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NGOs as Facilitators for the Integration of Foreigners in the Czech Republic

A Case Study of Center for Integration of Foreigners (Centrum pro integraci cizinců)

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hui Yu Weng".



MA Programme Euroculture Declaration

I, Hui-Yu Weng, hereby declare that this thesis, entitled “NGOs as Facilitators for the Integration of Foreigners in the Czech Republic: A Case Study of Center for Integration of Foreigners (Centrum pro integraci cizinců)”, submitted as partial requirement for the MA Programme Euroculture, is my own original work and expressed in my own words. Any use made within this text of works of other authors in any form (e.g., ideas, figures, texts, tables, etc.) are properly acknowledged in the text, as well as in the bibliography.

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Abstract

The Czech Republic has seen a rapid increase in the number of immigrants since 1989. While a system of integration policy was brought up as early as at the end of the 1990s, until today, the integration policy is yet to be sufficiently developed and implemented. Many of the integration measures are, in fact, only realized with considerable help from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), especially at the regional and local level. Nevertheless, surprisingly, there has been relatively little research on the role of NGOs in this field. To fill this research gap, this thesis aims to explore how NGOs facilitate the integration of foreigners in the Czech Republic. Specifically, it looks at NGOs' involvement in foreigners' integration from the perspective of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. A qualitative case study of the NGO Center for Integration of Foreigners (Centrum pro integraci cizinců, CIC) was adopted. Data were gathered from CIC's website, CIC's recent annual reports, and a semi-structured interview with a CIC social worker. The results of the study shed light on how NGOs engage in the ecological systems of foreigners (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem) and how they contribute to the field of integration in the Czech Republic.

Keywords: NGOs, non-governmental organizations, integration, foreigners, immigrants, ecological systems theory, Czech Republic

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List of abbreviations

CIC	Center for Integration of Foreigners (Centrum pro integraci cizinců)
CPIC	Center for Support of Integration of Foreigners (Centrum na podporu integrace cizinců)
EU	European Union
KIC	Concept of Integration of Foreigners (Koncepce integrace cizinců)
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OAMP	Ministry of the Interior Department of Asylum and Migration Policy (Odbor azylové a migrační politiky)
RVNNO	Government Council for Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organizations (Rada vlády pro nestátní neziskové organizace)
UN	United Nations

Introduction

The Czech Republic is among the European Union (EU) a relatively young migrant-receiving country but has seen a rapid increase in the number of immigrants in its recent history. Following the fall of the communist regime in 1989, the country (then Czechoslovakia) opened its borders and adopted a more liberal approach to migration, bringing about the arrival of thousands of immigrants in the early 1990s and turning itself from a transit country into a destination country.¹ While in 1989, foreigners represented merely 0.3 percent of the total population, in 2020, their representation climbed to almost 6 percent. In fact, the number of foreigners in the Czech Republic has increased more than 17 times since 1989.²

The Czech government began to formulate its integration policy in 1999 and has since then updated it frequently. Nonetheless, today, the Czech integration policy is still far from perfection. A lot of its integration measures remain on paper or exist only pro forma. Moreover, there is a lack of effective mechanisms to engage local government in the development and implementation of the integration policy at the local level. In fact, until the establishment of government-led Centers for Support of Integration of Foreigners (Centra na podporu integrace cizinců, CPICs)³ in 2009, all services and activities concerning the integration of foreigners were provided by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) alone.⁴ Even now, with CPICs set up in all 14 regions in the Czech Republic, NGOs remain as the chief actors in the delivery of integration-related services to foreigners.⁵

¹ Eva Dohnalová, “Governance of Migrant Integration in the Czech Republic,” *Czech & Slovak Social Work* 21, no. 1 (2021): 8; “Governance of migrant integration in Czechia,” European Commission, accessed July 4, 2022, https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/country-governance/governance-migrant-integration-czechia_en.

² Figures calculated based on data from Czech Statistical Office; Czech Statistical Office, *Permanently and long-term resided foreigners in the Czech Republic in the years 1985–2021 (as at 31 December)* (Czech Statistical Office, 2022), accessed July 4, 2022, <https://www.czso.cz/csu/cizinci/number-of-foreigners-data>; Czech Statistical Office, *Population and population increase of the Czech Republic in 1919–2020* (Prague: Czech Statistical Office, 2021), accessed July 4, 2022, <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/demographic-yearbook-of-the-czech-republic-2020>.

³ The Center for Support of Integration of Foreigners (Centrum na podporu integrace cizinců, CPIC) must not be confused with the NGO and the thesis’s case study Center for Integration of Foreigners (Centrum pro integraci cizinců, CIC). CIC as an NGO was founded by civil society as early as in 2003, whereas CPICs were established with direct support from the Ministry of the Interior and their earliest operation commenced only in 2009. More information regarding CPICs can be found in Section 1.5.3.

⁴ Karel Čada and Karina Hoření, “Governing Through Rituals: Regulatory Ritualism in Czech Migration and Integration Policy,” in *Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers’ Integration in European Labour Markets*, ed. Veronica Federico and Simone Baglioni (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2021), 129.

⁵ Dohnalová, “Governance of Migrant Integration in the Czech Republic,” 19.

Much research has been done on the integration of foreigners in the Czech Republic. Some look into specific areas of integration, such as foreigners' education-occupation mismatch⁶, health in relation to workplace social hazards⁷, labor market participation, language skills, and social support⁸. Others analyze the Czech integration policy, including its development, implantation, and drawbacks.⁹ However, there are few studies that focus specifically on the role of NGOs in facilitating the integration of foreigners in the Czech Republic. While in the 2011 study "Barriers to Integration of Immigrants and Integration Policy in the Czech Republic with Focus on Stakeholders and Their Co-operation", Trbola and Rákoczyová give extra attention to NGOs and provide an overview of possible NGO activities, it is unclear what the actual activities in which individual NGOs engage are. In addition, the information might have been outdated, given that the Czech integration policy has undergone numerous changes and the number of foreigners in the Czech Republic has grown substantially.¹⁰

Hence, this thesis attempts to explore concrete ways how NGOs facilitate the integration of foreigners in the Czech context. Specifically, it looks at activities of NGOs through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory—a framework allowing for systematic analysis of NGOs' support and interactions with various actors in foreigners' environment. To that end, qualitative research with a case study of the NGO Center for Integration of Foreigners (Centrum pro integraci cizinců, CIC) was carried out. The author examined CIC's website and recent annual reports using qualitative content analysis and

⁶ Martina Koutná, Anna Krčková, and Tereza Vavřínová, "Educational Mismatch Among Immigrants in the Czech Republic - Selected Issues," *Sociologia* 48, no. 6 (2016): 572.

⁷ Dušan Drbohlav and Dagmar Džurová, "Social hazards as manifested workplace discrimination and health (Vietnamese and Ukrainian female and male migrants in Czechia)," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 14, no. 10 (October 2017): 1.

⁸ Jitka Vacková and Radka Prokešová, "Selected areas of immigrant integration in the Czech Republic," *KONTAKT* 19, no. 4 (December 2017): 258.

⁹ Helena Bauerová, "The Czech Republic and the Reality of Migrant Integration Policy in the Context of European Integration," *Hrvatska i komparativna javna uprava: časopis za teoriju i praksu javne uprave [Croatia and comparative public administration: a journal for the theory and practice of public administration]* 18, no. 3 (2018): 397–420; Čada and Hoření, "Governing Through Rituals: Regulatory Ritualism in Czech Migration and Integration Policy," 115–134; Dohnalová, "Governance of Migrant Integration in the Czech Republic," 7–23; Agnieszka Zogata-Kusz, "Immigration and integration policies in Czechia," in *Relations between Immigration and Integration Policies in Europe*, ed. Maciej Duszczuk, Marta Pachocka, and Dominika Pszczółkowska (London: Routledge, 2020), 173–196.

¹⁰ Robert Trbola and Miroslava Rákoczyová, "Barriers to Integration of Immigrants and Integration Policy in the Czech Republic with Focus on Stakeholders and Their Co-operation," *Migracijske i Etničke Teme [Migration and Ethnic Themes]* 27, no. 1 (2011): 77–104.

conducted semi-structured interviews with a CIC social worker. The results of the study can contribute to a deeper understanding of NGOs in the area of the integration of foreigners and could be useful for policymakers, researchers, and those working with integration issues at the local level in the Czech context.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that, despite acknowledging integration as a two-way process, this thesis is set to focus more on integration on the side of foreigners and less on the majority society. Moreover, since the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the number of foreigners—mainly Ukrainians—in the Czech Republic has skyrocketed.¹¹ This thesis does not deal with this latest, dynamically changing situation.

Following this introduction, the context in regard to this research is presented. This includes definitions of NGO and integration, the ecological systems theory, the current situation of foreigners, in particular, third-country nationals¹², in the Czech Republic, the Czech integration policy and relevant issues, and Czech NGOs working in this regard as well as their general role, functions, and example activities. Next, in Chapter 2, the aim of the research is reiterated and further supported by research questions. The methodology adopted for this study is explained in detail: the research design, methods for data collection and analysis, and ethical considerations concerning the data collection process. Chapter 3 reports findings from the research. The services and activities of the case study are laid out based on an adapted ecological model, followed by a discussion of the results in relation to the research aim and questions. Finally, this thesis concludes with a summary of key findings, along with limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

¹¹ Ilaria Brizi, “Nearly 370,000 Temporary Protection Visas Granted To Ukrainian Refugees In The Czech Republic,” *Brno Daily*, June 13, 2022, <https://brnodaily.com/2022/06/13/news/politics/nearly-370000-temporary-protection-visas-granted-to-ukrainian-refugees-in-the-czech-republic/>.

¹² A third-country national refers to a citizen of a state not belonging to the EU nor a citizen of Norway, Iceland, Lichtenstein, or Switzerland.

1 Context

This chapter provides the context for the research. It first defines the terms NGO and integration, explains the ecological systems theory, and clarifies the target group of foreigners referred to in this thesis, together with the presentation of data on foreigners in the Czech Republic. It then introduces the Czech integration policy, including its aim, proposed measures, regional implementors, and shortcomings. Finally, the chapter gives an overview of NGOs and their functions in the country.

1.1 Definition of NGO

Non-governmental organization or NGO is a general term referring to organizations that are independent from official government institutions and from for-profit, private enterprises.¹³ NGO is sometimes used interchangeably with terms such as non-profit organization (NPO), private voluntary organization (PVO), and civil society organization (CSO).¹⁴ Each of these terms, as suggested by its name, emphasizes one particular aspect of the organization while inevitably omits the others. This thesis predominantly uses the term NGO, as it is used by the Czech government in its official English documents.¹⁵

The term “non-governmental organization” was coined in 1945, when the United Nations (UN) charter was adopted.¹⁶ Today, the UN defines an NGO as:

any non-profit, voluntary citizens’ group which is organized on a local, national or international level. Task-oriented and driven by people with a common interest, [NGOs] perform a variety of services and humanitarian functions, bring citizens’ concerns to Governments, monitor policies, and encourage political participation at the community level. [NGOs] provide analysis and expertise, serve as early warning mechanisms and help monitor and implement international agreements ... Typically,

¹³ Michael Yaziji and Jonathan Doh, “Classifying NGOs: definitions, typologies and networks,” in *NGOs and Corporations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 4.

¹⁴ Anna C. Vakil, “Confronting the Classification Problem: Toward a Taxonomy of NGOs,” *World Development* 25, no. 12 (1997): 2058; “About us,” United Nations, accessed March 11, 2022, <https://www.un.org/en/civil-society/page/about-us>.

¹⁵ Government of the Czech Republic, *State Policy with Respect to Non-Governmental Organizations for the Years 2015 – 2020* (Government of the Czech Republic, 2015), accessed March 14, 2022, <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/ppov/rnno/dokumenty/statni-politika-vuci-nno-na-leta-2015---2020-133505/>.

¹⁶ Peter Willetts, “NGOs, social movements, and civil society,” in *Non-Governmental Organizations in World Politics* (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 6.

they are organized around specific issues, such as ... peace and security, human rights, and development.¹⁷

However, it is important to note that the research on NGOs is still evolving. To date, there is no consensus on one specific definition of NGO. In the views of Willets, “one of the ambiguities about the term, NGO, is whether it is referring to a local, provincial, national, regional or global body.”¹⁸

Various scholars have proposed their own definitions of the term NGO. Anheier suggests NGOs exhibit the following four characteristics: 1) they offer useful (in specified legal sense) services or goods and serve a certain public purpose; 2) they are not permitted to distribute surplus income as profit; 3) they are voluntary organizations in the sense that they are established, operated, and dissolved according to voluntary initiative and decision by a board or members; 4) they demonstrate value-rationality, which signifies a set of values that guides and motivates the organizations.¹⁹ Teegen, Doh, and Vachani focus on social purpose NGOs and regard them as private, not-for-profit organizations aiming to serve specific societal interests by aligning advocacy and/or operational efforts with economic, social, political goals, including human rights, equity, health, education, and environmental protection.²⁰ Willets defines an NGO as an “independent voluntary association of people acting together on a continuous basis, for some common purpose, other than achieving government office, making money or illegal activities.”²¹

Given the topic’s focus on NGOs in the Czech Republic, this thesis follows the definition of NGO adopted by the Government Council for Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organizations (Rada vlády pro nestátní neziskové organizace, RVNNO), a permanent initiative, consultative, and coordination body of the Government of the Czech Republic in NGO affairs. This definition was originally formulated by Salamon and Anheier jointly in

¹⁷ United Nations, “About us.”

¹⁸ Peter Willets, “What is a Non-Governmental Organization?” *UNESCO Encyclopaedia of Life Support Systems*, City University London, last modified August 15, 2006, <http://www.staff.city.ac.uk/p.willets/CS-NTWKS/NGO-ART.HTM>.

¹⁹ Helmut K. Anheier, “Themes in International Research on the Nonprofit Sector,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 19, no. 4 (December 1990): 372–373.

²⁰ Hildy Teegen, Jonathan P. Doh, and Sushil Vachani, “The Importance of Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) in Global Governance and Value Creation: An International Business Research Agenda,” *Journal of International Business Studies* 35, no. 6 (November 2004): 466.

²¹ Willets, “What is a Non-Governmental Organization?”

the 1990s.²² It provides that an entity can be qualified as an NGO if five crucial structural or operational criteria are met. First, the entity has to be an organization. It should be institutionalized to a certain extent, such as having a charter, clear objectives, and activities that support its goals. Second, the entity must be private, meaning it should be institutionally separate from the government. Financial resources of the organization, however, are exempted from this condition.²³ The third criterion is non-profit-distributing. It concerns the non-profit nature of the entity. Profits generated should not be returned to the entity's owners or directors. Fourth, the entity is capable of self-governing. It should be able to control and carry out its activities independently. The fifth and final criterion is voluntariness. The organization should involve a meaningful degree of voluntary participation of people in its activities.²⁴

1.2 Definition of integration

As a broad concept, there is no settled definition of integration. One complication of this definitional debate is that the term integration is often used interchangeably with assimilation by scholars, with the former often used by Europeans and the latter by Americans.²⁵ Indeed, there is a lot of overlap between the two concepts. The studies on the concept of assimilation in the US in the early 20th century tended to look at processes of acculturation, in Park and Burgess's words, "incorporat[ion] ... in a common cultural life"²⁶. On the contrary, post-war European research on ethnic integration usually attended to issues regarding socio-economic inclusion and exclusion of post-war labor migrants from less developed states such as Turkey.

²² Government of the Czech Republic, *State Policy with Respect to Non-Governmental Organizations for the Years 2015 – 2020*, 8.

²³ Yet, in reality, because many NGOs are to an extent dependent on state funding, their activities can be more or less influenced. For instance, NGOs may be reluctant to criticize authorities for fear of losing financial support from the government the next year. This is particularly the case in the Czech Republic.

²⁴ Lester M. Salamon and Helmut K. Anheier, "In Search of the Non-Profit Sector. I: The Question of Definitions," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 3, no. 2 (1992): 135; Lester M. Salamon and Helmut K. Anheier, "Social Origins of Civil Society: Explaining the Nonprofit Sector Cross-Nationally," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 9, no. 3 (1998): 216.

²⁵ Anthony F. Heath and Silke L. Schneider, "Dimensions of Migrant Integration in Western Europe," *Frontiers in sociology* 6 (April 2021): 2.

²⁶ Robert Ezra Park and Ernest Watson Burgess, *Introduction to the science of sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 1921), 735.

Nevertheless, more recently, segmented assimilation brought up by Portes and Zhou²⁷ in the US includes the socio-economic aspect into an expanded concept of assimilation, and socio-cultural aspects of integration have become heatedly debated among European scholars. As a result, Heath and Schneider suggest that integration and assimilation be treated as synonyms. In any case, “the core of both concepts is that individuals and groups become fully part of a wider whole, the latter usually thought of as the nation-state in which the individuals reside”.²⁸

Another complication concerning the definition of integration is that “the particular requirements for acceptance by a receiving society vary greatly from country to country”²⁹ and are usually influenced by the country’s own migratory history and migration policy.³⁰ For instance, across Europe, the United Kingdom and France have long-established immigration traditions, while Italy or Spain have only recently become destinations for immigrants. Central and Eastern European countries are even newer to receiving migrants but have faced considerable problems with indigenous ethnic minorities. In addition, even if some countries share similar migratory histories, all governments design their integration policies differently. According to the Council of Europe, while the term integration denotes “joining parts (in) to an entity”, in practice, it can encompass a wide range of interpretations: from entirely giving up one’s background (in their words, “assimilation”) to preserving one’s unaltered patterns of behavior (“multicultural society”), depending on how the concept is formed in a country’s integration policy.³¹

The International Organization for Migration acknowledges that the meaning of integration is country-specific and therefore defines it as:

the process by which migrants become accepted into society, both as individuals and as groups. It generally refers to a two-way process of adaptation by migrants and host societies, while the particular requirements for acceptance by a host society vary from country to country. Integration does not necessarily imply permanent settlement. It

²⁷ Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou, “The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants,” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 530, no. 1 (November 1993): 81–82.

²⁸ Heath and Schneider, “Dimensions of Migrant Integration in Western Europe,” 2.

²⁹ Rinus Penninx, “Integration: The Role of Communities, Institutions, and the State,” *Migration Policy Institute*, last modified October 1, 2003, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/integration-role-communities-institutions-and-state>.

³⁰ Council of Europe, “Introduction,” in *Measurement and Indicators of Integration* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1997), 10.

³¹ Council of Europe, “Introduction,” 11.

does, however, imply consideration of the rights and obligations of migrants and host societies, of access to different kinds of services and the labour market, and of identification and respect for a core set of values that bind migrants and host communities in a common purpose.³²

It emphasizes that integration is not only the responsibility of the incoming foreigners but also the receiving society, both at the governmental and individual levels. Integration is not unidirectional but a two-way process.

The notion of integration as a two-way process is seconded by European institutions when discussing the integration of third-country nationals. The Common Basic Principles for the Immigrant Integration Policy, adopted by the Justice and Home Affairs Council of the Council of the European Union in 2004 and reaffirmed in 2014, define integration “as a two-way process of mutual accommodation by all migrants and by residents of the EU Member States”.³³ Furthermore, the European Commission has made clear in 2016 one of the EU’s core values—the respect for fundamental rights, including freedom of speech and religion as well as rights to equality and non-discrimination, applies to both the host society and third-country nationals. It highlights the importance of being guided by the EU values together with “the principle of a two-way process on integration”, which is explained as “not only expecting third-country nationals to embrace EU fundamental values and learn the host language but also offering them meaningful opportunities to participate in the economy and society of the Member State where they settle”.³⁴

Aware that integration means differently in different national contexts and that it is bilateral, Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas simply define integration as “the process of becoming an accepted part of society” and further developed three dimensions of integration in which immigrants may (or may not) become accepted into society: 1) the legal-political, 2) the socio-economic, and 3) the cultural-religious. Each of these dimensions corresponds

³² International Organization for Migration, *Glossary on Migration 2nd Edition* (Switzerland: International Organization for Migration, 2011), 51, accessed March 29, 2022, <https://documentation.lastradainternational.org/doc-center/2736/international-migration-law-n%C2%B025-glossary-on-migration-2nd-edition>.

³³ Eurostat, *Migrant integration 2017 edition* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2017), 6, accessed March 29, 2022, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-statistical-books/-/ks-05-17-100>.

³⁴ European Commission, *COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS Action Plan on the integration of third country nationals* (Strasbourg: European Commission, 2016), 5, accessed March 29, 2022, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52016DC0377>.

to the three main areas where integration takes place, the state, the market, and the nation, and can have an impact on one another. The legal-political dimension concerns the question of “whether and to what extent are immigrants regarded as fully-fledged members of the political community”.³⁵ It deals with migrants’ legal/political rights and obligations as well as the degree of difficulty in acquiring residence rights, national citizenship, and access to the formal political system, etc. The socio-economic dimension considers the social and economic position of immigrants, regardless of their citizenship. More specifically, it looks at their access to and participation in institutional facilities regarding employment, education, housing, and health care, and whether their rights in these domains are the same as the natives. The cultural-religious dimension discusses how migrants and the host society perceive the differentness between each other and to what extent cultural and religious diversity is accepted by the receiving society.³⁶

Considering the country focus of this study, the thesis defines integration the same as the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic—the leading actor in the Czech integration policy. The Ministry of the Interior describes integration as “a long-term process of integrating foreigners into society, in which both foreigners and the majority society necessarily participate. Integration is a bilateral or even trilateral process—the course of integration is to some extent influenced by the operation of the country of origin”.³⁷ It stresses that integration is a “long-term” process that cannot be achieved overnight and agrees with the above definitions that integration does not concern only incoming foreigners but also the host society and can even be affected by the immigrants’ country of origin.

³⁵ Rinus Penninx and Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas, “The Concept of Integration as an Analytical Tool and as a Policy Concept,” in *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe* (Springer, 2016), 14.

³⁶ Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas, “The Concept of Integration as an Analytical Tool and as a Policy Concept,” 14–15; Rinus Penninx, “Integration of migrants. Economic, social, cultural and political dimensions,” in *The new demographic regime. Population challenges and policy responses*, ed. Miroslav Macura, Alphonse Macdonald, and Werner Haug (New York/Geneva: United Nations, 2005), 139.

³⁷ Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, *Aktualizovaná koncepce integrace cizinců 2016 - Ve vzájemném respektu* [Updated Concept of Integration of Foreigners 2016 - In Mutual Respect] (Prague: Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, 2015), 15, accessed March 17, 2022, <https://www.mvcr.cz/migrace/clanek/zakladni-dokumenty-k-integracni-politice-ke-stazeni.aspx>.

1.3 Ecological systems theory

The ecological systems theory was chosen as the theoretical framework for this thesis because it provides a useful lens for analyzing NGOs' contribution to the integration of foreigners from a systematic point of view. The concept was first brought up by the psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1974 in his research regarding child development, where he argued that researchers should not only focus on the immediate situation of a child but also on interactions in the child's larger environment.³⁸ In 1977 and 1979, Bronfenbrenner elaborated on this notion and further developed the ecology of human development. This conception of the environment contends that an individual functions in an environment with a series of nested and interrelated systems that can affect the individual's development. Specifically, these systems are, from the most intimate level to the broadest, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem.³⁹

The microsystem is the innermost level of the ecological systems theory and comprises the activities and interactions in an individual's immediate environment. These settings can be, for example, family, school, and workplace. The mesosystem consists of interactions between microsystems, e.g. the interactions between home and school or school and workplace. It is essentially a network of microsystems. Next, the exosystem refers to the wider social system in which the individual does not participate but is indirectly affected by, such as the neighborhood, the mass media, and government agencies. Finally, the outermost layer in the individual's development is the macrosystem. It is the overarching cultural context in which microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem are embedded, e.g. a country's cultural beliefs, customs, social, economic, and political systems.⁴⁰

³⁸ Urie Bronfenbrenner, "Developmental Research, Public Policy, and the Ecology of Childhood," *Child Development* 45, no. 1 (March 1974): 4.

³⁹ Urie Bronfenbrenner, "Toward an experimental ecology of human development," *American Psychologist* 32, no. 7 (1977): 514–515; Urie Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 21–26.

⁴⁰ A fifth system that includes the dimension of time—chronosystem—was added to the theory in 1986. It encompasses environmental changes that occur over the lifetime of an individual, including historical events or major life transitions. This thesis is grounded on Bronfenbrenner's early theory on ecological systems, the chronosystem is therefore not discussed; Bronfenbrenner, "Toward an experimental ecology of human development," 514–515; Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*, 21–26; Urie Bronfenbrenner, "Ecological Models of Human Development," in *International Encyclopedia of Education*, ed. T. N. Postlethwaite and T. Husen (Oxford: Elsevier, 1994), 1645–1646; Urie

Applying the theory to this study, which focuses on Czech NGOs' efforts toward the integration of foreigners, an adapted ecological model can be conceptualized as below:

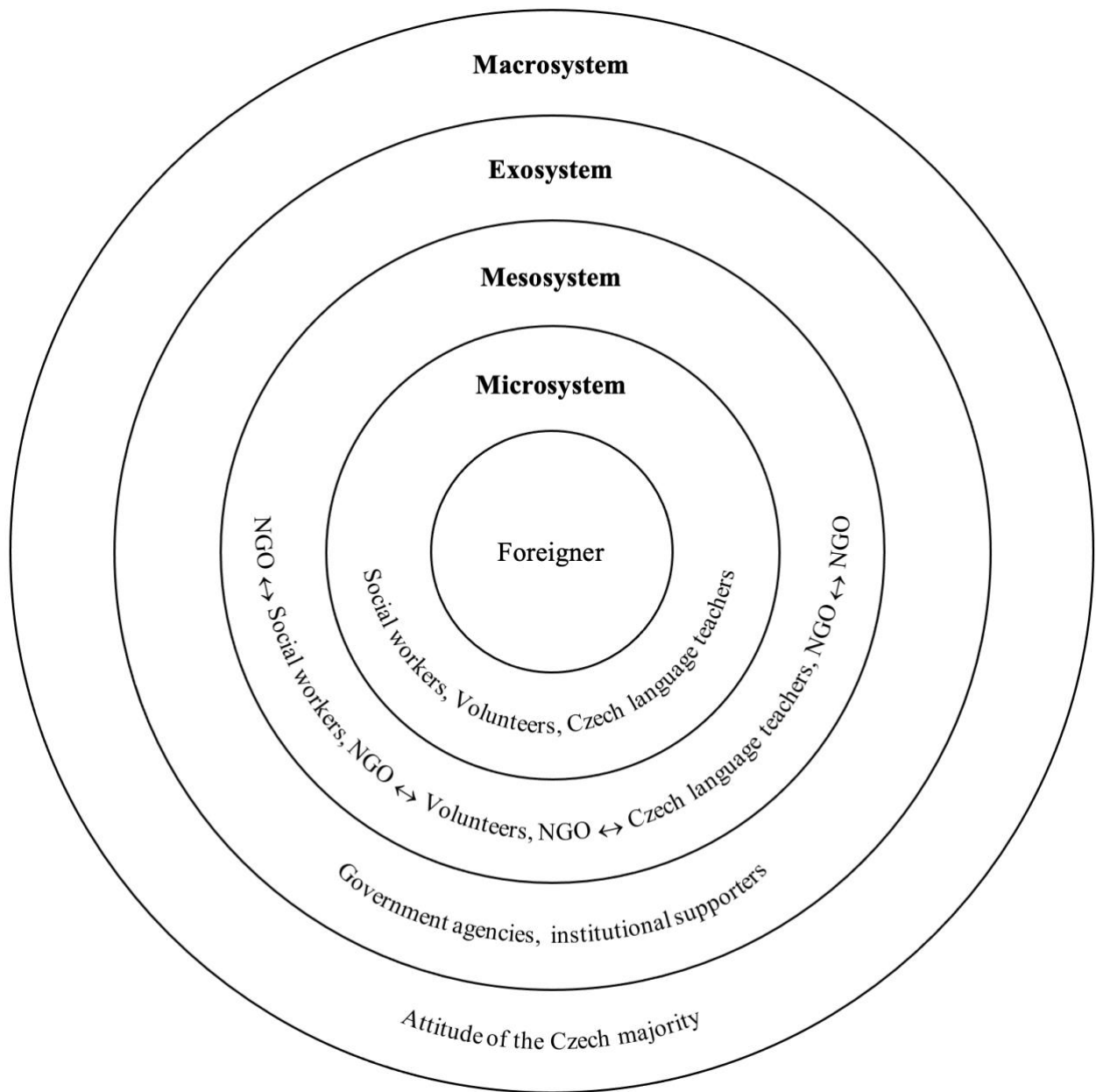


Figure 1: Ecological systems of foreigners in the Czech Republic with a focus on the role of NGOs

Bronfenbrenner, "Ecology of the family as a context for human development: Research perspectives," *Developmental Psychology* 22, no. 6 (1986): 724.

The adapted ecological model illustrates the environment of foreigners undergoing integration with an emphasis on the role of NGOs. Placing individual foreigners in the center of the nested model, the microsystem of foreigners includes those who provide direct support to foreigners, e.g. social workers, volunteers, and Czech language teachers. The interactions between direct supporters of foreigners then make up foreigners' mesosystem, which can also comprise interactions between two or more NGOs. Next, the exosystem of foreigners concerns NGOs' engagement with those belonging to the wider social system. These can be government agencies and other institutional supporters that indirectly benefit foreigners through cooperation and dialogues with NGOs. Lastly, the macrosystem of foreigners relates to the overall cultural context of foreigners' integration in the Czech Republic. A topic which NGOs deal with can be the attitude of the general public toward foreigners.

1.4 Foreigners in the Czech Republic

There are several ways to address people residing in a country other than their country of origin, such as migrants, immigrants, foreigners, etc. The main body of this thesis primarily uses the word foreigner(s) because it is in line with the word choice adopted by the Czech government (Ministry of the Interior) in its main document concerning the thesis's topic, titled "Concept of Integration of Foreigners (Koncepce integrace cizinců, KIC)"⁴¹. It is important to note that, just as the main target group of KIC, foreigners in this thesis refer to third-country nationals who legally and voluntarily reside in the Czech Republic on a long-term basis. This means they should hold a permanent residence permit or a valid long-term residence permit or visa that allows them to stay in the Czech Republic for over 90 days.⁴² Third-country nationals who have obtained Czech citizenship are not considered foreigners. Tourists, nationals from the EU, European Economic Area, or Switzerland, and forced migrants such as refugees and asylum seekers who were pressured to leave their home countries are also beyond the scope of this thesis.

⁴¹ Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, *Aktualizovaná koncepce integrace cizinců 2016 - Ve vzájemném respektu* [Updated Concept of Integration of Foreigners 2016 - In Mutual Respect], 1.

⁴² "Entering the Czech Republic, duties, length of stay," Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, accessed March 21, 2022, <https://www.mvcr.cz/mvcren/article/third-country-nationals-entering-the-czech-republic.aspx>.

According to the Czech Statistical Office, there were over 632 thousand foreigners living in the Czech Republic on a voluntary basis as of December 31, 2020, taking up almost 6 percent of the total population (10.7 million).⁴³ Among them, 61 percent (387 thousand) are foreigners from third countries.⁴⁴ The number of third-country nationals in the Czech Republic has been rising for a long time. It has doubled since 2004 and only slightly decreased from the second half of 2009 until 2014 due to the impact of the financial crisis.⁴⁵ Chart 1 illustrates the changes in the number of third-country nationals (excluding those with valid asylum) in the Czech Republic from 2004 to 2020:

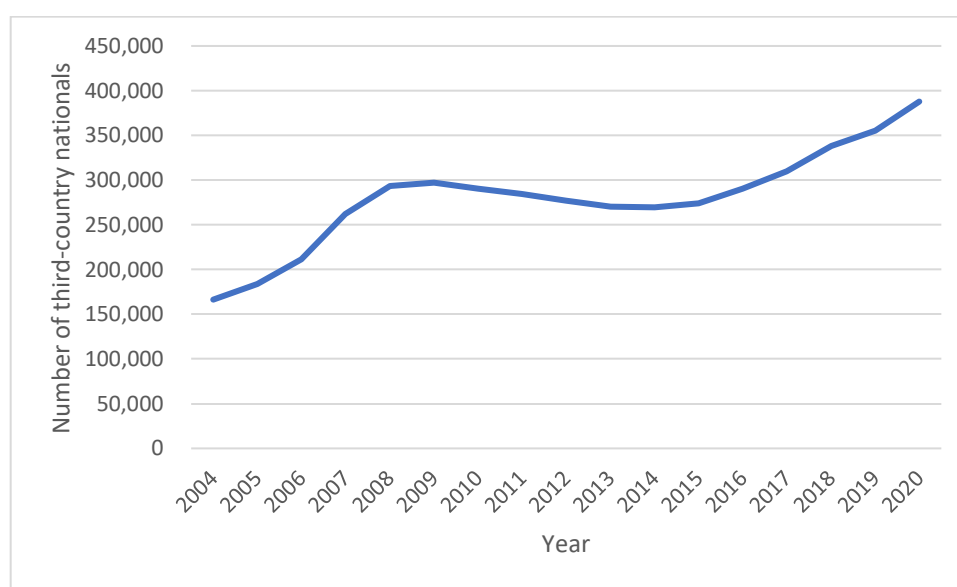


Chart 1: Number of third-country nationals (excluding those with valid asylum) in the Czech Republic from 2004 to 2020⁴⁶

⁴³ Figures calculated based on data from Czech Statistical Office; Czech Statistical Office, *Foreigners in the Czech Republic by citizenship in the years 1994–2020 (as at 31 December)* (Czech Statistical Office, 2022), accessed March 19, 2022, <https://www.czso.cz/csu/cizinci/number-of-foreigners-data>; Czech Statistical Office, *Demographic Yearbook of the Czech Republic - 2020* (Prague: Czech Statistical Office, 2021), 25, accessed March 19, 2022, <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/demographic-yearbook-of-the-czech-republic-2020>.

⁴⁴ Figures calculated based on data from Czech Statistical Office; Czech Statistical Office, *Foreigners in the Czech Republic by citizenship in the years 1994–2020 (as at 31 December)*.

⁴⁵ For the purpose of data consistency and to keep the thesis up to date, while the UK was a member of the EU from 1973 to January 2020, it is considered a third country in the data series covering the period from 2004 to 2020. For the same reason and following the same logic, while Romania and Bulgaria only joined the EU in 2007 and Croatia 2013, they are considered EU countries in the whole data series from 2004 to 2020; Figures calculated based on data from Czech Statistical Office; Czech Statistical Office, *Foreigners in the Czech Republic by citizenship in the years 1994–2020 (as at 31 December)*; Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, *Aktualizovaná koncepce integrace cizinců 2016 - Ve vzájemném respektu [Updated Concept of Integration of Foreigners 2016 - In Mutual Respect]*, 1.

⁴⁶ Chart created based on calculated data from Czech Statistical Office; *Foreigners in the Czech Republic by citizenship in the years 1994–2020 (as at 31 December)*.

The majority of third-country nationals in the Czech Republic reside permanently. In 2020, 55 percent (213 thousand) of foreigners from third countries held a permanent residence permit.⁴⁷ From 2004 to 2020, it can be observed that while the number of third-country nationals with temporary residence (a long-term residence permit or visa) fluctuates, the number of third-country nationals with permanent residence (a permanent residence permit) continues growing steadily (Chart 2).⁴⁸

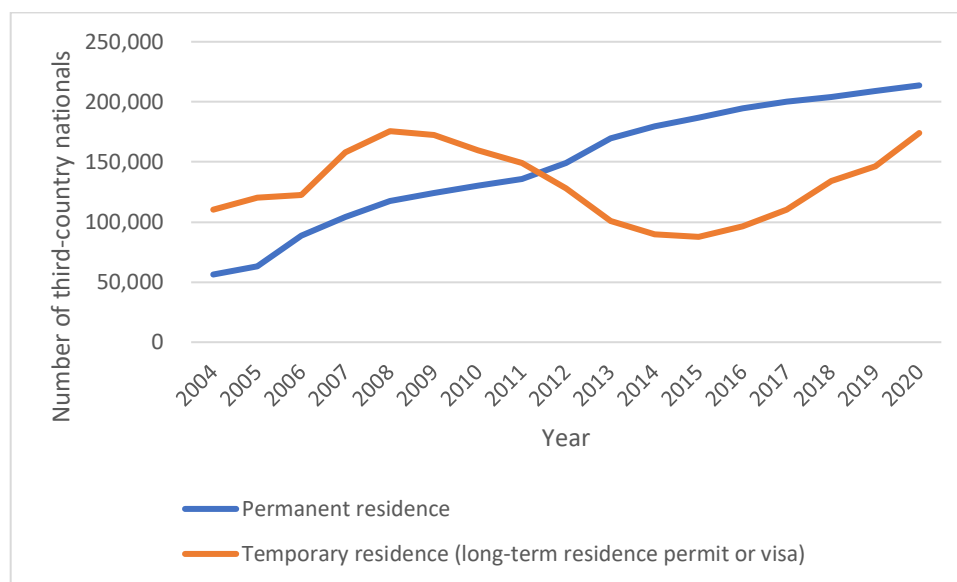


Chart 2: Types of residence of third-country nationals (excluding those with valid asylum) in the Czech Republic from 2004 to 2020⁴⁹

Regarding the nationalities of foreigners in the Czech Republic, the majority groups of foreigners from third countries have remained the same in the long run. Citizens of Ukraine (165 thousand)⁵⁰, Vietnam (62 thousand) and Russia (41 thousand) have been the top three

⁴⁷ Figures calculated based on data from Czech Statistical Office; Czech Statistical Office, *Foreigners in the Czech Republic in the years 2004–2020 (as at 31 December)* (Czech Statistical Office, 2021), accessed March 20, 2022, <https://www.czso.cz/csu/cizinci/number-of-foreigners-data>; Czech Statistical Office, *Foreigners in the Czech Republic by citizenship in the years 1994–2020 (as at 31 December)*.

⁴⁸ Czech Statistical Office, *Foreigners in the CR in the years 2004–2020 (as at 31 December)*; Czech Statistical Office, *Foreigners in the Czech Republic by citizenship in the years 1994–2020 (as at 31 December)*.

⁴⁹ Chart created based on calculated data from Czech Statistical Office; Czech Statistical Office, *Foreigners in the CR in the years 2004–2020 (as at 31 December)*; Czech Statistical Office, *Foreigners in the Czech Republic by citizenship in the years 1994–2020 (as at 31 December)*.

⁵⁰ Ukrainians were already the most numerous third-country nationals in the Czech Republic for a long time, but since the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the number of Ukrainians in the Czech Republic has increased with another 300 thousand. The Ukrainians who left for Czech Republic due to the 2022 Russia-Ukraine war were granted with a special temporary visa. This thesis, however, does not deal with the

most represented third-country nationals in 2020.⁵¹ Together they make up almost 70 percent of all third-country nationals residing in the Czech Republic voluntarily.⁵² Within the rest 30 percent, citizens of Mongolia (10 thousand), the United Kingdom (9 thousand), China (7.9 thousand), the United States (7.5 thousand), Belarus (6.9 thousand), Kazakhstan (6.8 thousand), and Moldova (6.1 thousand) are among the more salient groups.⁵³ Chart 3 presents the top ten most common third-country nationals (excluding those with valid asylum) in the Czech Republic in 2020:

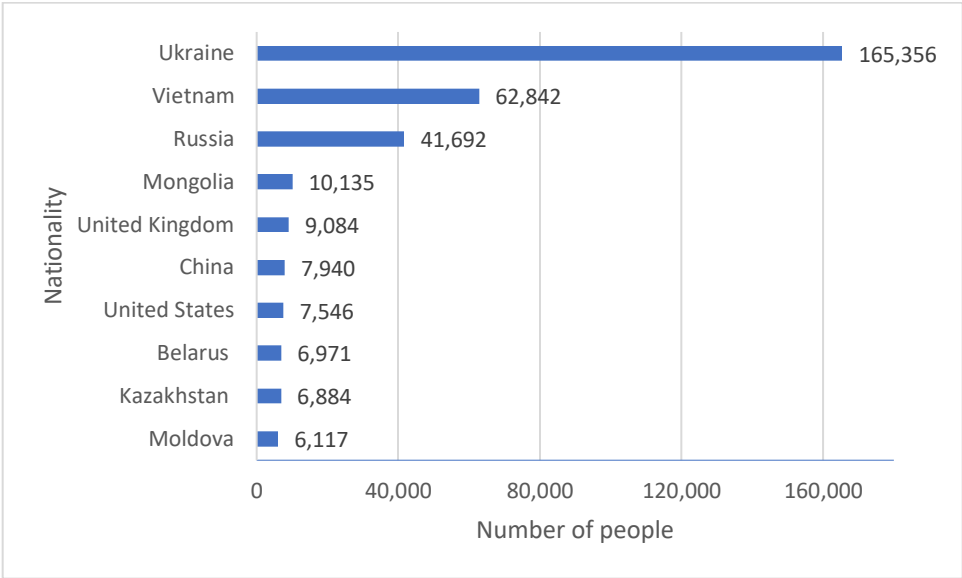


Chart 3: Top ten most common third-country nationals (excluding those with valid asylum) in the Czech Republic in 2020⁵⁴

latest, very dynamic situation; Brizi, “Nearly 370,000 Temporary Protection Visas Granted To Ukrainian Refugees In The Czech Republic.”

⁵¹ Czech Statistical Office, *Foreigners by category of residence, sex, and citizenship as at 31 December 2020* (Czech Statistical Office, 2021), accessed March 19, 2022, https://www.czso.cz/csu/cizinci/1-ciz_pocet_cizincu-001.

⁵² Figure calculated based on data from Czech Statistical Office; Czech Statistical Office, *Foreigners by category of residence, sex, and citizenship as at 31 December 2020*.

⁵³ Czech Statistical Office, *Foreigners by category of residence, sex, and citizenship as at 31 December 2020*.

⁵⁴ Chart created based on data from Czech Statistical Office; Czech Statistical Office, *Foreigners by category of residence, sex, and citizenship as at 31 December 2020*.

1.5 Integration policy of the Czech Republic

As implied earlier, the receiving state's integration policy is influential in the course of the integration of foreigners. In the Czech Republic, the Ministry of the Interior, especially the Department of Asylum and Migration Policy, is the main actor in formulating the integration policy.⁵⁵

The integration policy was set up as early as in 1999, after a significant increase in the number of immigrants and two unprecedented acts allowing foreigners to obtain permanent residence after a certain period of stay in the country.⁵⁶ Among the documents concerning the integration policy, the Concept of Integration of Foreigners (KIC) introduced in 2000 has played a key role in setting out the procedure for the integration of foreigners and have undergone several modifications and updates over the years.⁵⁷

1.5.1 Aim and target group of the 2016 Concept of Integration of Foreigners (KIC)

The latest version of KIC updated in 2016 recognizes that the integration policy is an integral part of legal migration and must respond to the new realities and needs of both foreigners and the Czech society.⁵⁸ It aims to support the integration of foreigners into society, achieve peaceful coexistence with foreigners, prevent the emergence of negative social phenomena, and to ensure the protection of the rights and security of all inhabitants of the Czech Republic. To that end, KIC calls attention to the self-sufficiency of foreigners. Specifically, it purports to enable foreigners to 1) know their rights and be capable of meeting their obligations, 2) orientate themselves in the Czech Republic, including its customs and way of life, 3) understand and be able to communicate in the Czech language, 4) be independent and self-

⁵⁵ The responsibility for this area was transferred to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs during the period 2004–2008; Zogata-Kusz, “Immigration and integration policies in Czechia,” 176; “Governance of migrant integration in Czechia,” European Commission, accessed April 23, 2022, https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/country-governance/governance-migrant-integration-czechia_en#ecl-inpage-4906.

⁵⁶ The Act on Aliens and the Act on Asylum in 1999 enabled foreigners to apply for permanent residence after ten years of legal residence in the Czech Republic. This required period of stay was reduced to five years in 2004 after the accession of the Czech Republic to the EU; Zogata-Kusz, “Immigration and integration policies in Czechia,” 174–176.

⁵⁷ Zogata-Kusz, “Immigration and integration policies in Czechia,” 175–185.

⁵⁸ Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, *Aktualizovaná koncepce integrace cizinců 2016 - Ve vzájemném respektu [Updated Concept of Integration of Foreigners 2016 - In Mutual Respect]*, 15.

sufficient socially and economically, and 5) have enough information regarding where to seek help and support when necessary. Additionally, as previously mentioned, KIC acknowledges integration as a shared responsibility of foreigners and the majority society in the Czech Republic. Hence, through its proposed measures, it attempts to shape the majority society to be more open and accommodating to foreigners and be willing to support the integration efforts of the newcomers.⁵⁹

The target group of KIC is first and foremost third-country nationals who have been legally residing in the territory of the Czech Republic for a long time. The 2016 KIC further enables holders of international protection to use relevant integration tools to complement the State Integration Program—the main document that guarantees special care for refugees given by Czech and EU regulations. In addition, specific integration measures are targeted at foreigners in the pre-migration period and, in some exceptional cases, EU citizens. Finally, as integration is a mutual process, the majority society is also part of the target group.⁶⁰

1.5.2 Proposed measures of the 2016 Concept of Integration of Foreigners (KIC)

The measures proposed for the implementation of the 2016 KIC center on six general aspects: 1) integration of foreigners, 2) promotion of the integration of foreigners, 3) integration at the regional and local level, 4) statistics, 5) coordination, and 6) financing. Falling under the aspect of the integration of foreigners, five key areas are identified: a) knowledge of the Czech language, b) economic self-sufficiency, c) orientation of a foreigner in society, d) mutual relations between communities, and e) gradual acquisition of rights depending on the length of stay.⁶¹

Knowledge of the Czech language is considered a basic pillar in the integration of foreigners, as it is a condition for foreigners' communication with the host society and plays a pivotal role in their education or successful employment. Measures in support of foreigners' Czech language development are different for children and adults. Measures for the former

⁵⁹ Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, *Aktualizovaná koncepce integrace cizinců 2016 - Ve vzájemném respektu* [Updated Concept of Integration of Foreigners 2016 - In Mutual Respect], 17.

⁶⁰ Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, *Aktualizovaná koncepce integrace cizinců 2016 - Ve vzájemném respektu* [Updated Concept of Integration of Foreigners 2016 - In Mutual Respect], 15–16.

⁶¹ Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, *Aktualizovaná koncepce integrace cizinců 2016 - Ve vzájemném respektu* [Updated Concept of Integration of Foreigners 2016 - In Mutual Respect], 25–35.

focus on enhancing the Czech learning and teaching environment at schools for foreign students and school teachers, whereas measures for the latter mostly rely on regional CPICs and NGOs to provide Czech language courses and courses for the preparation of Czech proficiency exams.⁶² It is worth noting that, despite the language requirement for obtaining permanent residence then stood at level A1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages⁶³, the 2016 KIC recognizes such a level is not sufficient for integration, foreshadowing the change in this condition of applying for permanent residence from level A1 to A2 in September 2021.⁶⁴

Foreigners' economic self-sufficiency is critical in the integration work as well. They should be capable of gaining income independently and not rely on state financial aid. Proposed measures hence emphasize the need to strengthen foreigners' access to as well as the ability to remain in the labor market. Social services and projects aimed at increasing foreigners' employability are supported with state budgets or EU funds. Moreover, foreigners should be protected from discrimination and be informed about their rights, obligations, and living conditions in the Czech Republic. Employers and government agencies, especially the Labor Office, need to be actively engaged in the process so as to mitigate barriers for foreigners in the labor market as much as possible.⁶⁵

Another key area in the integration of foreigners is the provision of information about Czech customs and way of life. Measures to orientate foreigners in the Czech society vary depending on their stage of immigration. For foreigners in the pre-migration period, the Ministry of the Interior, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, should ensure information materials on pre-migration preparation are adequately translated, handed over, and constantly updated on the websites of the embassies. For newly arrived foreigners, adaptation and integration courses provided by CPICs serve as crucial information

⁶² Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, *Aktualizovaná koncepce integrace cizinců 2016 - Ve vzájemném respektu* [Updated Concept of Integration of Foreigners 2016 - In Mutual Respect], 25–27.

⁶³ The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, commonly abbreviated as CEFR, categorizes foreign language proficiency into six levels, from basic to advanced being A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2; “Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR),” Council of Europe, accessed July 14, 2022, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages>.

⁶⁴ “Vláda ČR usnesením vlády č. 378 ze dne 19.4.2021 schválila novelu nařízení vlády č. 31/2016 sb. [By government resolution no. 378 of 19 april 2021, the government of the czech republic approved an amendment to government decree no. 31/2016 coll.],” Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports, accessed June 27, 2022, <https://www.msmt.cz/mezinarodni-vztahy/navyseni-urovne?lang=1>.

⁶⁵ Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, *Aktualizovaná koncepce integrace cizinců 2016 - Ve vzájemném respektu* [Updated Concept of Integration of Foreigners 2016 - In Mutual Respect], 27–28.

disseminators through which foreigners can be acquainted with miscellaneous issues concerning life in the Czech Republic. The CPIC lecturers and interpreters should also receive regular training and education. For foreigners with long-term or permanent residence, information regarding socio-cultural orientation should continue to be published and updated. Relevant projects or courses should similarly be aided continuously. For foreigners applying for citizenship of the Czech Republic, attention is paid to offering assistance in their preparation for the “Czech Life and Institutions Exam”⁶⁶. The Ministry of the Interior should closely cooperate with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport in this regard.⁶⁷ What is worth mentioning is that as of January 1, 2021, taking the adaptation and integration courses administered by CPICs has become a requirement for most foreigners⁶⁸ issued a long-term or permanent residence permit, indicating the prominence of these courses in the orientation of foreigners in the Czech society.

An equally important area in the integration of foreigners is the mutual relations between communities. Specifically, it refers to the necessary steps that should be taken in order to achieve harmonious coexistence between foreigners and the Czech majority. Intercultural dialogues are considered effective tools in fostering social tolerance and combating xenophobia and racism. Measures on this subject thus surround the promotion of events and activities that facilitate communication and mutual knowledge of both parties. Connecting with this idea is the provision of assistance in the communication between public institutions and foreigners. For instance, it is specified that the Ministry of Health should make available on their website a communication card in at least eight languages to ease the interaction between Czech healthcare professionals and their foreign patients. Also supported

⁶⁶ The official English translation of *Zkouška z českých reálií*; “Information about the Czech Life and Institutions Exam,” *Zkouška pro občanství* [Exam for citizenship], accessed April 8, 2022, https://obcanstvi.cestina-pro-cizince.cz/index.php?p=informace-o-zkousce&hl=en_US.

⁶⁷ Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, *Aktualizovaná koncepce integrace cizinců 2016 - Ve vzájemném respektu* [Updated Concept of Integration of Foreigners 2016 - In Mutual Respect], 28–30.

⁶⁸ This obligation does not apply to foreigners who have already taken this course or those residing in the Czech Republic on the basis of a long-term residence permit for the purpose of study/protection in the territory/investment, a long-term residence permit issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, an intra-company employee transfer card, or a European Union Member State intra-company employee transfer card; “Adaptation-Integration Courses,” Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, last modified February 25, 2022, <https://www.mvcr.cz/mvcren/article/adaptation-integration-courses.aspx>.

by the measures is the encouragement of foreigners' participation in the society as well as research on relations between foreigners and Czech citizens or on similar topics.⁶⁹

Finally, the gradual acquisition of rights based on foreigners' stay in the Czech Republic is paramount to integration. For instance, after five years of continuous residence in the Czech Republic, foreigners can apply for permanent residence and acquire all social rights, including access to public health insurance. After a total of ten years in the country, they can request for Czech citizenship and gain all political rights as well as the obligations of Czech citizens. However, it is also necessary to ensure the fundamental rights of foreigners who have yet to stay in the country for so long. One of these rights is their access to health care, which is underlined by the 2016 KIC. With a new legal regulation of compulsory health insurance for foreigners, it is less likely that foreigners would find themselves in desperate situations due to health issues. Another focus of the proposed measures in this respect is to activate foreigners' participation in public life. This consists of raising their awareness of the country's political system, institutions, democratic principles and legal system, and supporting their active participation in decision-making on public affairs at the local level, for example, in advisory bodies of regional councils and municipalities.⁷⁰

Some of the aforementioned measures are given extra attention in the 2016 KIC under the section connected with the promotion of the integration of foreigners. In particular, they relate to the awareness of foreigners and the majority, communication, and the deepening of professional competencies. It is deemed a primary task to familiarize both foreigners and the majority society with integration services and activities provided by the state or organizations and to ensure all actors involved understand the importance of integration for building harmonious coexistence with foreigners. Moreover, aside from the assistance in foreigners' communication with the public, there is a need to strengthen the communication with the general public on migration and integration issues through, for example, the formulation and implementation of a planned communication strategy and the compilation and distribution of reports on international trends in migration and integration. Lastly, it is imperative to provide relevant training seminars for professionals working at or with CPICs and NGOs assisting

⁶⁹ Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, *Aktualizovaná koncepce integrace cizinců 2016 - Ve vzájemném respektu* [Updated Concept of Integration of Foreigners 2016 - In Mutual Respect], 30–31.

⁷⁰ Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, *Aktualizovaná koncepce integrace cizinců 2016 - Ve vzájemném respektu* [Updated Concept of Integration of Foreigners 2016 - In Mutual Respect], 31.

foreigners as well as to increase intercultural and socio-cultural competencies of employees of individual ministries and other entities dealing with foreigners' affairs.⁷¹

To effectively put the integration measures into practice, the 2016 KIC places an emphasis on the cooperation with regional and local actors of integration. At the regional level, CPICs should continue to provide information for both foreigners and the majority, including public administration bodies, support for the full range of integration activities, and communication and mutual knowledge between foreigners and the general public. At the local level, subsidies should be given to municipalities with projects related to the integration of foreigners, with the hope to inspire other municipalities to create their own integration strategies. At both levels, NGOs facilitating the integration of foreigners are helpful partners in the implementation of KIC. Their activities and development are thus also supported with grants or EU funds.⁷²

Other aspects of measures central to the implementation of the 2016 KIC are statistics on foreigners in the Czech Republic, coordination with ministries, and financing the integration of foreigners. Working together with the Czech Statistical Office and various ministries, the Ministry of the Interior will make certain regular updates and publication of data concerning foreigners in the territory of the Czech Republic. The Ministry of the Interior also acts as the coordinator between ministries. Each of the ministries, however, is responsible for approaching KIC actively by submitting proposals for their intentions and tasks for its implementation. In terms of financing, except for 2020, every year since the implementation of 2016 KIC, more than 54 million CZK was set from the annual state budget to support the integration of foreigners.⁷³ Individual ministries also allocated additional financial resources from their budgets in this respect within the scope of their responsibilities.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, *Aktualizovaná koncepce integrace cizinců 2016 - Ve vzájemném respektu* [Updated Concept of Integration of Foreigners 2016 - In Mutual Respect], 32–34.

⁷² Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, *Aktualizovaná koncepce integrace cizinců 2016 - Ve vzájemném respektu* [Updated Concept of Integration of Foreigners 2016 - In Mutual Respect], 32.

⁷³ In 2020, the amount reserved within the state budget was 48 million CZK; Sources retrieved from 2016 KIC and documents of *Postup při realizaci aktualizované Koncepce integrace cizinců - Ve vzájemném respektu* [Procedure for the implementation of the updated Concept of Integration of Foreigners - In mutual respect] 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022; “Základní dokumenty k integrační politice ke stažení [Basic documents on integration policy for download],” Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, accessed May 17, 2022, <https://www.mvcr.cz/migrace/clanek/zakladni-dokumenty-k-integracni-politice-ke-stazeni.aspx>.

⁷⁴ Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, *Aktualizovaná koncepce integrace cizinců 2016 - Ve vzájemném respektu* [Updated Concept of Integration of Foreigners 2016 - In Mutual Respect], 34–35.

1.5.3 Centers for Support of Integration of Foreigners (CPICs)

CPICs are essential governmental instruments in realizing KIC measures at the regional level. They were set up as early as in 2009 in six regions of the Czech Republic.⁷⁵ Today, CPICs can be found in all regions of the country, with 14 of them established by the Ministry of the Interior Refugee Facilities Administration and four of them by individual organizations: CPICs in Prague by the Prague City Hall, in South Moravia by the Regional Office of the South Moravian Region, in Ústí nad Labem Region by the NGO the Counseling Centre for Integration, and in Hradec Králové Region by the Diocesan Catholic Charity of Hradec Králové.⁷⁶

Regardless of their establishers, all the CPICs share the same goal—to create space for conceptual and long-term support for the integration of foreigners into the Czech society. Their primary target group includes foreigners legally residing in the Czech Republic as well as individuals who have been granted international protection (asylum or subsidiary protection).⁷⁷ However, some of the CPIC activities also target the general public considering integration as a two-way process.⁷⁸

CPICs provide a range of services and activities free of charge, including social and legal counseling, Czech language courses, socio-cultural courses, interpreting services, support from community workers, the possibility of using the Internet workplace and library, and various educational, cultural, and social events. At the same time, CPICs are responsible for coordination activities such as regular regional advisory platform meetings, monitoring of the target group, and cooperation with relevant partners of the integration work, particularly low-level administrations and employers, in solving the impact of labor migration in each region.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ “Integration of Foreign Nationals in the Territory of the Czech Republic,” Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, accessed April 14, 2022, <https://www.mvcr.cz/mvcren/article/integration-of-foreign-nationals-in-the-territory-of-the-czech-republic.aspx>.

⁷⁶ “About Us,” Centra na podporu integrace cizinců [Centers for Support of Integration of Foreigners], accessed April 14, 2022, <https://www.integracnicentra.cz/?lang=en>.

⁷⁷ Centra na podporu integrace cizinců [Centers for Support of Integration of Foreigners], “About Us.”

⁷⁸ Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, *Aktualizovaná koncepce integrace cizinců 2016 - Ve vzájemném respektu* [Updated Concept of Integration of Foreigners 2016 - In Mutual Respect], 32; “Who are we?” Integrační centrum Praha [Integration Center Prague], accessed April 14, 2022, <https://icpraha.com/en/who-we-are/>.

⁷⁹ Centra na podporu integrace cizinců [Centers for Support of Integration of Foreigners], “About Us.”

In addition, an essential task of CPICs is the provision of the adaptation and integration courses, which require enrollment fees⁸⁰ but are mandatory for all long-term or permanent third-country nationals as of January 1, 2021, unless specified otherwise. These courses assist foreigners in navigating the Czech society faster and better and provide them with basic information such as Czech culture, fundamental values of the Czech society, and foreigners' rights and obligations in the Czech Republic. The course topics are built around situations that foreigners may encounter in their daily lives, for example, issues related to residence requirements, healthcare system, social security, housing, employment, education, etc. During the course, foreigners are also informed about integration institutions and organizations that offer free consultations, Czech courses, and other useful services to foreign nationals.⁸¹

The operation of CPICs is financed from the state budget, more concretely, from the budget of the Ministry of the Interior Refugee Facilities Administration according to the amended Act on the Residence of Aliens in the Territory of the Czech Republic. Between 2009 and 2020, the operation was also funded from the EU budget, in particular, from the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals (2009–2015) and from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (2015–2020).⁸²

1.5.4 Shortcomings in the governance of the integration of foreigners

While, on paper, the Czech integration policy seems well formulated, in reality, there is ample room for improvement. Many of the measures remain unrealized. For instance, the communication strategy mentioned in 2016 KIC is yet to be implemented, even though it was promised already a year before, when the Ministry of the Interior adopted the Strategy on Migration Policy of the Czech Republic.⁸³ In addition, the integration policy has long been treated merely as a tool to prepare for the incoming immigration situation. Its relation with the immigration policy is unbalanced and, sometimes, conflicting.⁸⁴ While there were

⁸⁰ The enrollment fee of a public adaptation and integration course is 1,500 CZK and a non-public course is 800 CZK; Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, "Adaptation-Integration Courses."

⁸¹ Centra na podporu integrace cizinců [Centers for Support of Integration of Foreigners], "About Us."

⁸² Centra na podporu integrace cizinců [Centers for Support of Integration of Foreigners], "About Us."

⁸³ Zogata-Kusz, "Immigration and integration policies in Czechia," 183.

⁸⁴ Zogata-Kusz, "Immigration and integration policies in Czechia," 190.

attempts to link the two policies, they were often piecemeal, vague, or lacked a clear implementation plan with supporting measures. An example of such is the Act on the Residence of Aliens in the Territory of the Czech Republic, which has undergone several changes.⁸⁵

In the Act's 2019 amendment, it rules that all foreigners with few exceptions are obliged to take the adaptation and integration courses from January 2021. However, it is uncertain whether the state is prepared to run the courses for a large and still growing number of foreigners. The amendment also does not cope with individuals unable to complete the course due to physical disability, language issues, or, indeed, the course shortage. Moreover, as already criticized by NGOs working with foreigners, despite the courses being mandatory, foreigners themselves need to cover the enrollment fees.⁸⁶

The amendment further introduces a system of quotas for holders of Employee Cards and long-term visas for the purpose of business. These quotas, according to the amendment's explanatory statement, are set in tripartite negotiations between the government, trade unions, and employers, and should take into account, among others, integration capacities. Yet, it is not specified what integration capacities mean. Critical information such as market needs and the basis for the quotas is also missing. Furthermore, these quotas are not reserved for foreigners seeking seasonal employment.⁸⁷

Another problem concerning the labor market integration is the amendment's introduction of the Extraordinary Work Visa, with which foreigners can come to the Czech Republic to work in certain types of professions, but only for one year. It is not possible to extend the validity of the visa or to change it to another type of residence—not even for the purpose of family reunification. Such measure, as pointed out by the Consortium of Migrants Assisting Organizations, is “anti-family, anti-employee, anti-employer, and non-respectful of EU law”⁸⁸. It discourages foreigners from integrating, as they are not expected to stay. In fact, experiences of western countries such as Germany in the 1950s and 1960s have already shown that this type of restrictive migration rule (the Gastarbeiter model) is detrimental to

⁸⁵ Čada and Hoření, “Governing Through Rituals: Regulatory Ritualism in Czech Migration and Integration Policy,” 122–123.

⁸⁶ Zogata-Kusz, “Immigration and integration policies in Czechia,” 189; Čada and Hoření, “Governing Through Rituals: Regulatory Ritualism in Czech Migration and Integration Policy,” 123.

⁸⁷ Zogata-Kusz, “Immigration and integration policies in Czechia,” 187.

⁸⁸ Zogata-Kusz, “Immigration and integration policies in Czechia,” 188.

the integration of foreigners and will only foster a group of second-category people residing illegally with no rights.⁸⁹

Additionally, the rigid and time-consuming system of hiring third-country nationals has led employers to increasingly rely on employment agencies to acquire foreign workers. Due to the absence of regulations safeguarding the rights of subcontracted foreigners, these foreigners often fall victim to labor exploitation. Many signed a contract they did not understand, worked without a contract, or were provided only “an Agreement to Complete a Job, which legally allows them to work for only 300 hours per year per employer and forces them to pay medical insurance on their own”⁹⁰. Other common issues connected to their working contracts include, for example, unstable wages and non-compensation for overworking hours.⁹¹

The precarity of foreigners is exacerbated by their limited social rights. By law, foreigners contribute to the social security system and the state employment policy just as their Czech counterparts, yet, foreigners enjoy only limited social benefits and are not entitled to use the unemployment benefits. Besides, if foreigners with permanent residence lose their job, they will risk having their permanent status revoked. In regard to healthcare, foreigners in the Czech Republic not employed by Czech companies are excluded from the public health insurance system, and hence forced to choose commercial insurance, which does not promise the same level of coverage as the public one.⁹²

On top of that, the unfavorable situation of foreigners can be complicated by unreliable and incomprehensible information provided by public authorities. For example, different public officials in the same institution may provide foreigners with different information, causing foreigners to have to undergo red tape repeatedly. Insufficient support from the government then creates conditions for the operation of commercial companies that profit from offering guidance services to foreigners. Sometimes, these service practices can

⁸⁹ Zogata-Kusz, “Immigration and integration policies in Czechia,” 188; Čada and Hořeni, “Governing Through Rituals: Regulatory Ritualism in Czech Migration and Integration Policy,” 123.

⁹⁰ Čada and Hořeni, “Governing Through Rituals: Regulatory Ritualism in Czech Migration and Integration Policy,” 127.

⁹¹ Čada and Hořeni, “Governing Through Rituals: Regulatory Ritualism in Czech Migration and Integration Policy,” 127.

⁹² Čada and Hořeni, “Governing Through Rituals: Regulatory Ritualism in Czech Migration and Integration Policy,” 127–128.

be semi-legal, e.g. the sale of bank account statements or the re-sale of time slots for visa applications, and could accelerate the exploitation of foreign workers.⁹³

On the other hand, the exclusive role of the Ministry of the Interior in the area of immigration and integration is not helpful.⁹⁴ The Ministry of the Interior is responsible for, among others, the establishment of alien-related legislation, clauses concerning foreigners' residence, management of CPICs through its organizational unit of the Refugee Facilities Administration, and the coordination and distribution of funds for integration from a variety of sources. This centralized power of the Ministry of the Interior has called forth many criticisms from the civil society, as it is not beneficial to the effective implementation of the integration policy.⁹⁵

The integration of foreigners is a complex and cross-sectional issue impacting multiple social areas and hence should involve a variety of ministries, e.g. the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Industry and Trade, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Regional Development. While, according to KIC, the Ministry of the Interior does cooperate with other ministries in some areas, in reality, these ministries do not pay adequate attention to the integration policy. Their insufficient activities in carrying out integration measures within their competence complicate the situation of foreigners in the Czech Republic, particularly in the fields of education and healthcare.⁹⁶

Limited involvement in the integration policy is common at the regional and local level as well. Although CPICs have been set up in all 14 regions of the Czech Republic as regional coordinators of the integration of foreigners, only four of them are directly run by regional entities. The rest are operated by the Ministry of the Interior's subordinating unit, the Refugee Facilities Administration. This organizational structure does not contribute to the regional development of integration activities.⁹⁷ Besides, employees at these centers tend to have a wide workload and are short of the necessary space and competence for active

⁹³ Čada and Hoření, "Governing Through Rituals: Regulatory Ritualism in Czech Migration and Integration Policy," 128.

⁹⁴ Zogata-Kusz, "Immigration and integration policies in Czechia," 190; Čada and Hoření, "Governing Through Rituals: Regulatory Ritualism in Czech Migration and Integration Policy," 119.

⁹⁵ Dohnalová, "Governance of Migrant Integration in the Czech Republic," 10–11.

⁹⁶ Dohnalová, "Governance of Migrant Integration in the Czech Republic," 12.

⁹⁷ Dohnalová, "Governance of Migrant Integration in the Czech Republic," 18.

coordination.⁹⁸ Critics have also noted that CPICs' activities concerning the regional advisory platforms should be further deepened and developed. These platforms should not exist only pro forma. They serve to share information, measure the situation of foreigners, or identify surfacing problems.⁹⁹

At the local level, very few municipalities and towns in the Czech Republic have their own integration strategy regarding foreigners. Recent history has shown that municipalities and towns generally pay little attention to the situation of foreigners unless related problems have occurred. For instance, during the economic crisis between 2008 and 2009, some cities with a significant representation of foreign laborers were faced with issues caused by mass dismissals of these workers and the increasing tensions between foreigners and locals. With the support of the Ministry of the Interior, the so-called emergent projects comprising a set of integration measures and activities were brought up in the locality and substantially improved the situation. Soon after, the projects were made into municipality-level projects, allowing municipalities to promote integration and implement relevant activities at the local level with funding from the state. In spite of this, the projects have not received much attention from municipalities and towns.¹⁰⁰ In 2020, only 20 public administrative bodies carried out the projects, and 11 of them were municipal districts in Prague.¹⁰¹

Considering the high concentration of foreigners in the capital city of Prague, it is not surprising that Prague has made the most progress in the establishment of integration strategies compared to any other Czech city. With the status of a region and municipality simultaneously, a Prague-based policy specific to the integration of foreigners was set up as early as in 2014, and its plans for implementation are closely followed annually. Brno, the second largest Czech city, is quickly catching up. Since 2017, the services of intercultural workers have been incorporated into the structures of the Brno City Council to improve communication between officials and foreigners. In late 2020, a strategy for the integration

⁹⁸ Dohnalová, "Governance of Migrant Integration in the Czech Republic," 14.

⁹⁹ Dohnalová, "Governance of Migrant Integration in the Czech Republic," 16.

¹⁰⁰ Dohnalová, "Governance of Migrant Integration in the Czech Republic," 14.

¹⁰¹ Municipalities or towns with projects targeting the integration of foreigners in 2020 were Bílá Voda, Brno, Břeclav, Česká Lípa, Havlíčkův Brod, Pardubice, Plzeň, Vyšší Brod, Žatec, and 11 municipal districts of Prague, including Prague 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, and Prague-Libuš; Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, *Zpráva o situaci v oblasti migrace a integrace cizinců na území České republiky v roce 2020* [Report on the situation in the area of migration and integration of foreigners in the Czech Republic in 2020] (Prague: Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, 2021), 193–196, accessed April 22, 2022, <https://www.mvcr.cz/migrace/clanek/vyrocní-zpravy-o-situaci-v-oblasti-migrace-a-integrace.aspx>.

of foreign nationals in the city of Brno was created and will be valid until 2026.¹⁰² However, other than Prague and Brno, there are few cities in the Czech Republic with community social service or social inclusion strategic plans targeting the integration of foreigners.¹⁰³

It is important to note that, to date, the Czech integration policy has been framed by general and non-binding documents. The only compulsory elements of integration concern third-country nationals, who, according to the Act on the Residence of Aliens, must 1) attend the adaptation and integration course within one year of acquisition of their long-term or permanent residence permit and 2) demonstrate their Czech knowledge at the level A2¹⁰⁴ should they apply for permanent residence.¹⁰⁵ As commented by Dohnalová, “formulation of integration measures only in the form of provisions causes alibism of public administration and self-government authorities in terms of responsibility for the integration policy of the Czech Republic.”¹⁰⁶ It is striking that there is no mention of foreigners or any reference to KIC in the Government Strategy for Combating Social Exclusion in 2016–2020. There is also an absence of legal requirements for regions and municipalities to fulfill their role in this regard.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, the term integration is yet to be legally defined. It is for these reasons that the EU calls attention to integration mainstreaming—“an effort to reach people with a migration background through needs-based social programming and policies that also target the general population”.¹⁰⁸

In short, the Czech government should approach the integration of foreigners in a more systematic and coherent manner. Ministerial, regional, and municipal public administrators should take active roles in the implementation of KIC. So far, the majority of

¹⁰² “Strategy for the integration of foreign nationals in the city of Brno 2020 – 2026,” European Commission, accessed June 28, 2022, https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/strategy-integration-foreign-nationals-city-brno-2020-2026_en.

¹⁰³ Dohnalová, “Governance of Migrant Integration in the Czech Republic,” 14–15.

¹⁰⁴ Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports, “Vláda ČR usnesením vlády č. 378 ze dne 19.4.2021 schválila novelu nařízení vlády č. 31/2016 sb. [By government resolution no. 378 of 19 april 2021, the government of the czech republic approved an amendment to government decree no. 31/2016 coll.]”

¹⁰⁵ Dohnalová, “Governance of Migrant Integration in the Czech Republic,” 10.

¹⁰⁶ Dohnalová, “Governance of Migrant Integration in the Czech Republic,” 14.

¹⁰⁷ Dohnalová, “Governance of Migrant Integration in the Czech Republic,” 17–18.

¹⁰⁸ Zogata-Kusz, “Immigration and integration policies in Czechia,” 189; “The future of immigrant integration in Europe: mainstreaming approaches for inclusion,” European Commission, accessed June 28, 2022, https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/future-immigrant-integration-europe-mainstreaming-approaches-inclusion_en.

KIC measures are realized through projects of NGOs.¹⁰⁹ At the same time, CPICs are still unable to meet the demand for services.¹¹⁰

1.6 NGOs dealing with the integration of foreigners

The importance of NGOs in the field of the integration of foreigners cannot be overemphasized. According to Lundberg et al., NGOs are generally active in areas where governments are weak or, from the perspective of NGOs, where governments do not meet the expected requirements. It is no exaggeration to say that states are to a certain degree dependent on NGOs for providing fundamental services to foreign nationals.¹¹¹ Trbola and Rákoczyová further pointed out that NGOs tend to be better at identifying foreigners' needs and their satisfaction compared with other integration actors, whose competences are usually limited by legislation. Through individual work with foreigners, NGOs are able to reflect on specifics of foreigners' needs, varying capacities and capabilities, social capital, as well as other components influencing integration.¹¹²

In the context of the Czech Republic, NGOs began to emerge in the 1990s after the fall of the communist regime.¹¹³ Today, there are more than 138,500 NGOs registered in the country.¹¹⁴ Many of them contribute to the field of integration of foreigners and play a critical complementary role in the implementation of KIC at the regional and local level. Nonetheless, the territorial scope of these NGOs is unbalanced, as their activities are mostly concentrated in large cities.¹¹⁵ Moreover, these NGOs are a diverse group comprising organizations of all sizes and with heterogeneous target groups. Some of them operate in only one city, while

¹⁰⁹ Dohnalová, "Governance of Migrant Integration in the Czech Republic," 19.

¹¹⁰ Čada and Hoření, "Governing Through Rituals: Regulatory Ritualism in Czech Migration and Integration Policy," 129.

¹¹¹ Erik Lundberg, Erik Amnå, Emanuela Bozzini, and Pia Brundin, "European civil societies and the promotion of integration, Leading practices from Sweden, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Italy," in *Social Rights, Active Citizenship and Governance in the European Union*, ed. Thomas P. Boje and Martin Potucek (Nomos Publishers, 2011), 8.

¹¹² Trbola and Rákoczyová, "Barriers to Integration of Immigrants and Integration Policy in the Czech Republic with Focus on Stakeholders and Their Co-operation," 93.

¹¹³ Agnieszka Zogata-Kusz, "Policy Advocacy and NGOs Assisting Immigrants: Legitimacy, Accountability and the Perceived Attitude of the Majority," *Social Sciences* 11, no. 2 (2022): 77.

¹¹⁴ "Infografika [Infographics]," Interaktivní mapa neziskového sektoru [Interactive map of the non-profit sector], accessed April 22, 2022, <https://mapaneziskovek.cz/infografika/>.

¹¹⁵ Trbola and Rákoczyová, "Barriers to Integration of Immigrants and Integration Policy in the Czech Republic with Focus on Stakeholders and Their Co-operation," 93.

others run activities besides headquarters in several branches across the country. Some focus primarily on refugees, e.g. Organization for Aid to Refugees (Organizace pro pomoc uprchlíkům), others target mainly foreigners with a legal status, e.g. CIC, and still others address multiple social issues, with foreigners being just one of their numerous target groups, e.g. People in Need (Člověk v tísni).¹¹⁶

NGOs assisting foreigners in the Czech Republic usually exhibit service or/and advocacy functions. Those which are service-oriented work directly with foreigners, providing them with assisting and educational services corresponding to their legal, cultural, and socio-economic dimensions of integration. Some also target the general public through events designed for mutual understanding between foreigners and the majority.¹¹⁷ NGOs with advocacy functions, on the other hand, promote or defend foreigners' rights and try to influence related government policies and practices through lobbying or research activities.¹¹⁸ As noted by Willetts, unlike service-oriented NGOs, which seek to achieve "small-scale change directly through projects", advocacy-oriented NGOs aspire to obtain "large-scale change promoted indirectly through influence on the political system".¹¹⁹ Nonetheless, it is important to keep in mind that these categories need not be mutually exclusive for individual NGOs.¹²⁰ Some NGOs are engaged in both service and advocacy activities and therefore serve both functions.

An example of a service-oriented NGO working with foreigners is InBáze. Founded in 2005 in Prague,¹²¹ the mission of InBáze is to help foreigners and their family members get used to life in the Czech Republic and to facilitate mutual knowledge and understanding between foreign and native communities.¹²² In particular, it provides foreigners Czech

¹¹⁶ "About us," Organization for Aid to Refugees, accessed July 13, 2022, <https://www.opu.cz/en/kdo-jsme/>; "Social Counselling Offer," Center for Integration of Foreigners, accessed July 13, 2022, <https://www.cicops.cz/en/social-counselling/41-social-counselling-offer>; "About us," People in Need, accessed July 13, 2022, <https://www.peopleinneed.net/who-we-are/about-us#what-we-do>.

¹¹⁷ "Nestátní neziskové organizace (NNO) [Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)]," CIZINCI.CZ, accessed April 22, 2022, <https://www.cizinci.cz/web/cz/nestatni-neziskove-organizace-nno->.

¹¹⁸ Willetts, "What is a Non-Governmental Organization?"; "Nongovernmental Organizations and Civil Society/Overview," World Bank, accessed June 8, 2001 (no longer available), <http://wbIn0018.worldbank.org/essd/essd.nsf/NGOs/home>, archived at <https://web.archive.org/web/20070621135344/http://docs.lib.duke.edu/igo/guides/ngo/define.htm>.

¹¹⁹ Willetts, "What is a Non-Governmental Organization?"

¹²⁰ Vakil, "Confronting the Classification Problem: Toward a Taxonomy of NGOs," 2062.

¹²¹ "History," InBáze, accessed May 18, 2022, <https://inbaze.cz/en/history/>.

¹²² "Who we are," InBáze, accessed May 18, 2022, <https://inbaze.cz/en/>.

language courses, legal, social, or psychological counseling, and services of interpreting and accompaniment to Czech institutions. For children and youth with foreign backgrounds, InBáze offers mentoring, tutoring, and leisure activities such as trips and intercultural clubs.¹²³ Furthermore, at its community center, InBáze runs adaptive integration courses, promotes civic engagement through volunteering, and holds leisure events or meetings that bring foreigners and Czech citizens together.¹²⁴ Finally, InBáze organizes training for educators and intercultural workers and cooperates with schools on lessons and activities promoting multiculturalism for students from kindergartens to secondary schools.¹²⁵

A unique example of an NGO advocating for the rights of foreigners is the Consortium of Migrants Assisting Organizations (Konsorcium nevládních organizací pracujících s migranty, “the Consortium”). Founded in 2003 in Prague, it serves as an umbrella organization that unites 16 Czech NGOs either supporting foreigners directly or contributing to foreigners’ integration. The Consortium facilitates cooperation between its member organizations and advocates on behalf of them for the improvement of foreigners’ rights in the Czech Republic.¹²⁶ For instance, it initiates and participates in meetings with stakeholders such as politicians, civil servants, employers, experts, or academics, conducts research and produces policy reports and press releases on topics connected to migration and integration, and holds a variety of debates, seminars, training workshops, and cultural or educational activities targeting the public, journalists, or their member organizations.¹²⁷

NGOs assisting foreigners are supported by the Ministry of the Interior as well as other ministries through grants for projects relevant to the implementation of KIC. In 2020, the Ministry of the Interior funded 10 NGO projects with the total amount exceeding 16 million CZK. These projects include, for example, “Welcome to the Czech Republic” by the NGO Slovo 21, where 62 adaptation and integration courses were carried out in seven languages, “Information Center for Foreigners” by Most pro, where foreigners were provided

¹²³ “For Foreigners,” InBáze, accessed May 18, 2022, <https://inbaze.cz/en/for-foreigners/>.

¹²⁴ “Community Center,” InBáze, accessed May 18, 2022, <https://inbaze.cz/en/community-center/>.

¹²⁵ “Nabídka vzdělávacích programů [Offer of educational programs],” InBáze, accessed May 18, 2022, <https://inbaze.cz/nabidka-vzdelavacich-programu/>; “Pro pedagogické pracovníky [For pedagogical workers],” InBáze, accessed May 18, 2022, <https://inbaze.cz/pro-pedagogicke-pracovniky/>.

¹²⁶ “About the Consortium,” Consortium of Migrants Assisting Organizations, accessed April 22, 2022, <https://migracnikonsorcium.cz/en/>.

¹²⁷ “What We Do,” Consortium of Migrants Assisting Organizations, accessed April 22, 2022, <https://migracnikonsorcium.cz/en/what-we-do/>.

assistance in Mongolian, Russian, Vietnamese and English at the branch of the Ministry of the Interior Department of Asylum and Migration Policy (Odbor azylové a migrační politiky, OAMP) in Pardubice, and “Infoline in Mongolian, Vietnamese, and Ukrainian” by Caritas Czech Republic, where telephone hotlines in the mentioned languages were provided to Mongols, Vietnamese, and Ukrainians, as well as authorities or institutions in need of these interpreting services.¹²⁸

1.7 Context in brief

Chapter 1 provides the background information essential for understanding this research. An NGO is defined according to RVNNO as an organization with the following attributes: 1) institutionalized, 2) private (separate from the government), 3) non-profit-distributing, 4) self-governing, and 5) involving a certain degree of voluntary participation. The term integration follows the definition set by the Ministry of the Interior in the 2016 KIC as “a long-term process of integrating foreigners into society, in which both foreigners and the majority society necessarily participate”¹²⁹. It is a bilateral or, considering the influence of the country of origin, even a trilateral process. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory was chosen as the basis for the theoretical framework because it allows for a systematic view on the issue of integration. An adapted ecological model focusing on NGOs’ role in foreigners’ integration is further proposed. Thereafter, the chapter pinpoints the target group of foreigners in this thesis—third-country nationals—and presents relevant data extracted from the Czech Statistical Office. The overall trend shows that the number of foreigners continues to rise in the Czech Republic and the majority of them hold a permanent residence status. Ukraine, Vietnam, and Russia are the three most represented countries of origin among the foreigners.

Following the data on foreigners in the Czech Republic, the Czech integration policy, especially the document KIC, is carefully examined. The 2016 KIC identifies five key areas

¹²⁸ Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, *Zpráva o situaci v oblasti migrace a integrace cizinců na území České republiky v roce 2020* [Report on the situation in the area of migration and integration of foreigners in the Czech Republic in 2020], 196–197.

¹²⁹ Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, *Aktualizovaná koncepce integrace cizinců 2016 - Ve vzájemném respektu* [Updated Concept of Integration of Foreigners 2016 - In Mutual Respect], 15.

of the integration of foreigners (knowledge of the Czech language, economic self-sufficiency, orientation of a foreigner in society, mutual relations between communities, and gradual acquisition of rights depending on the length of stay) and calls for, among others, the strengthening of integration measures at the regional and local level. Falling under the section of the Czech integration policy, CPICs, the regional implementors of KIC established by the government, are further expounded. The section also goes through flaws and criticisms of governance related to the integration of foreigners. These concern, for instance, unrealized or uncoordinated integration measures, clashes between immigration and integration policies, over-centralization of power of the Ministry of the Interior, inactive regional and local government, the lack of binding documents, administrative and legal obstacles for foreigners and their employers, and foreigners' limited access to social rights and healthcare. Finally, an overview of the role of NGOs, their functions, and examples of their activities in the context of the Czech Republic are put forward.

Overall, Chapter 1 gives the background connected to this research. In particular, it points out why further development in foreigners' integration in the Czech Republic is needed and why NGOs play a vital role in this process. The remaining body of the thesis builds on this knowledge and intends to elaborate on it with a case study.

2 Methodology

This chapter explains the methodology for the research, covering its aim and research questions, research design, methods for data collection and analysis, and ethical considerations associated particularly with primary data collection.

2.1 Aim and research questions

This study aims to find out how NGOs facilitate the integration of foreigners in the Czech Republic from the perspective of ecological systems theory. Drawing upon insights from a case study of the NGO CIC, this thesis attempts to explore answers to the following research questions in the context of the Czech Republic:

1. How do NGOs assist individual foreigners in adaptation to the Czech society?
2. What are the interactions between NGOs and integration service providers?
3. What are the relations between NGOs and government agencies and other institutional supporters of foreigners' integration?
4. How do NGOs contribute to the two-way process of integration?

The first research question looks at how NGOs help foreigners in their immediate environment, i.e. microsystem. The focus here, as mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, is more on integration on the side of foreigners and less on the majority society. As a result, the word adaptation (unidirectional) rather than integration (bidirectional) is used. The second research question concerns the mesosystem of foreigners. How do NGOs support foreigners through interactions with integration service providers (those who belong to foreigners' microsystem) such as social workers, volunteers, Czech language teachers, other NGOs, etc.? The third research question investigates how NGOs engage in the exosystem of foreigners. Specifically, it focuses on NGOs' relations with government agencies and other institutional supporters in foreigners' wider social system. Finally, the last research question relates to the macrosystem of foreigners. How do NGOs assist the integration of not only foreigners but also the Czech majority?

Due to the case study design, it is important to note that this research does not seek to establish statistical generalization, but analytical generalization in which "a previously

developed theory is used as a template with which to compare the empirical results of the case study.”¹³⁰ In other words, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to all Czech NGOs assisting foreigners, but they enable a thorough picture of how a Czech NGO can support foreigners through various forms of engagement in foreigners’ ecological systems.

2.2 Research design

This study utilizes a qualitative case study of the NGO CIC to explore in detail how NGOs support the integration of foreigners from an ecological perspective. According to Yin, a case study is best suited to explain, describe or explore a contemporary phenomenon within a specific context.¹³¹ It allows researchers to obtain an in-depth and multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its setting.¹³² The use of a case study in this thesis is instrumental¹³³, as it focuses on the ways through which CIC supports foreigners but not on CIC as an NGO itself.

CIC was selected as the case study NGO in this research because it is considered one of the most established NGOs assisting foreigners in the Czech Republic in terms of its number of branches across the country. While the majority of NGOs with a similar target group (foreigners with legal status) are only based in Prague, CIC provides direct support to foreigners not only in the capital city but also 10 other Czech cities or towns: Nymburk, Mladá Boleslav, Mělník, Litoměřice, Liberec, Kutná Hora, Kolín, Kladno, Jablonec nad Nisou, and Hořovice.¹³⁴ This thesis recognizes Prague as the “hotspot” for the integration of foreigners but nevertheless does not wish to restrict its study scope to the country’s capital. The fact that CIC operates in multiple sites beyond Prague renders itself a more representative case of NGOs assisting foreigners in the Czech Republic. Moreover, CIC’s service and activity offers for foreigners such as social counseling, support for families with children, and Czech language courses can be found in many similar service-oriented Czech

¹³⁰ Jennifer Rowley, “Using Case Studies in Research,” *Management Research News* 25, no. 1 (January 2002): 20.

¹³¹ Robert K. Yin, *Case study research: design and methods*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003), 3.

¹³² Sarah Crowe, Kathrin Cresswell, Ann Robertson, Guro Huby, Anthony Avery, and Aziz Sheikh, “The case study approach,” *BMC Medical Research Methodology* 11, no. 100 (2011): 1.

¹³³ Robert E. Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1995), 3.

¹³⁴ However, CIC’s service offers in different cities/towns might differ.

NGOs, e.g. InBáze, Most pro, Counseling Center for Integration (Poradna pro integraci). Hence, CIC is considered a typical case that can work well for an instrumental case study as such.¹³⁵

2.3 Data collection

To obtain a more holistic picture of a phenomenon, a case study usually involves the use of evidence from two or more sources.¹³⁶ This thesis is no exception. Both primary and secondary data were employed to collect data for this study. The secondary data consists of CIC's website and their annual reports published in the recent five years.¹³⁷ CIC's website first and foremost provides a clear overview of the organization's service and activity offers, and the reports give details on how these offers were implemented in the past years. Only reports published in the most recent five years were examined, namely, from 2017 to 2021, as this thesis intends to focus on NGOs' current efforts toward the integration of foreigners as opposed to all their past efforts.

As for the primary data, the researcher initially planned to conduct interviews with seven actors associated with CIC, including one in a leading position, three social workers, and three foreigners who have at some point been CIC's clients. Nonetheless, in the end, only one interview with one social worker was carried out, as CIC did not have the capacity to do more interviews at the moment,¹³⁸ following the surge of Ukrainians seeking refuge in the Czech Republic since the Russian occupation of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. This plan alteration, however, is not deemed to have a significant impact on the overall research. This is largely thanks to the rich information already provided on CIC's website and yearly reports. In fact, the interview that took place after the secondary data collection only helped to complement existing materials.

In terms of the actual primary data collection, one semi-structured interview with open-ended questions was carried out with an experienced social worker at CIC. The

¹³⁵ Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research*, 4.

¹³⁶ Yin, *Case study research: design and methods*, 83; Crowe, Cresswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery, and Sheikh, "The case study approach," 6.

¹³⁷ CIC's website address is <https://www.cicops.cz/>. All CIC's annual reports can be retrieved from <https://www.cicops.cz/en/about-us/68-annual-reports>.

¹³⁸ According to the researcher's email communication with CIC.

language used in the interview was English since it is the common language between the researcher and participant. The interview followed a semi-structured interview guide containing the following themes: the participant's background as a social worker, the participant's view of CIC as an integration organization, CIC's relations with other similar NGOs as well as with the government, and information specific to CIC's service and activity offers. The decision for the use of a semi-structured interview instead of a structured one is that it reduces the risk of misunderstanding and allows more leeway for asking follow-up questions during the interview process.¹³⁹

The interview took place online, as it was preferred by the participant. It is not estimated that the data collected would be affected by the delivery mode of the interview since physical contact with the participant is not a required element in this research. Moreover, since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, virtual conferences have become very popular and heavily relied on.¹⁴⁰ Both the researcher and the participant are therefore familiar with the online environment. The interview lasted 47 minutes and was conducted via the video conferencing platform Google Meet. At the same time, it was audio-recorded with the researcher's smartphone with the participant's consent. Once the interview was done, the researcher manually transcribed it on a Word document by listening to the audio recording. A verbatim transcription was produced as a result.

2.4 Data analysis

Qualitative content analysis was used to analyze both the primary and secondary data. According to Hsieh and Shannon, qualitative content analysis is “a research method for the

¹³⁹ Patricia Leavy, *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 437.

¹⁴⁰ The COVID-19 pandemic arrived in the Czech Republic with its first three cases confirmed on March 1, 2020. One of the major epidemic prevention measures activated much of the time in 2020 and 2021 was the nationwide lockdown, which forced many activities such as work and school to be shifted online. As of May 5, 2022, all restrictions regarding epidemic prevention in the Czech Republic were lifted, but not all activities shifted online due to the initial restrictions were dropped; Matěj Sviták and Adam Fiala, “V Česku jsou tři lidé nakaženi koronavirem. Předtím byli v Itálii [In Czechia, three people are infected with coronavirus. They were in Italy before],” *ČT24*, March 1, 2020, <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/domaci/3056228-v-cesku-jsou-tri-lide-nakazeni-koronavirem>; Seznam Zprávy, “Pandemická pohotovost odvolána, od čtvrtka končí roušky i u lékařů [Pandemic emergency canceled, mask regulations will end from Thursday even at the doctors’],” *Seznam Zprávy*, May 4, 2022, <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/koronavirus-pandemicka-pohotovosti-odvolana-od-ctvrtka-konci-rousky-i-ve-zdravotnictvi-200995>.

subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns.”¹⁴¹ Specifically, a directed approach to content analysis¹⁴² was employed because it worked well with the adapted ecological model introduced earlier. Guided by this adapted model, the researcher carefully went through CIC’s webpages and reports and highlighted all text related to actions beneficial to the integration of foreigners. All highlighted text was coded using the predetermined categories (foreigners’ ecological systems), some of which was put to more than one category due to its equivocal nature. Then, the researcher examined the data under each category and divided them into subcategories (such as types of CIC’s services). As a final step in secondary data analysis, the researcher reviewed the coded data, identified missing information, and used it to develop an interview guide that would be used for primary data collection.

The analysis of the primary data followed a similar procedure. Text that could complement the secondary data was marked and coded into the aforementioned categories and subcategories. Next, the researcher examined all coded data and determined whether some repeated information could be omitted or combined. Finally, the researcher expanded on the previously introduced ecological model with evidence from all the coded sources.

2.5 Ethical considerations

There are some ethical issues that need to be considered when carrying out research involving people.¹⁴³ They arise particularly due to “the complexities of researching private lives and placing accounts in the public arena.”¹⁴⁴ According to Kvale and Brinkmann, ethical issues lie in the entire process of an interview investigation, and these concerns should be taken into account from the beginning of an investigation to the final report.¹⁴⁵ Thus, concerning this study, the purpose of the research, procedure of the interview, information regarding

¹⁴¹ Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah E. Shannon, “Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis,” *Qualitative Health Research* 15, no. 9 (November 2005): 1278.

¹⁴² Hsieh and Shannon, “Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis,” 1281.

¹⁴³ Colin Robson and Kieran McCartan, *Real World Research*, 4th ed. (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 205.

¹⁴⁴ Maxine Birch, Tina Miller, Melanie Mauthner, and Julie Jessop, “Introduction,” in *Ethics in Qualitative Research*, ed. Melanie Mauthner, Maxine Birch, Julie Jessop, and Tina Miller (London: Sage Publications, 2002), 1.

¹⁴⁵ Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann, *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2009), 62.

confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw from the study anytime were communicated to the participant through a written informed consent form (see Appendix). The interview was conducted only after the participant had signed and returned the consent form. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the interview, the researcher still briefed the purpose of the investigation and sought permission before starting the audio recorder. The interview was thereafter transcribed verbatim to ensure the participant's view was preserved in its original form. All the data collected are stored securely accessible only to the researcher (and her supervisors when necessary). The confidentiality of the participant was maintained during data collection and will continue to be protected throughout the entire research process.

2.6 Methodology in brief

Chapter 2 addresses the methodology of the study. To find out how NGOs facilitate the integration of foreigners in the Czech Republic from an ecological perspective, research questions proposed focus on NGOs' involvement in foreigners' multi-layered environment. The research design is a qualitative case study, which enables an in-depth and multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue.¹⁴⁶ The decision of CIC as the case study is due to its relatively large number of branch offices across the country as well as its service offers that are considered to be typical among service-oriented Czech NGOs. Both primary and secondary data were collected for this research. The former involves a 47-minute semi-structured interview conducted with a CIC social worker, and the latter consists of CIC's current website content and annual reports published from 2017 to 2021. Both types of data were analyzed with qualitative content analysis, which requires the coding of information based on predetermined categories (foreigners' ecological systems). Lastly, attention is paid to ethical considerations associated with the collection of primary data. The interview was carried out with the interview participant's explicit consent, and the confidentiality of the participant was maintained throughout the study.

¹⁴⁶ Crowe, Cresswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery, and Sheikh, "The case study approach," 1.

3 Results and discussion

This chapter presents and discusses the research findings. Using CIC as a case study, it attempts to shed light on how NGOs engage in the ecological systems of foreigners (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem) and how they contribute to the field of integration in the Czech Republic.

CIC was founded in 2003 in Prague. The mission of CIC is to help foreigners better integrate into the Czech society and to build a social environment more accessible and just toward foreigners. The target group of the organization was initially asylum seekers, but over time, with Czech immigration and integration policies becoming more mature, the target group of CIC was shifted to mainly foreigners who already obtained legal status in the Czech Republic (i.e. those with a permanent or temporary residence permit or a long-term visa). As a service-oriented NGO, CIC started off with the provision of social counseling, followed by, among others, Czech courses, social rehabilitation service, and in 2019, social activation service. Today, CIC is present in 11 cities or towns of the Czech Republic and has grown into a well-rounded NGO, with services and activities aiding foreigners and contributing to their environment of integration.

3.1 Microsystem

At the level of microsystem, in the immediate environment of foreigners, a series of services and activities supporting foreigners in adaptation to the Czech society are provided mainly by CIC social workers, volunteers, and Czech language teachers. These include social counseling, social rehabilitation and activation services, Czech courses, and activities from the Volunteer Support Program.

3.1.1 Social counseling

Social counseling is the oldest and one of the most popular services used by CIC's clients. The objective of this service is to familiarize foreigners with information relevant to their situation and assist them in finding a solution to their unfavorable social circumstances.

Common issues discussed during consultations were topics connected to residence permits, citizenship, family matters, education, housing, healthcare, and labor law, including job searching and social security. In 2020 and 2021, due to the pandemic, there were also inquiries about the latest epidemic prevention measures announced by the Czech government. Social counseling can be provided by phone, via email, through online meeting platforms, on CIC premises, or even on-site, for example, at a public office where the foreigner needs assistance.

According to the participant of this study, a typical consultation goes as follows: First, a social worker receives a phone call in which a client describes his or her situation and asks questions. The social worker may answer immediately on the phone or get back to the client in few minutes after finding out relevant information. When the issue is more specific, the social worker makes an appointment with the client and prepares for it by researching, making phone calls, and printing helpful information for the client. During the appointment, the social worker advises the client on his or her options, next steps, and rights and obligations in the Czech Republic. In the meantime, the social worker may also train the client with some practical skills, such as filling a certain form by him/herself or how to make an appointment at a public office. The duration of a consultation usually lasts from 20 minutes to two hours, depending on each case. Another appointment can also be made when the situation is more complicated.

3.1.2 Social rehabilitation service

The social rehabilitation service, also called Perspective (Perspektiva), supports Prague-based foreigners in the process of job seeking. It aims to motivate foreigners to actively participate in the Czech labor market, familiarize them with important information such as basic terms and key provisions of the labor law, and help them improve their chances of getting hired as well as maintain employment. In particular, foreigners are offered individual support and training in areas concerning CV and motivation letter writing, job interview preparation, retraining course choosing, workplace communication, and the rights and obligations of employees.

Moreover, there are two types of regular group activities designed to boost foreigners' employability. The first is called Job Club (Jobklub). A Job Club is a workshop conducted in Czech at a pre-intermediate level usually consisting of 10 to 15 participants. Aside from previously mentioned topics, it discusses how recruitment agencies work, online platforms for job search, risky offers, etc. These clubs often feature guest speakers such as human resources specialists, experts in a specific field, or former CIC clients who successfully found a job, with a view to giving participants insights into the reality of the current labor market or simply motivating them in job finding. The other type of regular group activities is Czech language courses. As part of the Perspective service package, these courses target unemployed foreigners with very limited Czech proficiency. Two levels of Czech courses—beginners/false beginners (A0/A1) and elementary/pre-intermediate (A1/A2)—are offered. Topics in class cover, among others, phone conversations, email communication, CV writing, and job interviews.

3.1.3 Social activation service (for families with children)

The social activation service, also called Hermione (Hermiona), is aimed at families with children aged 3 to 18 years (to 26 in exceptional cases) with a foreign background. The goal of this service is to help foreign families overcome difficulties in complicated long-lasting social situations and minimize possible negative impact on their children's normal development. Common situations when the social activation service can be of help include, for example, when parents are getting a divorce and may endanger the basic needs and housing of their children, or when a child is bullied, often absent, or has poor performance at school. In 2021, it is reported that children's school problems were exacerbated by the anti-epidemic measures (e.g. distance learning and lockdown) due to the language barrier and mental health issues.

Some clients turned to the social activation service themselves, while others started using it on the recommendation of a social worker, school, or the social and legal protection of children authorities (Orgán sociálně-právní ochrany dětí). The support for clients of this service varies from case to case. Regardless, it usually involves a key social worker, an education specialist (also called integration worker), and in some cases, a volunteer. The

social worker is responsible for, e.g. planning the course of cooperation with parents, helping parents develop skills related to upbringing or household management, and facilitating the communication between families and school. The education specialist assists children in preparation for school in their home environment and is sometimes aided by a volunteer who acts as a homework mentor or tutor.

3.1.4 Czech courses

From the interview with the CIC social worker, it is found that knowing the local language as well as some local people are two essential first steps toward the integration of foreigners. It is for this reason that CIC offers clients not only professional assistance from social workers but also a wide range of Czech courses taught by qualified Czech language teachers. Czech courses are usually very popular among foreigners, especially the low-threshold ones. Besides low-threshold Czech courses, there are grammar courses, semester courses for advanced students, family courses, intensive courses for children and young people, and preparatory courses for Czech language exams (A2–B1) or for secondary school entrance exams, each of which designed for foreigners of different age groups or language levels. Some courses take place on CIC premises, while others online.¹⁴⁷ In addition, there are several materials for learning Czech available for use on CIC's website. They comprise a series of video courses for beginners of Czech as well as self-learning platforms and books surrounding topics such as work and school.

3.1.5 Volunteer Support Program

As its name implies, the Volunteer Support Program is run by CIC volunteers. It aims to facilitate positive relations between foreigners and Czech nationals, encourage social interactions between communities, mitigate cultural and social isolation, and help foreigners improve their Czech language skills. Under this program, there are four types of activities: individual mentoring, group tutoring, open clubs, and events. Mentoring offers client-specific support and usually lasts from six months to a year. It connects a volunteer with a foreigner

¹⁴⁷ All courses were taught online during the peaks of the pandemic between 2020 and 2022.

at any age or with an entire family. Generally, individual foreigners meet their mentors weekly at an agreed place or online for one to two hours in order to, for instance, practice speaking Czech, discuss Czech culture and customs, seek help with studies or work, or discover meaningful pastimes and integrate into the Czech society better. Tutoring is provided to groups of primary school children with a different mother tongue. During tutoring sessions, a volunteer helps children with their homework, e.g. checking and giving advice, or does practices with them based on their needs. Group tutoring is held weekly for a duration of an hour at CIC's main office in Prague.

Open clubs provide space for foreigners to meet with Czech nationals, practice speaking Czech, or simply make new friends. The clubs are divided according to various themes, for instance, work and life in the Czech Republic, library talks, clubs for parents and children, and clubs for youth. Depending on each club, volunteers and participants can meet in person or online. Interestingly, some of the volunteers who help organize the clubs are also foreigners themselves. Events under the Volunteer Support Program are one-off activities that also serve to bring foreigners and Czech citizens together and establish friendships. These events can be trips, sports games, workshops, travel talks, visits to galleries or museums, theater or music performances, etc. Trips are especially popular among foreigners, as they can go sightseeing for free or at a low cost.

3.1.6 Additional information

From the interview, it is learned that the most common language used for communication in the aforementioned services and activities is Czech. This is because CIC is a Czech organization and many clients want to speak Czech. If this is not possible due to clients' limited proficiency in Czech, English is used. Depending on the language skills of individual CIC employees, other languages such as Russian, Spanish, or Vietnamese can also be used.

Social counseling is offered in all CIC offices (Prague, Nymburk, Mladá Boleslav, Mělník, Litoměřice, Liberec, Kutná Hora, Kolín, Kladno, Jablonec nad Nisou, and Hořovice), social activation service, Czech courses, and the Volunteer Support Program in Prague, Kolín, Liberec, and Mladá Boleslav, and social rehabilitation service only in Prague.

Except for some Czech courses and trips, all services and activities mentioned above are provided free of charge by CIC.

Besides standard service and activity offers, each year, CIC runs a number of projects complementing existing service and activity offers. For instance, 25 projects were implemented in 2021, most of them focusing on empowering newly arrived foreigners, unemployed foreigners, foreign families and children, or foreigners with limited Czech proficiency. Some projects last for a duration of over a year and can be further extended, and some are carried out collaboratively with like-minded NGOs or even private entities (see Section 3.2).

3.2 Mesosystem

At the level of mesosystem, where interactions between microsystems take place, not only do CIC social workers and volunteers undergo training themselves but CIC also provides training courses to Czech language and primary school teachers, public social workers, and public administration officials. In addition, CIC cooperates with like-minded NGOs as well as private enterprises in delivering services and activities or exchanging information. All of these contribute to the quality and enrichment of service and activity offers for foreigners in the Czech Republic.

3.2.1 Training for CIC social workers

According to the interview participant, social workers employed by CIC receive a series of on-the-job training. They are required to undergo 24 hours of education from like-minded organizations such as Fokus or GI Psychotherapy Center (Centrum psychoterapie GI). One of the initial training courses for newly appointed social workers is Effective Interview, a 48-hour course in psychosocial support designed by the GI Psychotherapy Center. This course follows a systematic approach and deals with topics such as how to conduct interviews, how to work with clients, how to value clients' opinions and help them find solutions to their situations. For those lacking a background in working with foreigners, they also attend a training course of 20–30 hours organized by the Ministry of the Interior and pass a

qualification exam at the end of the training. Alternatively, they can take the exam without joining the training. Such an exam is also for people interested in working with foreigners at the Ministry of the Interior.

3.2.2 Training for CIC volunteers

Upon joining CIC, volunteers learn about the rules and principles of the Volunteer Support Program through an introductory course and receive a copy of the guide *The How and the Why of Helping People from Other Countries (Jak a proč být průvodcem pro cizince)*. Throughout the course of volunteering, they are supported by their coordinator and, in some cases, social workers and Czech language teachers through regular consultations, monthly group meetings, and supervising sessions which take place four times a year. While not being CIC's formal staff members, volunteers are entitled to receive insurance and administrative support. In recognition of their contribution to CIC, volunteers can be awarded a certificate of long-term volunteer service. They may also be involved in study trips. For instance, in 2017, active CIC volunteers participated in a training activity regarding integration services in Berlin.

3.2.3 Workshops for teachers of Czech as a foreign language

Besides providing training to CIC's own staff and volunteers, CIC offers a range of workshops designed for people interested in teaching Czech as a foreign language and for Czech language teachers of various experience levels. Each workshop looks at a specific area of Czech language teaching, including introduction to teaching Czech to foreigner, Czech grammar, conversation in teaching, Czech pronunciation, activities in face-to-face teaching, and online tools in teaching. Each of these workshops lasts three hours and costs 750 CZK. In case the standard topics do not meet the needs of client teachers, they are welcome to discuss their ideas with CIC and participate in workshops tailored to their wishes.

3.2.4 Retraining course in teaching skills

For those who would like to become certified Czech language teachers, CIC offers a retraining course in teaching skills, which is accredited by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The retraining course aims to prepare a lecturer to teach Czech in various types of courses. It costs 12,500 CZK and consists of 100 teaching hours, of which 62 are conducted face-to-face and 38 online. Within the 62 hours, the participant teachers are required to observe a CIC Czech language class (90 minutes) and subsequently carry out a class of their own of the same length at CIC or a school/an organization. Once passing the course and the final exam, the participant teachers can receive a certificate of professional qualification valid nationwide.

3.2.5 Training for primary school teachers

For primary school teachers who meet students with a different mother tongue on a daily basis, CIC organizes the training course The Czech Language and Methods of Working with a Heterogenous Group. The goal of the course is to help primary school students improve and develop their skills in teaching Czech to students of various backgrounds. Accredited by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the course connects theory and practice, comprising topics such as lesson planning for heterogenous groups, development of students' language ability, and teaching without an intermediate language. In total, the course lasts 16 hours and takes place in person.

3.2.6 Training for public social workers

CIC supports social workers outside CIC as well. The training program Integration of foreigners—the Basic Minimum for Social Workers aims to equip social workers of public administration or social services with vital knowledge of working with foreigners, including their position, rights, and obligations in the Czech Republic. Accredited by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the program gives an overview of migration issues and details integration in different areas of life, impact of integration measures, domestic and foreign

integration procedures and implementation, and finally principles of effective communication with foreigners. The program takes in total six hours and can be implemented in person or online.

3.2.7 Training for public administration officials

A similar training program provided is Integration of foreigners—the Basic Minimum for Public Administration Officials. The program content, length, and mode of delivery are the same as those of the program for public social workers. However, this training is accredited by the Ministry of the Interior instead of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and targets ordinary officials of local administrative units.

3.2.8 Cooperation with other NGOs

Apart from providing training to individuals working with foreigners, CIC further cooperates with like-minded NGOs. For instance, together with META, an NGO focusing on the integration of foreign children and their parents, CIC implemented the project Don't give up! and co-offered services to young foreigners aged 14–25 for better integration into the education system and labor market in the Czech Republic. Another project META and CIC collectively carried out was Click with School, which supported foreign children and youth aged 6–25 with inclusion into school, with an emphasis on learning the Czech language.

With People in Need, the Czech largest NGO tackling multiple issues domestically and worldwide, CIC co-organized the project Equality and Diversity, which assists teachers with the incorporation of the principles of multicultural education and inclusion into schools. In fact, when developing the retraining course in teaching skills in 2008, CIC already cooperated with People in Need as well as the Association of Teachers of Czech as a Foreign Language (*Asociace učitelů češtiny jako cizího jazyka*) and experts in this field.

As a member of the Consortium of Migrants Assisting Organizations, CIC actively participates in the Consortium's meetings, exchanges information and good practices with other NGOs assisting foreigners, and upon request from the Consortium, gives comments and recommendations on certain issues regarding the integration of foreigners. Moreover,

thanks to the membership, CIC is able to get regular updates on information concerning the integration of foreigners, which CIC can further share with its employees and clients.

Cooperation with like-minded NGOs can also take on an implicit form. According to the interviewed social worker, clients are “transferred” to other NGOs when CIC is unable to provide a specific service. This can happen, for example, when Czech courses at CIC are full or when a client needs a lawyer. In some cases, CIC social workers may also call partnered organizations for consultations.

3.2.9 Cooperation with private enterprises

Private enterprises are welcome to provide services for foreigners in partnership with CIC as well. For instance, for the service social rehabilitation, corporate human resources specialists or experts in a specific field from various companies are often guest speakers of Job Clubs who give insights into the current labor market as well as information relevant to foreign job-seekers. In 2017, in collaboration with AbecedaPC, a company devoted to the training of computer and IT skills, CIC co-organized a course on the basics of computer work consisting of eight lessons for seven foreigners.

3.3 Exosystem

At the level of exosystem, in foreigners’ wider social system, CIC closely cooperates with local government agencies in support of projects and activities related to the integration of foreigners. Furthermore, funding from multiple levels of government and EU institutions is central to the operation of CIC, together with financial support or donation from foundations or enterprises.

3.3.1 Cooperation with government agencies

As a long-term partner of the municipal district of Prague 3, CIC assisted in the project Community Center Žižkov (2017–2020) with the provision of Czech language courses,

information seminars, and activities such as open clubs, which connect foreigners and Czech citizens.

CIC also worked closely with the Ministry of the Interior Department of Asylum and Migration Policy (OAMP) in the Central Bohemian Region. Through the projects Integration of foreigners 2021 and Assistance at the Residency Offices (OAMP) of Ministry of the Interior in the Central Bohemian Region 2017–2019, CIC social workers helped OAMP offer support to foreigners applying for residence permits at the OAMP offices.

Alongside municipalities in the Central Bohemian Region, CIC co-implemented the project Our Common Region (2017–2021). Focusing on the integration of foreigners at the local level, CIC co-organized Czech language courses and open club events and helped map the situation of foreigners, build a network of local partners, and create information materials beneficial to the development of a local strategy for the integration of foreigners.

Local government agencies with which CIC is in close partnership include the municipal district of Prague 3, 4, 12, and 13, cities of Kladno and Mladá Boleslav, and towns of Kolín, Kutná Hora, Mělník, and Nymburk. Additionally, CIC is involved in the community planning of social services in Jablonec nad Nisou and Liberec. Each year, CIC actively participates in the Prague regional platform for the integration of foreigners as well as the activities of the Committee for the Rights for Foreigners (Výbor pro práva cizinců), which belongs to the Government Council for Human Rights (Rada vlády pro lidská práva).

3.3.2 Funding from different levels of the Czech government and EU institutions

Financial sources from the Czech government and EU institutions play a crucial role in the implementation of CIC's programs for foreigners. Depending on the scope of each project, CIC receives government funding at the national, regional, or municipal level. These funders are, for instance, the Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport, Liberec regional government, Prague city hall, municipal districts of Prague, and town halls of the municipalities in which CIC is present. There are also projects supported by grants at the European level, e.g. the European Social Fund.

3.3.3 Funding or donation from individual foundations or enterprises

In addition to government and EU funding, some of the CIC projects are financially supported by philanthropic foundations. Private funders of CIC in the recent past included, for instance, the VELUX Foundations, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, KB Jistota Foundation, O2 Foundation, and Active Citizens Fund. Private enterprises contributed to CIC's work as well. For example, Škoda Auto financed the educational project for young foreigners in 2021, and most recently, Delta Electronics donated several laptops to CIC's office in Kolín.

3.4 Macrosystem

At the level of macrosystem, the overarching cultural context where microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem are embedded, CIC strives to facilitate a welcoming attitude of the Czech majority toward foreigners through group activities and projects connecting both communities.

As implied in Section 3.1.5, CIC fosters positive mutual relations between foreigners and Czech citizens through open clubs and events. Not only do these activities offer foreigners opportunities to practice speaking Czech and network with Czech people, but Czech citizens themselves also get to learn about foreigners' cultures and their lives in the Czech Republic, and consequently develop an open mind about foreign communities.

Moreover, to give the Czech majority a glimpse of foreigners' efforts in integration as well as CIC's support along the way, CIC runs a website containing success stories of foreigners who participated in the project Talent Studio from 2017 to 2020.¹⁴⁸ The project Talent Studio provides a space for foreigners to develop their artistic and craft works and equips them with knowledge of starting an artistic business in the Czech Republic. Visitors of the website can learn about participants' stories, their artworks, and how they were supported in their artistic careers.

¹⁴⁸ CIC's "Talent Studio" website address is <http://www.dobrekonce.cz/>.

Through the provision of open clubs, events, and the Talent Studio website, CIC aims to bridge the native and foreign communities, and ultimately contributes to the two-way process of integration.

3.5 Discussion

The findings support existing views that NGOs are crucial actors in providing practical support to foreigners at the local level. Compared with other actors in the same field, NGOs are generally more oriented toward the specific needs of foreigners thanks to their services taking place in foreigners' immediate vicinity.¹⁴⁹ For instance, in the case of CIC, these services are social counseling, social rehabilitation service, social activation service, Czech courses, and Volunteer Support Program. Within the microsystem, apart from social workers, volunteers, and Czech language teachers, it is found that other actors may also be involved, such as education specialists (in CIC's social activation service), Czech citizens (in CIC's open clubs), and experts or human resource specialists from corporations (in CIC's social rehabilitation service).

In terms of the mesosystem of foreigners, actors with whom an NGO interacts may not be limited to those affiliated with the organization. For instance, CIC provides training not only to its own social workers and volunteers but also to individuals who may come in direct contact with foreigners. These include anyone interested in teaching Czech as a foreign language, Czech language teachers of various experience levels, primary school teachers, public social workers, and public administration officials. Furthermore, NGOs may cooperate with like-minded non-profit organizations on projects or activities beneficial to foreigners' integration or their situation in the Czech Republic. What was not anticipated by the author is that NGOs can also cooperate with the private sector in the delivery of services to foreigners. In the case of CIC, these services are usually connected to the improvement of foreigners' employability in the labor market.

Concerning foreigners' wider social system, the exosystem, NGOs may collaborate with government agencies on the basis of projects that promote specific areas of integration.

¹⁴⁹ Trbola and Rákoczyová, "Barriers to Integration of Immigrants and Integration Policy in the Czech Republic with Focus on Stakeholders and Their Co-operation," 93.

While Trbola and Rákoczyová suggest such cooperation is mainly connected to the provision of information and consultation,¹⁵⁰ the results from the case study reveal that offers such as Czech language courses and activities engaging both foreigners and Czech citizens are also representative. Moreover, NGOs may assist the public sector in the research in and development of local integration strategies. In this regard, CIC is engaged in the monitoring of foreigners' situations, the establishment of networks of local integration actors, and the creation of relevant information materials. NGOs' collaboration with government agencies can further take the form of participation in government-led activities, such as community planning, regional platforms, and activities of the Committee for the Rights for Foreigners. Also belonging to the exosystem are funding or donation from public institutions, private enterprises, and philanthropic foundations. Financial contribution in fulfillment of NGOs' projects is the most common type of support, although material donations can take place as well. An example of the latter is Delta Electronics' recent donation of laptops to CIC's office in Kolín.

In the macrosystem of foreigners, it is important to take into account the bi-directionality of integration. NGOs may strive for positive mutual relations between communities and for an open-minded attitude of the Czech majority toward foreigners. This can be realized through activities that encourage interactions between foreigners and Czech citizens, e.g. CIC's open clubs and events, or through platforms such as CIC's Talent Studio website that tell stories of foreigners undergoing integration to Czech nationals. These stories can be powerful, as they invite Czechs to see foreigners and foreigners' experiences in a different way than they might have seen in media or populist discourses¹⁵¹. The stories also help break myths and stereotypes that some Czechs might have against foreign communities. Nonetheless, at the level of macrosystem, NGOs' support for foreigners can be constrained by state policies. In particular, certain changes in the Czech immigration or integration policy can create difficulties for foreigners in staying in the country and consequently impact their integration as well as NGOs' work. According to the interviewed CIC social worker,

¹⁵⁰ Trbola and Rákoczyová, "Barriers to Integration of Immigrants and Integration Policy in the Czech Republic with Focus on Stakeholders and Their Co-operation," 96.

¹⁵¹ Václav Štětko, Sabina Mihelj, and Fanni Tóth, "The Impact of News Consumption on Anti-immigration Attitudes and Populist Party Support in a Changing Media Ecology," *Political Communication* 38, no. 5 (2021): 554.

examples of such include the change in the income requirements for foreigners who wish to stay with their unmarried Czech partners in the Czech Republic, the requirement of obtaining insurance valid for the entire period of stay when applying for residence permits, the requirement to achieve level A2 in the Czech language in order to obtain permanent residence, etc.

All in all, there is no doubt that NGOs are significant to the integration of foreigners in the Czech Republic. However, with a closer look, one can notice that individual NGOs may be more devoted to advancing certain dimensions of integration than others. For instance, as a service-oriented NGO, CIC's services and activities mostly surround the improvement of foreigners' socio-economic or cultural-religious dimensions of integration. Its engagement with foreigners' legal-political dimension of integration is rather limited (to providing advice and guidance). Additionally, from this research, it is found that CIC is more active in foreigners' microsystem and mesosystem, where foreigners are directly supported through service or activities and those working closely with foreigners receive training or cooperate with CIC on the basis of projects.

Despite not being equally active in all ecological systems of foreigners, on the whole, CIC well complements the Ministry of the Interior in the implementation of KIC. Regarding the aspect of the integration of foreigners, CIC helps enhance foreigners' knowledge of the Czech language through the provision of various Czech language courses and opportunities to practice the language in open clubs or events. It also dedicates to helping foreigners achieve economic self-sufficiency through, for example, the social rehabilitation service. Moreover, the offers of social counseling and social activation service are key to improving foreigners' orientation in the Czech society. Finally, activities offered through the Volunteer Support Program as well as stories published on the Talent Studio website facilitate mutual relations between foreign and Czech communities. With regard to the aspect of the promotion of the integration of foreigners, CIC contributes the most in the area of the deepening of professional competencies. (Re)training about working with foreigners is provided to not only CIC social workers and volunteers but also anyone interested in teaching Czech as a foreign language, Czech language teachers of various experience levels, primary school teachers, public social workers, and public administration officials. Lastly, by continuing to

provide support to foreigners and cooperating with local government on relevant projects, CIC fulfills its part as a helpful partner in realizing the 2016 KIC at the local level.

Conclusion

By analyzing activities of the case study CIC from the perspective of ecological systems theory, this thesis has shown concrete ways how NGOs facilitate the integration of foreigners in the Czech Republic. In relation to foreigners' microsystem, NGOs may assist foreigners in adaptation to the Czech society through social counseling, Czech courses, programs designed for foreign job-seekers and families, and through client-specific services or group activities offered by volunteers. In regard to foreigners' mesosystem, apart from ensuring qualifications of its own social workers and volunteers, NGOs may additionally provide training to external actors who work or may work with foreigners at some point in the future, e.g. Czech language and primary school teachers, public social workers, and public administration officials. Moreover, cooperation with like-minded NGOs or even private enterprises can take place at this level, further enriching NGOs' existing service offers as well as allowing the exchange of information. In the exosystem of foreigners, NGOs may collaborate with government agencies in projects and activities that support foreigners' integration. Also important in this layer of the environment is funding or donation from the government, EU institutions, foundations, and enterprises. Lastly, concerning foreigners' macrosystem, NGOs may endeavor to foster positive relations between foreign and Czech communities by engaging both parties in conversation clubs and events, or by inviting Czech citizens to learn about stories of foreigners undergoing integration in the Czech Republic.

Depending on the functions of individual NGOs, some NGOs may dedicate more to certain dimensions of integration and less to others. For instance, a service-oriented NGO such as CIC may focus more on improving foreigners' socio-economic and cultural-religious dimensions of integration and less on their legal-political dimension. NGOs' engagement in different ecological systems of foreigners also varies. CIC, for example, is significantly involved in foreigners' microsystem and mesosystem and less in the others. That being said, CIC plays a crucial complementary role in the implementation of KIC. Many of its services and activities correspond to KIC's main topics pertaining to the integration of foreigners: knowledge of the Czech language, economic self-sufficiency, orientation of a foreigner in society, and mutual relations between communities. CIC also helps deepen professional competencies of a wide range of integration service providers—another important focus of

KIC. Finally, through continuous support to foreigners and common projects with local government, CIC fulfills its role as a facilitator of the integration of foreigners at the local level.

This research successfully captures an NGO's participation in the ecological systems of foreigners in the Czech context. However, there are some limitations. The first issue concerns the nature of the single-subject research design. While the decision for a single case study enables a deeper understanding of an individual NGO, the results of the study cannot be directly applied to other organizations. The thesis, thus, cannot claim its findings to be generalizable to all Czech NGOs assisting foreigners, but rather indicative of ways in which NGOs can contribute to a more friendly environment for foreigners in this regard. Another limitation of the study is the risk of overgeneralization in relation to CIC's services and activities in the Czech Republic. Although CIC offices are present in 11 Czech cities or towns, most of them are concentrated in the northwest of the country, more precisely, in the capital city of Prague, Central Bohemian Region (Kladno, Kolín, Kutná Hora, Mělník, Hořovice, Mladá Boleslav, and Nymburk), Liberec Region (Liberec and Jablonec nad Nisou), and Ústí nad Labem Region (Litoměřice). In addition, not all services and activities provided in the Prague office can be found in others. Some of the smaller offices offer the social counseling service only. Finally, there is a lack of different perspectives in the collected primary data. The study's primary data is based solely on one interview with a CIC social worker. As mentioned in Section 2.3, this is largely due to the knock-on effect caused by the Russian occupation of Ukraine since February 2022. The surge of foreigners (mainly Ukrainian refugees) coming to the Czech Republic within a short time span largely increased the workload of Czech NGOs assisting foreigners, including CIC. It is therefore not surprising that CIC did not have the capacity to do more interviews.

To address these limitations, future research could adopt a multiple case study design involving NGOs based in different parts of the Czech Republic. This would allow for a more thorough understanding of NGOs' contribution to the field in localities beyond Prague and its surrounding regions. Additionally, as the results of the present study is based on CIC, a service-oriented NGO, it would be interesting to compare this study with research of a similar design but based on an advocacy-oriented organization. Finally, in terms of primary data collection, it is suggested that future research on this topic could involve more interviews.

Apart from NGO social workers, the subjects of the interviews could be, for instance, NGO staff members in leading positions, NGO clients (foreigners), and public administration officials working with NGOs assisting foreigners or dealing with relevant issues. This would give a more comprehensive perspective on the role of NGOs in facilitating the integration of foreigners.

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Appendix



Palacký University
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GEORG-AUGUST-UNIVERSITÄT
GÖTTINGEN

Interview Consent Form

Research title:

NGOs as facilitators for the integration of foreigners in the Czech Republic: a case study of Center for Integration of Foreigners (Centrum pro integraci cizinců, CIC)

Researcher:

Hui-Yu Weng, student of *Euroculture - Society, Politics and Culture in a Global Context* at Palacký University Olomouc and University of Göttingen

Research supervisors:

- Mgr. et Mgr. Agnieszka Zogata-Kusz, Ph.D., Department of Christian Social Work, Palacký University Olomouc
- Dr. Lars Klein, EMJMD Euroculture - Society, Politics and Culture in a Global Context, University of Göttingen

This research serves as the student Hui-Yu Weng's master thesis. It aims to explore how NGOs facilitate the integration of foreigners in the Czech Republic. Participation in this study involves an interview which will last around an hour. It is not anticipated that there are any risks connected with your participation, but you remain the right to withdraw from the research at any time.

As a participant of this research, you understand and agree:

1. The interview will be audio-taped and transcribed by the researcher.
2. The interview audio recordings and transcripts are only accessible to the researcher and, if necessary, her research supervisors.
3. The transcripts of the interview will be analyzed by the researcher with guidance from her supervisors.
4. Summary interview content or direct quotations from the interview will be anonymized in the published thesis paper.
5. You will not receive any payment or compensated in any way for participating in this study.
6. The participation of the interview is completely voluntary. You remain the right to withdraw from the interview anytime or decline to answer a question for any reason.

Please provide your signature if you have read the above information and agreed to participate in this study:

Signature _____ Date _____