**Roma and Migrant women in the Czech Republic**

Roma and Migrant women in the Czech Republic, as well as elsewhere in Europe, face barriers to equality both economically and socially, and live in a position particularly vulnerable to violence and discrimination. These groups in the Czech Republic are subject to multiple discrimination – based on gender, belonging to a social group, ethnicity or legal status. Moreover, the available statistics and supporting NGOs demonstrate a recent trend of feminization of migration, ageing and poverty (Munich, 2014, 14). Migrant and Roma women often face a higher risk of social exclusion, live in inferior material conditions and have a lower quality of life compared to the majority of women in the Czech society. These groups of women have the most vulnerable position within society and very often their situation is of no concern to the state authorities that do little to help reduce the inequality and to provide the benefits of the majority society and relevant stakeholders.

In recent years, there has been a discussion of the so-called feminized migration (Matheová, 2016, 1). This phenomenon has been caused by an increase of migration of women for work in the Czech Republic as evidenced by the following statistic. According to the Czech Statistics Authority, the total number of foreigners in the Czech Republic in June 2015 was 458 229 and 56.5% of these were women (Matheová, 2016, 2). The number of women has doubled since June 2005 when there were only 105 599 female foreigners. The statistics further reveal that up to 50% of the female migrants who have access to the Czech job market and those who also have a work permit have jobs, which require low-level qualification (Matheová, 2016, 3). Even though the work force of the female migrants brings benefit to the market, the women face a number of obstacles, such as discrimination, depreciation of qualification, social exclusion and a dependence on the employer. More broadly, the female migrants in the Czech Republic do not have enough opportunities to exert their potential.

Another issue related to discrimination relates to the public heath insurance system in the Czech Republic. Migrants who do not have residence status in the Czech Republic cannot claim financial support for the unemployed. Some employers take advantage of the limited rights of the migrants and exploit them. For instance, Organizace pro pomoc uprchlíkům (Organization for Migrant Support) reports that one of the frequent places where female migrants are exploited is massage parlors. It is not uncommon for a female migrant whose contract stipulates 40 working hours per week to have to work six days a week and 11-12 hours a day (Jelínek, 2011, 22). Moreover, a large number of migrants resorts to enlisting the services of job agencies that can take as much as 50% of their salary in fees for facilitating the job. In some cases, such agencies tend to delay the payment of the worker’s salary and do not defend the worker’s rights when they are forced by the employer to work up to 16 hours per day in a blatant violation of the state law.

The vulnerable position of female migrants directly relates to their employment situation. They face uncertainty as for them to lose their job also means losing their long-term residence status, another fact that is frequently exploited by employers. Regrettably, the above described scenario equally applies to female migrants with university-level education (Munich, 2014, 21). In a related issue, the economic pressure and a lack of support for female migrants while they are raising children limits their opportunities of education. They simply cannot afford to quit their job with long working hours to continue their studies or even to take re-qualification courses.

The list of issues faced by the migrant women in Czech Republic continues, but for the purposes of our literature review, we will now move to proposed solutions and their possible implementation. It follows that the vulnerable position of female migrants must be addressed by changing the related regulations and the legislation. An important instrument of change would be creating a sustained oversight and monitoring of discrimination practices and strict enforcement of discrimination control. Furthermore, migrants should not be perceived as a monolithic mass, but as smaller groups of individuals who share a specified set of characteristics. Each group would benefit from an approach tailored to their needs. We strongly believe that before any large-scale measures can be effectively implemented, it is crucial for their success to first identify the particular problems each given vulnerable group is facing. The problems can accurately identified by regular monitoring. One study suggests that the Czech Republic could draw inspiration from the newly formed female migrant support organizations in the United Kingdom, which actively raise awareness of the the authorities and also influential individuals.

The next important step rests in offering a variety of opportunities for further education. The data shows that "there are significantly lower numbers of immigrants from post-communist countries who fall into the middle education category than among the native population." (Munich, 2014, 16). In contrast, among migrants from Western countries, "50 percent to 60 percent have a tertiary education, a rate that far above natives as well as migrants from the post-communist region" (Munich, 2014, 17). Based on the conclusion of the study, it would be more effective to target migrant women from post-communist  countries and offer them customized educational opportunities. The study also indicates that there are slightly more women than men among immigrants from post-communist countries. The age at arrival of the migrants also helps to narrow down our focus. Whereas the average age of the Czech population fluctuates around 40 years of age, the average of of the migrants from the west is roughly 32 years and, more significantly, the average age of the migrants from the post-communist countries is even lower – approximately 28.

We believe that by devising educational and re-qualification programs specifically targeted on women from the Eastern European countries under or around the age of 30, we can increase their chances of gaining a better employment that would consequently help them attain higher security in life.

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