



The Economic Integration and Professional Development of Third- Country Nationals: Policy Recommendations

This report provides a list of policy recommendations based on the findings of the **Erasmus+ Career Path Project**. Career Path is a multi-stage research project that seeks to better understand the economic situation and professional development opportunities of third-country nationals (TCNs) in Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia.

The project analyzes the barriers TCNs face in finding employment as well as in pursuing further education and professional development opportunities. The policy recommendations in this report are the product of two rounds of interviews with TCNs, government officials, employers, and non-governmental organizations conducted by the project partners: the **Centre for Peace Studies (Croatia)**, **InBáze (Czech Republic)**, **Menedék (Hungary)**, and **Mareena (Slovakia)**.

Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia are all experiencing increasing levels of migration from countries outside of the European Union (EU). Unfortunately, the institutional capacity of these countries to effectively deal with the migration and integration process is lacking. Migration and integration policies are often realized in an ad-hoc manner, lack long-term institutional financing mechanisms, and employ a uniform approach that underestimates or ignores the diverse needs of diverse migrant populations (particularly women). Moreover, the various components of the migration and integration process fall under the auspices of different government guarantor institutions, leading to unnecessary bureaucratic complexity. Ultimately, these flaws lead to social and economic inefficiencies. The countries analyzed in this report all have unmet demand for both low- and high-skilled labour. Yet, companies are often hesitant to hire TCNs due to the complexity of the procedures involved in doing so. Concomitantly, TCNs also face challenges once settled in their host country. Examples include difficulties with switching employers, having foreign credentials recognized, or affording local-language instruction. These difficulties can lead to more severe problems down the line (e.g., unemployment). Thus, reform is necessary.

While wholesale reform of migration and integration systems may not be feasible in the short term due to the resources and political will required, there are smaller, actionable steps that these four countries can take to improve the current situation. Thus, in this report, we present four policy recommendations that our research identified as instrumental for improving the labour market integration of TCNs. The goal of these recommendations is to provide tangible, concrete steps that various organizations, including local and national governments, can take to help remedy some shortcomings of the current system. These policy recommendations were chosen for both their feasibility and their applicability to all four country contexts. For each policy, we present a general overview prior to discussing relevant details associated with respective national contexts.

Policy 1: Language Courses and Intercultural Orientations

A major barrier to labour market integration is a lack of local-language knowledge. Without knowledge of the local language, TCNs struggle to find work, compete for job opportunities, and pursue further education or professional development. Moreover, not knowing the local language leads to difficulties with navigating bureaucratic processes related to migration and integration, as well as with social integration. First, many of the resources that facilitate finding employment (e.g., online job boards, or government employment offices) are only accessible in the local language. Second, not knowing a local language closes off many potential labour opportunities for TCNs. It also makes TCNs less competitive for jobs where local language knowledge is not a formal requirement (in many cases, employers still prefer hiring someone who can speak the local language). In addition, participation in many professional development opportunities or further education programs requires local language knowledge, limiting the ability of TCNs to pursue such opportunities. Finally, government offices often lack the resources to provide English-language resources to their staff. This means that bureaucratic processes like filing for a work permit or changing a residency address are still largely done in the local language. If TCNs do not speak the local language, navigating these processes is more difficult.

Due to these reasons, we suggest the implementation of low-cost, accessible language courses at the municipal level. We also suggest that these courses be coupled with an intercultural orientation program. This orientation program would provide a general orientation to relevant legal frameworks, bureaucratic procedures, available services, and cultural life in the host country. Thus, not only would TCNs gain important language knowledge, they would also learn about the general resources available to them and how to practically navigate bureaucratic procedures in their new home. We believe that this policy would be beneficial for local governments, as well as TCNs. Not only would this policy allow municipalities to be in direct contact with TCNs residing in the area, it would also ensure that any possible problems with integration are identified.

We envision that the language curriculum could follow two formats. The first format follows the general structure of language instruction -- i.e., a standard curriculum that starts with fundamentals before moving on to more advanced topics. The second format that we suggest entails specialized curricula tailored to specific occupational roles. These courses would focus on vocabulary and other language skills necessary for TCNs to either do their jobs, or to apply for jobs in their fields of specialization.

This second format may be particularly useful as, to the best of our knowledge, no courses provide instruction specifically tailored to fulfilling occupational roles or gainfully finding employment. For this reason, it seems appropriate to develop a specialised range of language courses taking into account the specific occupational needs of TCNs. We also believe that this system of instruction would benefit TCNs who are looking for work. By being able to claim accreditation in the language of a given occupational field, TCNs would be able to improve their employment prospects.

The primary necessary condition for implementing this policy is a sufficient number of TCNs residing in a locality. Thus, this policy may be best suited for larger municipalities, where offering low-cost language courses is economically efficient. Municipalities must recruit lecturers and co-design (or adopt from existing examples) a language curriculum. Lecturers, in partnership with government officials, would have to adapt certain facets of language instruction to include components of intercultural orientation.

After a curriculum is designed and a class schedule is finalized, municipalities must recruit TCNs to attend classes. Here, we suggest partnering with local organizations already working with these communities to make use of existing networks. Similarly, if firms in the area employ large numbers of TCNs, municipalities may choose to recruit there. Active cooperation with local integration coordinators and civil society organizations should also aid the recruitment of TCNs.

Once classes are complete, municipalities should evaluate the program through both qualitative and quantitative means. The first fundamental evaluation metric of this policy is recruitment and attendance. If courses are filled to capacity in each cycle, this means that TCNs find value in the program. Second, the post-course feedback mechanisms will help revise the courses for future iterations. These mechanisms include surveys of all instructors and participants, as well as in-depth interviews with a random selection from both groups. By evaluating the curriculum, and its implementation, responsible municipalities and governmental institutions will be able to adequately adjust the curriculum in order for it to fully comply with the needs of TCNs. We expect the instruction program to undergo revisions in response to the feedback gathered after the completion of each course cycle.

The primary cost of these courses is lecturer salary. We realize that municipalities may not be able to fund this expenditure on their own. Thus, we hope a combination of municipal, national, and EU funds will be sufficient for maintaining low cost. Municipalities are encouraged to partner with NGOs to write applications for EU project funds. For example, similar projects have been funded through the EU Asylum, Migration, and Integration (AMIF) Fund. However, national funding is particularly important because it offers sustainability. Thus, national governments are strongly encouraged to allocate funding for these initiatives.

We foresee two primary obstacles. The first is cost, discussed in the preceding paragraph. The second is recruitment, also discussed above. Generally, we hope that active partnerships across levels of government, with NGOs, and with firms, can help overcome these barriers. Importantly, it is up to the national government to take active steps to encourage localities to institute these programs. This includes financial, as well as programmatic support (e.g., incorporating language instruction in a unified integration policy).

Croatia: Throughout interviews with TCNs, representatives of non-governmental organisations, and government officials, we identified a lack of knowledge of the Croatian language as one of the biggest barriers when integrating into the labour market. Whereas TCNs coming from more privileged backgrounds have the opportunity to fund Croatian language courses themselves, the majority of TCNs we interviewed do not have this possibility. Lack of knowledge of the

Croatian language further restrains TCNs from successfully integrating into the labour market, and closes the door for already-scarce job opportunities.

This policy proposal aligns with the existing Croatian Action Plan for Integration. However, the Action Plan only focuses on the integration of persons who were afforded international or subsidiary protection and is thus limited in its scope. By implementing this broader policy recommendation, TCNs would acquire the necessary Croatian language knowledge and pursue integration more independently. This would be beneficial both for municipalities where TCNs are located, and it would also allow for the organization of this program by local integration coordinators (appointed by the Government's Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities).

Furthermore, the Law on International and Temporary Protection stipulates that the Republic of Croatia must provide a Croatian language, history and culture course, funded from the state budget, for asylees and persons under subsidiary protection. For persons who have been granted asylum or subsidiary protection, the course is structured to align with the Programme of Croatian language, history and culture for asylum seekers and aliens under subsidiary protection, and lasts for 280 (70 + 210) hours. Other foreigners (TCNs and EU nationals) do not have access to state-funded courses or integration support, which means that they need to fund their own (commercial) courses, or that they depend on the support of NGOs whose capacities are limited. In practice, many asylees and persons under subsidiary protection have delayed access to language courses, and often do not have the opportunity to go through the whole cycle of 280 hours of courses guaranteed by the law.

Being an EU Member State and being positioned geographically on the Balkan Route, Croatia should strive towards becoming a more open country that allows equal opportunities for all. TCNs are an essential part of Croatian society, and these courses would allow them to become active participants in Croatian society.

Czech Republic: Our analyses in the Czech Republic also identified a need for accessible, low-cost language courses. In response to the specific needs of TCNs residing in the Czech Republic, we recommend two formats. The first format follows the general structure of language instruction -- i.e., a standard curriculum that starts with fundamentals before moving on to more advanced topics. The second format that we suggest entails specialized curricula tailored to specific occupational roles. These courses would focus on vocabulary and other language skills necessary for TCNs to either do their jobs, or to apply for jobs in their fields of specialization.

While some free (and low-cost) language courses are available to TCNs in the Czech Republic, no courses that we are aware of provide instruction specifically tailored to fulfilling occupational roles or gainfully finding employment. For this reason, it seems appropriate to develop a specialised range of language courses taking into account the specific occupational needs of TCNs. We also believe that this system of instruction would benefit TCNs who are looking for work in the Czech Republic. By being able to claim accreditation in the language of a given occupational field, TCNs would be able to improve their employment prospects.

Hungary: Language courses and intercultural orientation are crucial for TCN integration in the Hungarian job market. First, many of the job-search resources are only in Hungarian. Second, not knowing the local language makes TCNs less competitive for both jobs where Hungarian is required, but also for jobs where Hungarian language is not officially required, but employers still prefer Hungarian-speaking applicants. Third, speaking the local language helps TCNs complete the Work Permit procedures. Since the ratio of English-speaking customer staff at the Immigration Office (officially: National Directorate - General for Aliens Policing) is low, petitioners need a basic understanding of Hungarian for a successful application. Knowing the local language is also a must for participating in state-financed training in helping labour market integration.

Slovakia: In Slovakia, we identified language knowledge as one of the largest barriers to successful economic integration. Low levels of language capacity led to three obstacles: (1) an inability to find employment; (2) an inability to pursue career development opportunities and further training; and (3) an inability to navigate bureaucratic processes. These problems were further compounded by a lack of readily available and affordable language courses. Often, foreigners had to rely on cost-prohibitive, commercial options.

The provision of low-cost language courses would solve the identified problems by equipping TCNs with the Slovak language skills necessary to pursue employment and further education. Additionally, when coupled with the intercultural orientation component, these courses would equip TCNs with the ability to navigate bureaucratic processes, as well as other, everyday facets of life in Slovakia. We believe that this policy would be beneficial for local governments, as well as TCNs. Not only would this policy allow municipalities to be in direct contact with TCNs residing in the area, it would also ensure that any possible problems with integration are identified. This policy recommendation follows the national framework's goals concerning cooperation with local governments in the area of integration, as outlined in the Integration Policy of the Slovak Republic (pp. 82-85) as well as the Strategy on Labour Mobility of Foreigners in the Slovak Republic (pp. 36-39; pp. 43-45).

Policy 2: Recognition of Qualifications

Across all four countries, many TCNs expressed frustration with the system of qualification recognition. The lack of an accreditation and assessment system of TCNs' skills impacts their ability to find jobs that match their qualifications and career aspirations. Consequently, TCNs are forced to accept precarious forms of work, short-term contracts, undeclared work, or hard manual labour that is often not adequately paid. Thus, we propose the creation of a functioning qualification recognition system at both the national and local level. The primary objective of this recommendation is to facilitate the recognition of TCNs' qualifications, allowing them to further specialise or work in professions needed in the domestic labour market. The implementation of this policy would not only benefit TCNs, but their local communities as well. Such a policy would increase the qualified workforce and improve the economic integration of citizens, benefitting the labour market overall. This recommendation also accords with extant EU legislation concerning a uniform system of qualification recognition.

Ideally, the recognition of qualifications would follow a standardized process. The necessary steps and documents needed for recognition should be made available to TCNs through an online resource. Moreover, best practice would be for government institutions and employers to follow the same standards as it pertains to the recognition of diplomas and other qualifications. This system should be developed through active partnerships between the relevant government institutions -- usually the ministries of education or labour -- and the various, relevant professional agencies in the four countries. Such partnerships would ensure that professional standards are being met. While the formulation and verification of this policy would have to occur at the national level (creating a standardized system), we envision that implementation could occur at the local or municipal level. This implementation would reduce inefficiency by specifically targeting localities where TCNs and persons granted international protection reside. Partnerships with, for example, local employment offices would ensure that TCNs could access the qualification recognition system in the municipality where they reside (or at least nearby). In cases where qualifications are not recognized, TCNs should be provided with written justification enumerating the reasons why their credentials were not recognized and what, if anything, they can do to achieve successful recognition.

In cases where TCNs do not have access to documentation proving their educational or professional qualifications (a common problem amongst individuals granted international protection), they should be able to undergo a specified procedure that assesses their educational and professional qualifications. In this process, we suggest that relevant ministries and educational/professional organizations collaborate to create a transparent system of qualification verification. If necessary, these assessments could be conducted in partnership with different employers to ensure that relevant standards are being met.

Qualification recognition is generally included in the legislative framework regarding persons with international protection and TCNs. Thus, the implementation of this policy should be co-financed through the state budget and EU funds in the field of integration and social inclusion. In terms of evaluation, we suggest that the relevant government offices set up an annual monitoring system that aggregates data from all the qualification cases carried out

by the local offices. These cases should be reviewed at the national level to ensure that the policy is being implemented in a standardized and appropriate manner.

We foresee two main obstacles. First, educational and professional qualifications of TCNs acquired abroad may not be directly comparable or translatable to national equivalents. However, by presenting a transparent and systematic system for the recognition of qualifications, TCNs can familiarize themselves with what qualifications can be recognized, and what documentation is necessary for recognition to occur. In cases where recognition is not possible, alternative systems of prequalification or professional training (based on the previous experience of TCNs) can also help mitigate this obstacle. The second possible obstacle is the language barrier. Until language courses become widely available to all TCNs, all relevant materials and resources should be accessible in English, and interpreters should be provided to facilitate the recognition process.

Croatia: In Croatia, qualification recognition was identified as one of the main obstacles TCNs face while integrating into the labour market, at both the national and municipal level. As one TCN stated in the interview: “They didn’t trust that my diploma from back home was real.” The lack of accreditation of job qualifications and assessment of TCNs’ skills impacts their ability to find jobs that match their qualifications and career aspirations. Consequently, TCNs are forced to accept precarious forms of work, short-term contracts, undeclared work, or hard manual labour that is often not adequately paid.

This policy recommendation follows the findings of the Situational Mapping Analysis where TCNs proposed the establishment of a support system related to the recognition of qualifications in order to ease their access to information and to become acquainted with their rights and opportunities. Furthermore, this policy follows the Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council (13th of December 2011) on standards for the qualifications of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted (Article 28: Access to procedures for recognition of qualifications) transposed in the Croatian Law on International and Temporary Protection and in the Croatian Action Plan for Integration focused on persons who were granted international protection, as well as the Law on Foreigners.

Thus, this policy recommendation should be implemented on both national and local level through cooperation of national and local authorities and competent institutions in the field of education and labour. The Ministry of Science and Education with its agencies (Agency for Science and Higher Education and Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education) and the Employment Service at the national level should closely cooperate with local authorities, educational institutions and local branches of the Employment Service in order to help TCNs in accessing qualification recognition, prequalification and professional training that would allow them successful integration into the labour market. The implementation should specifically target localities where persons granted international protection and other TCNs reside.

Czech Republic: Like in the other countries under study, the method of qualification recognition in the Czech Republic is complex and not very transparent. The process -- governed by the

Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports -- distinguishes between the recognition of professional qualifications, the recognition of educational qualifications, and other specific requirements. However, for some regulated professions, other state institutions also govern parts or the entirety of the process. Applications for recognition of qualifications are subject to a fee, which is an additional burden for some TCNs. Simplifying the process would help TCNs find employment in positions corresponding to their qualifications; unfortunately, such a change cannot be expected in a short period of time. In practice, therefore, a number of non-profit organizations assist third-country nationals in submitting and processing applications for qualification recognition. However, these services are usually implemented as parts of projects financed, for example, through EU funds. Thus, the continuity of financing is not necessarily ensured for longer periods of time. Therefore, it would be beneficial to dedicate a portion of the state budget to qualification recognition.

Hungary: The recognition of qualifications also constitutes an important issue concerning TCNs integration in the Hungarian job market. The Hungarian Equivalence and Information Centre (MEIK) is in charge of the process of official recognition of degrees and qualifications. Applicants can request either the recognition of the level of education ('recognition'), or the naturalization of a degree or certification ('nostrification'). Official recognition, and especially nostrification, is a serious administrative and financial burden on TCNs. The primary burden is obtaining the necessary documents, and paying the procedural and official translation fees. Successful recognition depends on several factors, most importantly on whether the profession of the TCN is state regulated. For certain regulated professions, only the holder of a nostrified qualification can exercise the given activity. It is crucial to develop a more nuanced policy environment, especially for those professions where practice requires an official qualification and nostrification procedure. This will help TCNs fulfil their potential in the Hungarian labour market, while also ensuring a balanced Hungarian labour market.

Slovakia: The Slovak Republic faces a labor shortage in the medical field, especially as it pertains to qualified nurses and doctors. TCNs with the relevant experience could help solve this problem, however, many medical professionals with degrees from outside of Slovakia struggle to have their qualifications recognized by the relevant Slovak authorities. Unfortunately, this problem also extends to other high-skilled fields as well. Thus, we recommend a simplified and transparent system of qualification recognition.

This system should be developed through active partnerships between the Ministry of Education, Science, Research, and Sport and various, relevant professional agencies in Slovakia. For example, revisions to the recognition system for medical degrees could be carried out in partnership with the International Association of Doctors in Slovakia. Such partnerships would ensure that professional standards are being met. Importantly, facilitating the recognition of credentials and diplomas for high-skilled TCNs could solve many of the shortages present in the Slovak labor market. Importantly, however, the recognition of qualifications for low-skilled workers is also problematic. Refugees and asylum seekers in particular have a difficult time with having their diplomas recognized by Slovak institutions. Ideally, the recognition of qualifications would follow a standardized process. The necessary steps and documents needed for recognition should be made available to TCNs through an online resource. Moreover, best practice would be for government institutions and

employers to follow the same standards as it pertains to the recognition of diplomas and other qualifications.

Policy 3: Further Education and Professional Development

Another major identified barrier is the lack of low-cost and accessible further education programs for TCNs. By further education, we refer to language courses, professional (re)qualification and development courses, as well as career guidance. Currently, such classes are offered mostly in the local language, and rarely in English. Moreover, these programmes do not have a systematic source of financing, and courses are often entirely financed by participants. Moreover, the private sector offers few solutions. While some companies do offer further education courses and language instruction, these are largely on a case-by-case basis. Thus, expanding and systematizing this system would ensure both accessibility and consistency. Ultimately, such a system would benefit both the social and the economic integration of TCNs. We envision that this policy would be formally enumerated in government integration strategies. Formally defining the problems and needs of TCNs when it comes to continuing education should help policy solutions become a component of national integration strategies.

We suggest that access to further education be made available to TCNs as soon as they migrate to the host country. Ideally, under this new system, each TCN would be allocated a small budget that they could use for educational purposes. This budget would only be available for one year and could be used only for educational opportunities approved by the respective national governments. Alternatively, TCNs could petition to have a specific educational opportunity covered by the budget. Such a program would also be extremely beneficial for TCNs most in need -- e.g., women or those under some form of international protection.

Professional development opportunities could also include a systematic approach to career guidance. The guidance program should provide TCNs with concrete information and actionable steps for translating their skills to equivalent employment. While existing career services offer information about the local labour market and existing opportunities, it is important to go beyond informational aid, and focus on the development of specific skills and abilities. Moreover, career services should also incorporate elements of networking and social inclusion.

It is also important that both professional development opportunities and career development initiatives be offered outside of major cities, as long as a sufficient number of TCNs reside in a given area. These services should be comparable and supported by long-term institutional funding sources (rather than ad-hoc projects). Services should also be cognizant of the challenges faced by different groups of TCNs. For example, the barriers faced by migrant women are often much more severe than those faced by migrant men. Thus, programs should be tailored to the relevant audience, promoting inclusion across all groups. Finally, linking language instruction, career guidance, and professional development would be fruitful. Often the skills developed through each of these programs build upon one another. Combining services through a systematic program could increase efficiency.

We consider these allocations as investments in the potential of TCNs, and believe that they would provide substantial returns. Nonetheless, we realize that such a program requires a significant investment. Perhaps, linking further education opportunities directly to shortages

in the local labour markets -- e.g., if the budget is used to prepare for positions that do not have enough workers -- would make this program even more economically worthwhile. Finally, while further education can encompass a diversity of programs, we envision that employers would play an active role in the formulation of this policy. Specifically, employers could help identify skills and qualifications necessary for working in a respective country. Subsequently, educational opportunities could be based on these perspectives.

In terms of evaluation, we suggest that TCNs would have to agree to provide feedback at various stages in order to access their personal budget. Thus, they would be incentivized to provide data on whether or not further education opportunities aided them in securing employment. Actual assessment could be carried out through surveys or focus group discussions. Another indicator of success would be the number of TCNs enrolling in further education opportunities.

Croatia: In Croatia, the Ministry of Science and Education and its agencies (Agency for Science and Higher Education and Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education) and the Employment Service are the competent institutions for language courses, formal education of adults, prequalification, and professional development. Although the Action Plan for the Integration of Persons under International Protection 2017-2019 included measures intended to enhance adult education, prequalification, professional development and language learning, these measures were only partially implemented. Furthermore, these measures encompass only individuals who received international protection, and who consequently spent some time living in Croatia (people generally wait on the international protection decision for 1-2 years). There are several additional problems that TCNs face in Croatia when accessing adult education and professional development. First, free language courses (for persons under international protection) are not continuously available nor do they cover the full range of language proficiency needed for successful integration in the labour market. Other TCNs can only access paid language courses. Second, many TCNs face numerous obstacles in accessing higher education, adult vocational education or prequalification programs, as these programs are often available only in Croatian language or require proof of previously obtained education. These requirements are often difficult for TCNs to meet. Furthermore, these programs are not systematically financed, which impacts their availability and price.

Czech Republic: In the Czech Republic, professional development and career guidance services are available only in the large cities with organizations working in this area. These services should be available in all regions of Czech Republic. Not only do these services bring clear benefits for TCNs and help them fully use qualification potential, they also provide advantages to regional employers facing qualified labor shortages. Career services should focus on expanding the skills of TCNs, enabling their transition into new fields and industries. Career practitioners should also be aware of labour market forecasts in different regions and of in-demand skill sets. Thus, they can provide TCNs with updated information and navigate them through the Czech labour market and ultimately find long-term employment. Close cooperation between employers, NGOs and public institutions is one of the main conditions for providing effective career guidance and counselling. Not only do these services bring clear

benefits for TCNs and help them fully use their qualifications, they also provide advantages to regional employers facing labor shortages.

Hungary: Although one of the main objectives of the integration chapter in the Hungarian Migration Strategy (2013-2020) was to develop adult education training programs to assist in the labor integration of migrants, and although long-term resident TCNs (and those granted international protection) are granted the right to attend state financed training and re-skilling sessions, three obstacles persist. The first obstacle is the requirement of having finished primary education. This poses an issue for many TCNs granted international protection, as many have not completed this requirement or lack the necessary documentation from their countries of origin to prove it. Second, foreign qualifications necessary to attend the courses may not be recognized due to the lack of original documents verifying those qualifications. Finally, these programs are mainly offered in Hungarian. Thus, the lack of Hungarian language knowledge is a major obstacle for TCNs who wish to participate in these training programs.

Slovakia: The lack of low-cost and accessible further education programs for TCNs is also a problem in Slovakia. Currently, such classes are offered mostly in the Slovak language, and rarely in English. Moreover, these programmes do not have a systematic source of financing, and courses are often entirely financed by participants. Thus, expanding and systematizing this system would ensure both accessibility and consistency. Ultimately, such a system would benefit both the social and the economic integration of TCNs in Slovakia.

We envision that this policy would be formally enumerated in two key government strategies: (1) The Human Resource Strategy under the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, and Family; and (2) The Lifelong Learning Strategy under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research, and Sport. Formally defining the problems and needs of TCNs when it comes to continuing education should help policy solutions become a component of the overall integration strategy of the Slovak Republic. We also suggest that access to further education be made available to TCNs as soon as they migrate to Slovakia. Ideally, under this new system, each TCN would be allocated a small budget that they could only use for educational purposes. This budget would only be available for one year and could be used only for educational opportunities approved by the Slovak government. Alternatively, TCNs could petition to have a specific educational opportunity covered by the budget. Such a program would also be extremely beneficial for TCNs most in need -- e.g., women or those under some form of international protection.

Policy 4: Employer Integration Programs

Our analysis also showed that systems of support after employment could be expanded for TCNs. Once TCNs are employed, employers become the main source of guidance not only for administrative processes, but for other, more practical issues as well (e.g, housing). It is important for both TCNs and their employers to understand specific obstacles associated with the employment of TCNs and with multicultural workplaces. Thus, we suggest two related initiatives: (1) the creation of the position of dedicated guidance officer; and (2) a system of comprehensive intercultural training at firms employing TCNs.

Many firms in the analyzed countries want to hire TCNs but are discouraged by inefficient and complex bureaucratic processes and the complex legislation associated with these hires. Moreover, TCNs who are ultimately employed may lack guidance as they settle into their working roles. Thus, we recommend the creation of a separate occupational position at large firms that would explicitly support the employment of TCNs and help navigate related bureaucratic processes.

Generally, responsibility for such affairs falls to human resources departments. However, these departments have other, primary responsibilities that do not specifically entail the employment of TCNs. Moreover, given the complex and developing nature of regulations regarding migration and employment, familiarizing oneself with this policy area requires extensive attention. For these reasons, we suggest that companies consider creating a specialized position specifically dedicated to helping both the company and TCNs navigate bureaucratic processes.

We envision that this position will be created in human resources departments, and the worker in this position will benefit from external information sources and will be a specialised expert in both migration legislation and career development, in addition to possessing expertise in labour law. Of course, the actual job description and responsibilities fall under the purview of respective employers. We hope that such a position can also serve as a resource for TCNs employed by the company. Ideally, TCNs should be able to turn to this office with questions regarding legislative and bureaucratic procedure, as well as logistical questions concerning life in their host country.

We understand that financing a new position may be a major difficulty for many companies. Thus, we expect the implementation of this policy to be feasible largely for multinational corporations or larger domestic firms. Nonetheless, given that these firms employ a substantial number of TCNs, we expect substantial benefits. Finally, firms who create such a position would be able to evaluate for themselves whether implementing the policy was worthwhile.

Second, we suggest that firms implement a comprehensive intercultural training program for employees. As part of this intercultural training, we hope to motivate employers to set up mentorship programs that pair TCN employees with local colleagues, aiding the social integration of their workforce. By offering mentorship and allocating efforts into building a multicultural working environment, employers would work towards integrating TCNs into the workforce, while also building networks within their workplace.

Logistically, once a TCN secures employment in a company who has this workplace integration support system in place, they would be offered a mentor who will guide them through the internal procedures of the company and support him/her through the initial stages of integrating into the workplace. This process would include informing the newly joined TCN about all internal procedures and offering them the description of these procedures in English (or another language they understand). Mentoring would be followed by team building activities that promote cultural diversity, creating a welcoming climate and opening space for cultural exchange among employees.

This intercultural support should be replicated within the internal management team and the human resources administration. For example, there should be more flexibility in arranging holidays for TCNs who might have different religious customs. Last but not least, management or other leaders within the company should consider modelling appropriate practices for other employers when it comes to building a relationship with TCNs who have newly joined the workforce.

In addition to the above mentioned steps, companies who have more experience in employing TCNs could organise language courses. By offering TCNs the possibility of learning a local language, the company is giving them an additional tool while they build their network and strengthen their interpersonal and communication skills. These programs can be evaluated through participation rates, and feedback mechanisms that ask TCNs and their mentors to comment on how the program went for them.

Importantly, implementation of this policy is strictly dependent on the will of companies who employ TCNs. Thus, a lack of resources, whether financial or human, may be an obstacle to implementation of a workplace integration system. However, through EU funds and initiatives, companies can take part in programs that promote cultural diversity and its importance within the workplace. These can be fruitful starting places for many companies. Ultimately, by showing how beneficial cultural diversity in the workplace can be, these companies will not only be more attractive on the market, but they will also attract other skilled TCNs. Perhaps, these benefits are enough to incentivize companies to adopt such programs.

Croatia: There is no systemic workplace integration support system in Croatia, and the few workplace integration systems that do exist are managed by Human Resources departments of private companies. The introduction of such a system, particularly in private companies, could make a substantial impact on the lives of TCNs living in Croatia. Yet, keeping in mind that there are not a particularly high number of TCNs in Croatia, and that most companies do not have experience employing a large number of foreign nationals, we suggest that employers should be encouraged to establish their own mentoring and support-building system. This policy proposal also helps to solve an identified problem: in many firms, there is a lack of social connection between TCNs and locally recruited employees. Although this gap does not reflect discriminatory policy, it is a product of the lack of internal policies that promote a multicultural working environment and rely on pre-existing work dynamics. By offering mentorship and allocating efforts into building a multicultural working environment, employers would make a step towards integrating TCNs fully and offer them a tool for not only conducting their work, but also for building a network within their workplace.

Czech Republic: Our analysis shows that employers, particularly large multinational companies, are interested in hiring TCNs in the Czech Republic. However, many such companies are discouraged by the bureaucratic complexity involved with the hiring process. Moreover, TCNs who are ultimately employed in the Czech Republic often lack guidance as they settle into their working roles. Thus, we recommend the creation of a separate occupational position at large firms that would explicitly support the employment of TCNs, navigate related bureaucratic processes, and generally provide integration support. At the same time, it is appropriate to consider different programs that motivate employers to hire TCNs, and provide support for their social integration. In the Czech context, it seems useful to include these social integration programs in the concept of "corporate social responsibility (CSR)", where, for example, the announcement of competitions for the "CSR" award is important for many employers' public visibility and reputation.

Hungary: The private sector in Hungary does not take any identifiable initiatives to help TCNs integrate in the labour market. While some companies provide language training and general coaching at an individual level, there is no specific programming in place apart from these sporadic resources. The presence of an employer integration program does not correlate with the size of the organization, but there does appear to be a correlation with organizational culture; specifically, the importance of intercultural values within the organization. In 2013, the Hungarian government adopted a "Migration Strategy" that briefly described the tools needed to achieve TCN integration. The Strategy included a chapter on the teaching of language skills, the provision of education opportunities, access to the labour market, housing, and other social benefits, and on programs aimed at providing migrant-specific training to Hungarian employers. Moreover, the Migration Strategy envisaged the adoption of a full-fledged integration strategy, but the government has not adopted it yet, and the Hungarian private sector did not take any identifiable initiatives to integrate TCNs in the workforce.

Nevertheless, projects financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) of the European Union were based on this strategy. One of the tools used by AMIF projects to promote labour market integration was career counseling, including needs assessments, the provision of information about the Hungarian labour market, job search training, trainee programmes, intercultural training, and business development. While some companies provide language training and general support at an individual level, and while one of the main objectives of the Migration Strategy is the development of adult education programs to assist in labor market integration, there is no specific programming in place apart from existing resources. Overall, the migrants' entry into the labour market could be facilitated through training, re-training, and extra incentives offered to employers who hire TCNs. We also suggest that educational initiatives can target employers and stress the advantages of TCN integration programs.

Slovakia: Similar to the other countries in this analysis, no systemic efforts exist amongst Slovak companies in terms of employer integration programs. If such programs do exist, they are realized in an ad-hoc manner, and only amongst larger, multinational firms. Smaller employers lack these programs entirely. Generally, these programs take two forms: (1) multicultural training meetings, where professionals discuss the benefits and challenges of working in a multicultural workplace; and (2) small allowances that employees can use for integration purposes (most often used for Slovak language courses). Some firms also promote integration

through a “buddy” system, where new employees are paired with Slovaks to facilitate their transition to life in Slovakia.

To realize such a policy in the Slovak Republic -- and given that creating a dedicated, permanent position to coordinate may not be feasible for many firms -- we suggest that companies partner with nongovernmental organizations working in the area of migrant integration. Many of these organizations have experienced staff ready to conduct workshops or trainings at different firms.

Impressum

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