do not usually concentrate in any geographically specified area (one of the exceptions could be Prague 6 Suchbátův where the Czech Agricultural University is situated<sup>2</sup>). Another important difference between Sub-Saharan respondents living in and outside the Czech Republic was the fact that long-term immigrants residing in the Czech Republic are in comparison with their European counterparts usually less generous with their families in the country of origin (i.e. the total amount of remittances sent by Sub-Saharan respondents living in the Czech Republic was quite low) and they do not visit their relatives very often either. The weakness of social networks and lower level of solidarity within the Sub-Saharan community in the Czech Republic can be explained by both – the small size of the community in absolute terms, and arrival motives that drew them into the country. Two-thirds of Sub-Saharan respondents living in the Czech Republic came to the country on the basis of study visas, while in the case of France, Great Britain and Belgium, half of all respondents used as a gateway to the country an asylum system. In the Czech Republic asylum seekers and recognized refugees generally faced the biggest problems during the integration process. By contrast, immigrants who come to the Czech Republic in late 60's and 70's (primarily from Angola and Ethiopia), on the basis of bilateral agreements on friendship and mutual assistance among socialist countries, assessed their integration process in very positive terms. Their integration process was usually facilitated by the help of their Czech companions. In France, Great Britain and Belgium, the highest socio-economic status (with respect to the position held in the labour market and the social prestige) were reached by those Sub-Saharan respondents who have been residing in the host society for more than five years on the basis of a permanent residence permit or acquired citizenship. On the contrary, the most disadvantaged groups of Sub-Saharan respondents residing in Western European countries were those with only temporary residence status. Given the fact that among the most successfully integrated Sub-Saharan immigrants usually did not belong newcomers under 25 years of age, we can deduce that the successful integration into a host society requires a certain time.

In general terms, the most important prerequisite for a successful integration of Sub-Saharan immigrants into a host society (in case of Paris, London, Prague and Liège) was a stable residence

status. The stable residence status (i.e. permanent residence status, acquired citizenship), even if it is not a panacea for all problems related to the integration process, facilitated the Sub-Saharan interviewees to find an appropriate job and to improve their housing conditions. Moreover, the stable residence status of Sub-Saharan immigrants living in Western European countries tends to encourage their interest in personal participation in development programs with their countries of origin and to reinforce their intercommunity cohesion (for example by setting up ethno-cultural organizations).

It might be supposed that a successful economic integration of Sub-Saharan migrants goes against the development of Sub-Saharan intercommunity cohesion, however, in practice both factors could co-exist. In France, Great Britain and Belgium, highly qualified Sub-Saharan respondents successfully integrated in the labour market, did not lose the intention to continue to support their families residing in their countries of origin (materially or financially). For this reason, it is preferable to assess the of integration process of immigrants in a whole complexity of the phenomenon (Castles, 2008; Niessen, 2007) and not only in economic terms. The successful economic integration of immigrants does not automatically lead to their satisfactory position in a major society, although it may help them in this respect.

The empirical research conducted with Sub-Saharan respondents in European countries was followed by semi-structured interviews realized with representatives of local governments in Paris, London and Liège. The purpose of these interviews was to identify best practices of local integration policies. Results of the semi-structured interviews conducted with local workers as well as representatives of a target group were subsequently integrated into several ranking tables summarizing municipality activities of Paris, London and Liège in the context of local integration strategies on the one hand, and reflecting a feedback of a real effectiveness of such implemented instruments from the perspective of their recipients (i.e. Sub-Saharan immigrants), on the other hand. The selection of indicators evaluating the integration policies of the respective city was based on the premises that the objective of each local government was to approach the model of the 'intercultural city' predefined in studies of Israeli researcher Michael Alexander (Alexander, 2007, in Wood, Landry, 2007, p. 296–297). Given the results of both aforementioned surveys, the inclusion of highly qualified Sub-Saharan immigrants into the society should become more efficient after the implementation of the following recommendations:

- 1) First, the host society should seek to stabilize the residence status of long-established immigrants (i.e. immigrants that have been staying in the host society more than 1 year).
- 2) Local integration strategy should promote the implementation of concrete programs with relation to employment and housing policies that would be based on a positive-active approach (i.e. immigrants were given specific jobs; immigrants are actively protected from discrimination in finding adequate housing, etc.) and not on a passive-negative approach (i.e. repressive measures such as interdiction to use the native language of immigrants; elimination of ethnic media; rise in taxes on satellite dishes, etc.).

<sup>1</sup> Areas with a higher proportion of African immigrants on a respective area – usually a number of adjacent streets.

<sup>2</sup> The Czech Agricultural University is frequently attended by students from developing countries.

- 3) Local integration strategy should not apply only anti-communitarist policy measures that tend to eliminate cultural specificities of immigrants; such an approach would sooner or later provoke social unrests.
- 4) Local integration strategies should comprise not only measures for an effective integration of immigrants in the labour market but should also valorise the existence of cultural diversity in the host society (by facilitating a foundation of ethnic businesses as well as organizations of foreigners dealing with the integration of immigrants in the host society or the development of their countries of origin, etc.)
- 5) Local integration policies should seek to link the logic of communitarism with the new concept of citizenship. This strategy would enable immigrants (who have been residing in the host society for more than one year) to be involved more extensively in a decision-taking process of local governments (via participation in local referenda and other important activities of the village), while maintaining some aspects of their cultural identity.

Data obtained during both empirical investigations (conducted with local workers as well as representatives of a target group) were also enriched by an analysis of press coverage in France, Great Britain, Belgium, and Prague. This methodological approach provided the research results with new incentives for further discussion.

The main aim of analysis of the Czech and foreign periodicals was to evaluate the frequency and emotive colouring of published articles referring to Africa. The basis of the research lied in an assumption that mass media had a fundamental impact on forming individual points of view on different subjects and to some extent on forming the public opinion (Kadeřka, Karhanová, 2002). Selected Czech and foreign printed media were evaluated during the two-month period on the basis of two types of analyses: quantitative and qualitative analysis. Quantitative analysis of the printed media evaluated the frequency and the thematic focus of published articles regarding Africa (i.e. identified articles were regrouped according to the subject treated up to 22 thematic categories<sup>3</sup>), while the qualitative analysis assessed a content of the selected articles according to what picture of Africa they are giving (1), whether they promote intercultural understanding between communities and if so, to what extent (2), and whether they tend to enhance xenophobic attitudes within the majority and if so, to what extent (3). The most discussed Africa-related topic in the selected newspapers (MF Dnes, Lidové noviny, Týden, 24 hodin; Le Figaro, Le Monde, Metro France; The Sun, The Guardian, Metro Great Britain; La Meuse, Le Vif, Metro Belgium) was an African immigration to Europe, political situation in former colonies, and development and humanitarian assistance in Africa. Compared to the Czech periodicals, French/British/Belgian newspapers did not hesitate to publish articles on topics that are still considered as taboo in some way in the Czech Republic (i.e. articles on global warming and development of the Sub-Saharan countries). The articles related to global warming were quite frequently discussed in British newspapers while articles referring to the development of the Sub-Saharan countries in French newspapers. Moreover, foreign periodicals dealt more intensively with

<sup>3</sup> 1) culture, 2) society, 3) religion, 4) history, 5) discoveries, 6) travelling, 7) sport, 8) nature, 9) economy, 10) demography, 11) politics, 12) development and humanitarian aid, 13) immigration, 14) infringement of human rights and democratic values, 15) armed conflicts, 16) terrorism, 17) defamation of African continent, 18) diseases, 19) accidents and natural disasters, 20) discrimination, 21) global warming, and 22) delinquency in the host society.

a socioeconomic discrimination of Sub-Saharan immigrants in a host society than did the Czech newspapers. Such a visibility of the problematic aspects related to the integration process of African communities in foreign newspapers was probably provoked by the fact that the number of Sub-Saharan Africans residing in Britain, France and Belgium is much higher than it is the case in the Czech Republic. Although the most positive image of Africa was provided during the two months period by the Czech newspapers (especially due to the very low number of published articles in comparison with other analysed newspapers in Western Europe), it was unfortunately the Czech press (of all the analysed European periodicals) that devoted the least articles to the strengthening of intercultural understanding among communities, which is a prerequisite for a creation of social cohesion in a multicultural society.

In order to eliminate the identified deficiencies, the Czech Republic should derive some inspiration from the Belgian journalistic Code of Ethics. Possible creation of the Czech code of ethics should urge a greater caution in a selection of themes and forms of expressions while interpreting the events related to Africa and African diaspora. In compliance with the Belgian Code of Ethics, the adherence to the Czech one should be supervised by a professional committee consisting of journalists and experienced professionals. The main task of such a committee would be to process annual reports on selection of topics, verbal and visual documentation in respective Czech periodicals, and to offer recommendations on possible improvements to the media coverage with the common objective to increase in objective information on minorities and simultaneously to fostering of the sense of social belonging among communities.

The creation of an intercultural society based on social solidarity and mutual respect would be reinforced by the elaboration of an effective integration strategy that would support intercultural understanding (while monitoring the enforcement of its principles); and the elimination of causes of intercultural misunderstandings (usually induced by negative prejudices) by a sensitive use of mass media. Only free of prejudice we will be able to work successfully with members of diverse cultural communities on our common future.

#### Resources:

- CASTLES, S. *Conference on Theories of Migration and Social Change*. St Anne's College, Woodstock Road, Oxford, 1. – 3. 7. 2008.
- KADERKA, P.; KARHANOVÁ, K. *Obráz civilizace v médiích*. Praha : Ústav pro jazyk český Akademie věd ČR, 2002.
- NIESSEN, J. *Towards a Common European Framework for Migration and Integration Policies: Perspectives from European Institutions and Civil Society*. *Organisations, Conference in Brussels*, 12. 6. 2007.
- WOOD, P.; LANDRKY, Ch. *The Intercultural City – Planning for Diversity Advantage*. London : Earthscan, 2007. ISBN 13-978-1-8447-436-5.