

Trends in Demography and Migration in the Czech Republic

1. Introduction

On 31 December 2017, the total population of the Czech Republic was 10,610,055 inhabitants (ČSÚ 2018). This number gives the country the 87th place among 206 countries in the global comparison (Prospects 2017) and the 13th position out of the 48 countries in Europe (Worldometers 2018). Still, in comparison and in absolute terms, the Czech Republic is one of the countries with a relatively small population. It is currently experiencing a very dynamic demographic development and, in particular, the increases since the early 1990s have and will have a significant impact on the structure and key characteristics of the population.

2. The historical context of demographic trends in the Czech Republic

In the course of the 20th century, the development of the population of the Czech Republic was marked by several major events that had a significant impact on the long-term and stable demographic continuity. Similarly to other Central European countries, the development of the population was affected by the two world wars. As a result of the First World War 300,000 men from the Czech lands died.¹ This, the subsequent epidemic of the Spanish flu and 550,000 “unborn” children have led to a distinct break in the age structure of the population and to a temporary deformation of its gender composition. War population losses were over 900,000 people who would otherwise contribute to the population (KUČERA 1996, 334).

The Second World War and its aftermath also significantly influenced the population development of the country, both in terms of the quantitative population growth or decline, and the ethnic composition of the population. The population losses during the war were caused by repressions against the population (e.g. 3,229 persons were executed); deportations and almost complete extermination of Jewish (77,000) and Roma people (5,000); or deaths in combat, in prisons, concentration camps and forced labour in Germany (50,000) (KUČERA 1996, 333). On the other hand, and perhaps paradoxically a population increase is also evident in the period of occupation, due to several factors. Family and children were the only intimate sphere, where it was possible to fulfil oneself without being confronted with the totalitarian environment of the occupation. As free functioning in the political, public, but also economic life was impossible, the family became the only and relatively trouble-free refuge. Another,

¹ For the purposes of this paper, the traditional term “Czech lands” refers to the territories of the present Czech Republic, consisting of the historic lands of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia.

also paradoxical factor was the improvement of the conditions of living for some parts of the population. The introduction and expansion of social care and higher wages, in particular, for those employed in the war industry, facilitated the establishment of families. Furthermore, having a child was a “protection” from forced labour in Germany. It can be seen as a paradox that during this period of occupation, such difficult for the Czech nation, the numbers of women with children as well as the numbers of children in a family increased (KUČERA 1996, 334). During the war years, the number of population in the territory of the Czech lands grew by more than 200,000 people, but mainly in the (German populated) border areas (KUČERA 1994). In quantitative and qualitative terms, the Nazi occupation had much less serious consequences on the development of the Czech population compared to the consequences of the First World War.

The fundamental impact on the demographic history occurred in the subsequent post-war events, especially with the expulsion of the German population. In pre-war Czechoslovakia, the Czech lands had 10,674,240 inhabitants (according to the census in 1930), out of which 7,304,442 obtained Czech nationality and 3,149,820 German nationality (Sčítání lidu 2016). People of the Czech and German nationalities formed 98% of the population, the other minorities were negligible (Sčítání lidu 2017). As a result of the war and, in particular, the expulsion of the German population, especially in 1945–1946, the number of Germans dropped to a fraction of their original number. According to the population census in 1950, only 159,938 people obtained German nationality. As a result of ethnic cleansing during the occupation and in the post-war period, the Czech lands became an ethnically homogeneous territory with a complete domination of the Czech nation, or Czech-speaking population.

After a short period of relative freedom and reconstruction of the state, another dramatic political change emerged in 1948 – the establishment of a communist government that lasted until the end of 1989. The new political regime tried to promote pro-natalist measures, but in the first two decades of the regime, their practical implementation was often only declarative. There was, however, a significant shift more than twenty years later, after the country was attacked and occupied by the forces of the Warsaw Pact countries, and the promising attempt at political and economic liberalisation was terminated by a brutal military intervention in August 1968. This was the second period of occupation in the modern Czech history and the restoration of conservative neo-Stalinist political course had also specific demographic consequences, including the forced exodus of many people, as well as an increase in the birth rate among the deprived population. Similarly to the period after the Communist coup in 1948 (25,000), a large number of inhabitants (70,000) went into exile in 1968–1969. During the period of the Communist Government between 1948–1989, over 200,000 inhabitants left the country (TOMEK 2000). It is interesting to note that in the years that followed the stressful Soviet occupation, similar demographic behaviour could be observed among the Czech society as in the time of the Nazi occupation.

The period of the first half of the 1970s can be even described as a baby boom (due to the generation of the so-called *Husák's children*).² This was the result of several factors: an external pressure, when the neo-Stalinist political regime, set up after the invasion in

² Gustáv Husák was the General Secretary (the head) of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in 1969–1978. In 1975–1989 he was the President of Czechoslovakia. He is viewed as a symbol of close collaboration with the USSR and the leading representative of the so-called normalisation system, established after the occupation in 1968.

1968, again started to control and restrict significantly the political, public and economic life of the society and family became the only intimate refuge outside the direct political supervision. There was also an actual and extensive support for the families and other pro-natalist policies implemented by the state, facilitating the establishment of families (advantageous loans for the newly married, longer maternity leave, increased building of flats and more accessible housing for couples with children, etc.), social and health care for children (establishment of nurseries, expansion of the network of educational, social and healthcare facilities for children, etc.). The main impetus for these measures was the necessity of political calming after August 1968 – therefore, the communist regime supported the fulfilling of citizens outside the political sphere, i.e. within the family. In addition, it pursued long-term economic and security interests (increase in labour force and conscription potential for covering the future needs of the armed forces).

In the course of the 20th century, the Czech society underwent many turbulent changes that had an absolutely crucial, revolutionary and probably permanent effect on the nature, age and gender structure as well as ethnic composition of the population of the Czech lands. In particular, the consequences of the two world wars changed and directly determined the demographic behaviour of the society. The year 1989, which brought the end of the long period of Communist government, marked not only the end of one political regime and the transition from totalitarianism to democracy, but it is also a symbolic milestone separating different types of demographic behaviours of the population.

3. General demographic trends after 1989

3.1. Changes in fertility rate

The fall of the Communist regime in November 1989 brought a downright change in political, economic and social conditions, the influence of which was fundamentally reflected in the demographic development of the country. During the 1990s, there was a definite start of the demographic trend that is strongly correlated with the demographic development in Western European states. The new situation was most visible in the birth rate, which not only dropped heavily in comparison with the last two decades of the Communist period, but it has remained at a very low level in the long term as well.

This process had several different reasons: family and children have ceased to be the single meaningful and intimate fulfilment in life – as there appeared a range of alternative possibilities outside the family. People were free to participate in public and political life, to run businesses, travel and study – all of which contributed to the postponing of the starting of the family, especially among younger generations. At the same time, material and social conditions for the establishment and taking care of a family have become worse, while a functional family has ceased to be the priority for the state or for the society. A large family with many children, typical at the beginning of the 20th century, became absolutely rare at the end of the same century, and a family with one or with maximum two children has become the standard. The beginning of the century and to a large extent its entire first half were characterised by a high fertility rate (the sum of 4.0 children per woman in 1910–1911), high proportion of children under the age of 15 in the age structure (34%) and,

the opposite, low proportion of people over 60 (6%) (KUČERA 1996, 314). The second half of the century is marked by a gradual shift toward the intensive type of reproduction, which is characterised by a particularly low fertility rate, longer life expectancy and decreasing share and number of children in the population structure.

The downward trend of the fertility rate can be traced already in the 1980s (the Czech population reached the minimal necessary fertility rate of 2.1 children per woman for the last time in 1980, in the course of the next ten years, fertility rate was at the average value of 1.94) (Indicators 2018). There was a sharp decline in the period after 1989 – the lowest fertility rate was recorded in 1999, when it reached the value of only 1.13 (Český statistický úřad 2017). Since the beginning of the last decade of the last century, the fertility rate has been slightly growing, but it is still far below the values required for at least sustaining the population level – in 2016, it reached the maximum value 1.67. The number of live births in 2016 amounted to 112,663 children (57,837 boys and 54,826 girls) (Zdravotnická ročenka 2017).

A certain “population reserve” is the number of unborn children, in particular, the number of so-called induced abortions (artificial abortions). The aggregate abortion rate, indicating the average number of abortions per woman, provided that the age-specific abortion rates are maintained at the level of the respective year, was 0.51 abortion per woman in 2016. The number of abortions in the Czech Republic is in decline – in 2016, a total of 35.9 thousand abortions were reported (4.0 thousand less than ten years ago), of which 20.4 thousand were artificial abortions (4.9 thousand less than in 2006). This means approximately 32 abortions per one hundred live births. In 1990, 126,055 pregnancies ended with abortion, of which 111,268 were induced abortions (Počet interrupcí 2017).

The share of induced abortions was historically the lowest – 56.8% in 2016; while this number was 63.4% ten years ago. Meanwhile, the amount of spontaneous abortions has increased over the years. In 2016, they accounted for 39.6% of the total number of abortions (and for 33.3% in 2006). In the last four years, their absolute number increased (up to 14,200). The average age of women during abortion has increased over the past ten years by 0.5 year, to 30.5 years in 2016 (Český statistický úřad 2017).

3.2. Transformation of family behaviour

Low fertility rate, insufficient number of live births and growing numbers of spontaneous abortions are also the result of a profound change in the family behaviour. Preferring other priorities to family values, together with the economic and social pressures, led to the postponement of the time of starting the family. The average age of women at the time of the birth of the first child has increased. While at the beginning of the 1990s, the average age of a woman giving birth was less than 25, it is now at the age of 30. The increase of the average age of women giving birth slowed down after 2008; in 2016, the average age of women giving birth stagnated at the value of the previous year (30.0), the same applies to the average age of primiparas (28.2) (Český statistický úřad 2017). The high age of primiparas also biologically limits the possibility of giving birth to more children.

The traditional approach to marriage and formal family ties have also transformed fundamentally. As a result of this, the share of persons with single status grows at

the expense of married couples. Persons living in marriage still represent the largest number, however, their share within the population has dropped below 50% and continues to decrease. The number of new marriages decreased significantly in the 1990s (before, over 90% men and women entered into marriage) and the declining trend prevailed also in the first decade of the new century. In 2016, the first marriage before the age of 50 was concluded by 56.2% of men and 64.3% of women, with the average age of 32.2 and 29.9, respectively. Among the divorced, 40.7% of men and 38.7% of women entered into another marriage. The minimum absolute number of concluded marriages (43.5 thousand) and historically the minimum marriage rate (51.4% among men and 59.0% among women entering into the first marriage) was reached in 2013. According to the latest results (as of 31.12.2016), 48.5% of men and 45.9% of women over 15 were married, while ten years ago these numbers were 53.8% and 50.4%. People living in marriage become a major group at an increasingly higher age. In 2016, this age was as high as 37 among men, compared to 31 ten years ago, and 33 among women, unlike 28 in 2006 (Český statistický úřad 2017). This situation is the result of both, more frequent preference for a free partner coexistence or separate living (*singles*), but also a high divorce rate.

The decline of the traditional family model, based on authority or church approved and permanent tie between a man and a woman, can be demonstrated very clearly on the divorce rate. While in the first half of the 20th century, less than 5% of marriages ended in divorce (KUČERA 1996, 314), currently, the number of divorces is almost tenfold. Since 2001, the divorce rate was at 45–50% of marriages. Marriages often end in divorce after 3 to 6 years of living together. Owing to the lower divorce rate of shorter duration marriages and its increase among marriages lasting 20 years and longer, the average length of marriage at the time of divorce increased from 12.0 to 13.1 between 2006 and 2016 (Český statistický úřad 2017). Therefore, a large part of children grew up and grow up in single-parent families and assume this model of co-existence as normal and easier to follow in an adult age. Despite the state's pro-natalist policies and professed support for families, raising a child in a dominating intensive model of reproduction is rather demanding for economic and social reasons. Especially in single-parent families, where the other partner does not participate, there is a danger of social and economic isolation of the parent who takes care of the child (in particular, in case of the so-called *single mothers*).

3.3. Changes in mortality rate

The gradual improvement of the economic and social conditions, as well as the extensive and long-term access to high quality healthcare have resulted in the gradual increase of life expectancy, as well as the decrease in mortality in all demographic cohorts. Life expectancy was gradually growing already during the 20th century – from about 40 (among men) and 45 (among women) at the beginning of the 20th century up to 74 (among men) or 81 (among women) in 1989 (LUSTIGOVÁ 2006).

In comparison with Western European countries, however, the pace of reducing mortality was slower and the average life expectancy remained shorter. After 1989, there is a further growth to the current 76.2 years among men and 82.1 among women. In the same year, 107.8 thousand deceased persons were registered in the Czech Republic. The longer life

was boosted mostly by the lower mortality rate among the over-75 age group and also among men in the 50–64 age group. Infant mortality rate grew in 2016 by three tenths per mille to 2.8‰, but it still remains one of the lowest in the world (Český statistický úřad 2017).

The most frequent cause of death in the Czech Republic are long-term diseases of the circulatory system; in 2016, they were the cause of death in 40.6% of deceased men and 48.0% of deceased women. The second most frequent cause of death are neoplasms, in the same year causing 28.0% of male and 23.5% of female deaths. There is a remarkable difference between the representation of death with external causes (accidents, suicide, poisoning, etc.) among men and women: among men, they are currently the fourth most frequent cause of death with 6.7% (Český statistický úřad 2017), next to the respiratory system diseases (7.3%), whereas among women they occupy the sixth position with 3.5%, following the respiratory system diseases (5.9%), endocrine, nutrition and metabolism disorders (4.8%), the category including also diabetes mellitus, and diseases of the digestive system (3.7%).

3.4. Demographic ageing

The dramatic changes in the fertility rate, mortality rate and the prolonged life expectancy have led to the ageing of the population. Following Malta and Finland, the Czech Republic is the third among EU member states with the largest population share of people in the over-65 age group (Eurostat 2017). Still in 1989, this age cohort represented approximately 12.5% of the population of the Czech Republic, while currently, it is almost 19% of the population. The age cohort 65+ will reach the largest share around 2059, when their number will reach 34% within the total population (Struktura 2017). The average age of the Czech population is constantly increasing – in 1989, the average age of men and women were 34.4 and 37.8. In 2016, the average age was already significantly higher – 40.6 among men and 43.4 among women (Český statistický úřad 2017).

Thus, there is not only the ageing of the population and the quantitative increase in the number of people in retirement age (65+), but in addition to the above, extending life expectancy. These lead to a longer period, when the oldest population cohorts are dependent on the state pension system. The growing dependence of people in elderly age on the ever-shrinking number of economically active people is not only a serious intergenerational conflict, but also the onset of a fatal economic and social disbalance.

3.5. Changes in the educational structure

Among the Czech society, there is a long-term and traditional respect for education and full literacy has been a matter of course in the Czech lands since the rule of Maria Theresa. However, in the course of the last few decades, there has been a significant change in the attitude to education and the constant expansion of the range of educational activities. Education is no longer considered to be a single and relatively short-term matter of children and adolescents, but today, it is clearly outweighed by the trend of lifelong learning – almost

half of the population continue their education after leaving compulsory schooling (Český statistický úřad 2018).

Also, higher levels of education are becoming accessible to a still greater proportion of the population. While secondary and, in particular, university education was understood as selective, or exclusive and prestigious in the first half of the 20th century, since the middle of the century, the numbers of graduates from secondary schools and universities were gradually growing. In 1950, 83% of the population had only basic education, 9.8% had vocational secondary education, 5.1% had A-level secondary education, and less than 1% held university degrees. In the 1970s and 1980s, the proportion of secondary and tertiary educated population grew significantly, and the trend was also prominent after 1989, with the boom of education of all types, especially at universities. The reform of the education sector that transformed state universities to public and private schools³ and expanding the range of new subjects meant a huge impetus for the increased numbers of graduates. In 1991, the proportion of people with basic education accounted for 33.1% of the population, secondary education with vocational certificate 35.4%, secondary education with A-level exam 22.9%, and university graduates 7.2% of the population. In 2016, the number of people with basic education had the share of only 9% of the population, 35% of people had vocational secondary education, 33% were A-level graduates, and 23% were university degree holders. There is a more prominent trend in the growing numbers of higher levels of education, apparent when examining the younger age cohorts, where the shift is more evident – in the age group of 25–34, both men and women with only basic education account to only 6%, with 32% men and 19% women with vocational secondary education, 37% A-level educated men and women alike, with university educated men accounting for 24% and women for 38% in this age group (České noviny 2017).

Currently, 68 university-level institutions operate in the Czech Republic (2 state, 42 private and 26 public), with approximately 350,000 students. Each year, there are more than 82,000 graduates from the universities. Compared with the beginning of this century, it is a threefold increase. There is also more intensive integration of secondary education finished with A-levels and university education – 9 out of 10 A-level holders apply for university studies and 7 out of 10 complete that (HRONOVÁ 2016). The increase in the proportion of graduates in the higher levels of education has been confronted with the lower numbers of students in recent years. There is a demographic decline, with less pupils and students coming to school than in previous years. In 2017, approximately 118,000 first year pupils entered basic schools, which is approximately 9% less than in the previous year (České noviny 2017). In 2016, 99,610 students started secondary schools (with a total of 424,849 secondary school students), whereas ten years ago there were 140,564 new students (VOJTĚCH–CHAMOUTOVÁ 2018). In the same year, there were 82,021 university applicants, about 90,000 less than in 2010, the year with the highest record of students admitted to universities. The demographic curve is clearly reflected in the forward movement of the younger and less numerous age cohorts through the educational system, in particular, the secondary and tertiary education.

³ Nowadays there are only two state universities in the Czech Republic: The Police Academy and the University of Defence in Brno.

3.6. *The ethnic structure*

In terms of ethnic stratification of the population, the Czech Republic is an extraordinarily homogeneous state. According to the most recent census from 2011, the Czech, Moravian or Silesian ethnicity was reported by almost 95% of the population. The Czech Republic is a true nation state, without major compact minorities on its territory; also, the Czech minorities abroad are entirely marginal. Put simply, the international border of the Czech Republic defines the area on the planet where the Czechs live. In addition to them, there are about 5% of foreigners in the country – today, more than half a million people (BÁČOVÁ 2018). The foreigners are represented mainly by Ukrainians (120,000), Slovaks (113,000), Vietnamese (57,000), Russians (35,000), Germans (21,000) and Poles (20,000).

The census in 1991 was the first that allowed the reporting of the Moravian and Silesian nationalities.⁴ In previous censuses, the Moravian nationality was not recorded separately. The Moravians reached the highest proportion of the total population exactly in 1991 (13.2%), which was caused to some extent by the mediatisation of Moravian national issues. In the census of 2001, their share decreased to 3.7%, in 2011 it raised back to 5%. The highest representation of Moravians was in the South Moravian and Zlín regions. Almost one third of people with Moravian nationality (31.4%) lived in the districts of Brno-město, Brno-venkov and Hodonín. Silesians, just like the Moravians, could first report their nationality in 1991. They also had the highest proportion of the total population in 1991 (0.4%), while the censuses in 2001 and 2011 recorded their share equally at 0.1% of the population. The vast majority of Silesians lived in the Moravian–Silesian region. 60% of the Silesians lived in the Opava and Karviná districts. A high proportion of people reporting these two nationalities in 1991 (together 13.6%) decreased during the next census in 2001 to 3.8% and their share has slightly increased to 5.1% in 2011. Reporting nationality in the 2001 and 2011 censuses was voluntary. While the share of unidentified responses in 2001 was only 1.7%, in 2011, one quarter of respondents (25.3%) did not answer this question. This affects the shares of the other nationalities and thus reduces the comparability of results with the previous censuses (KRAUSOVÁ 2014).

In 2011, the Roma nationality was reported by five thousand people, amounting to less than 0.1% of the population. In comparison with 2001, the number decreased by 50%, but there was a higher number in the category combining the Czech and Roma nationalities, which was reported by almost 7 thousand more people than in 2001; (in 2011 it had 0.1% share within the population). However, the experts view these data to be underestimated.

The national structure of the population of the Czech Republic is influenced also by foreigners who were included in the total population. Compared to the previous censuses, the census in 2011 included all who had a regular residence on the territory of the Czech Republic or who fulfilled or intended to fulfil the conditions of actually living in the country for at least one year.

⁴ People reporting Czech, Moravian or Silesian ethnicity speak an identical language and there are no ethnic, cultural, religious or other differences among them. The decision to report the Moravian or Silesian ethnicity could be the result of patriotism – in the past, Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia were administratively divided and underwent a partly different historical development. In everyday and political life of the country the specified partitioning does not play any role.

The largest traditional national minority were the Slovaks in the post-war period. This is the result of the historical development, because Slovakia (whose residents have Slovak nationality as the dominant one) was part of the joint Czechoslovak state between 1918–1939 and between 1945–1992. After the separation in 1993, the number of people living in the Czech Republic and reporting Slovak nationality temporarily and substantially dropped, but in the past 15 years, a rapid and continuous growth in the number of Slovaks living in the Czech Republic can be traced.

The Polish national minority was the second largest until 2001. It is also traditional on the territory of the Czech Republic. The biggest concentration of Poles was in the Moravian–Silesian region, which corresponds to the historical Těšín territory, inhabited by the Poles already since the 13th century, and it is also an industrial area offering jobs. However, the number of Poles has been decreasing and since 2011 they are the third largest ethnic minority behind the Ukrainians and Slovaks.

The German national minority is also historically linked to the territory of the Czech Republic. Until the post-war expulsion, 30% of the population was German. Afterwards, their share dropped dramatically and this trend continued further. The reduction in the number of persons with German nationality occurred because of their adverse age structure, but probably also due to the assimilation of the younger age groups. They had the highest representation in the area in the north-west, near the border with Germany (Karlovy Vary and Ústí nad Labem regions), which formed an important part of Sudety.

The Ukrainian national minority recorded a significant increase after 1989. It is closely connected with the development of labour migration of the Ukrainians. As compared to 1991, when their number was around 8 thousand, in the census of 2011, their number was more than six times higher, and the share of 0.1% in 1991 rose to 0.5% of the population in 2011. The highest concentration of Ukrainians was in Prague and the Central Bohemian region.⁵

The Vietnamese national minority recorded a similar increase to the Ukrainian minority after 1989 and it is also associated with labour migration. Although the Vietnamese were on the territory of the Czech Republic since the 1970s, they started to report the Vietnamese nationality increasingly since the census in 2001. Their share within the total population in 2001 was 0.2%, and it rose to 0.3% in 2011. The highest concentration of the Vietnamese was in Prague, followed by the Ústí nad Labem and Karlovy Vary regions.

The Russian national minority has been steadily increasing since 1989. In 1991 and 2001, the Russians had the share of 0.1% of the population (but their total number increased from 5,000 to 12,000); in 2011, their share reached 0.2% with almost 18 thousand people. The history of Russians in the Czech Republic is also long: the first wave of migrants came already in the 1920s and 1930s, but their number decreased significantly after 1945. The second wave of migrants came after 1989. The reasons for migration were mostly political-economic. The highest concentration of Russians was in Prague (KRAUSOVÁ 2014).

⁵ More detail in the section on legal migration into the Czech Republic.

4. Population outlooks, forecasts and state reaction

The development of the population of the Czech Republic has been fundamentally affected by the already mentioned trends, of which the process of population ageing is undoubtedly the most important. Despite the currently and momentarily favourable development owing to the generation of the so-called *Husák's children* from the baby boom of the 1970s having their own children, the return to a strong trend of depopulation can be expected in a short time. According to forecasts, the Czech Republic could expect a real population decline in the coming years, even despite the slight but continuous growth in immigration.

According to the forecasts, the total number of the population will decrease to 9.8 million by 2050, whereas the number of elderly people will double compared to the current situation. The number of people in the over-65 age group is estimated to reach almost 3.2 million, which would represent nearly one third of all people living in the Czech Republic. At the same time, by 2050, the number of people over 85 will grow more than three times to 0.6 million, which will represent approximately 6% of the population (Struktura 2017). The most significant decrease in population is expected to take place between 2050–2080. By the end of the century, the number of the population is expected to drop to 9.083 or even as little as 6.095 million people, with more than 1/3 of the population in the over-65 age group and only approximately 13% of the population younger than 15. Opposing trends in the size of the junior and senior components of population result in a higher ageing index, which describes the relation between the two groups. Thus, the ageing index will continue to grow significantly in the future. It will culminate in 2063, when the ratio of 100 children per 277 elderly people is expected. The situation of the elderly outnumbering the children 2.5 times should last for the entire second half of the century (ŠTYGLEROVÁ et al.[s. a.]).

The dynamics and potential severity of the ageing, as well as its social, economic and security aspects, attracted the attention of the political domain already at the end of the last century. The response included the gradual adoption of some pro-natalist measures and implementation of measures in young families support, as well as starting a public and political debate about the problem of the ageing or immigration. However, it is a fact that there was no real and substantial transformation in this area.

The key strategic document at the state level in this area is the Concept of Family Policy, adopted by the government in 2017, which builds on earlier similar documents of previous governments. Its implementation manages, to a certain extent, to improve conditions, in particular, for young families with children, but also to prepare measures to manage the care of the coming and growing demographic cohort of elderly people. There have been significant legislative changes, extending the competences of municipalities and non-state subjects, which become more involved in the system. At the same time, there is an increase in funds from the state budget for the development of institutions of social and health care or education as well as direct or indirect financial and social support for population groups in need. Measures have been implemented in the area of pre-school care (allowing for the introduction of the so-called child groups as alternatives to kindergartens – 4,000 new places, guarantee of places in kindergartens for children older than 2 years, compulsory kindergarten attendance for the last year of the pre-school age, etc.). Financial support for families has increased (higher childcare tax relief – approximately €570 per year for

the first child, €720 per year for the second child and €900 per year for the third and each additional child), introduction and financing of paternity leave after birth, higher birth allowance (€480 for the first child, €370 for the second child), introduction of the so-called kindergarten allowance (tax relief for a child in a pre-school facility), faster reception of the parental allowance – a parent is entitled to €8,200 to be paid progressively for up to 4 years of available maternity leave period. If she decides for a shorter period of maternity leave, e.g. because of an early return to work, she can receive up to €1,360 per month. There is also direct financial support for low-income families and those who are at risk of income poverty due to the birth of a child – currently, contributions for 547,000 children are paid, with the amount between €30 to 281 per child each month. There were also changes in the areas of health insurance and social security, which now includes a wide range of care for children and the elderly, as well as extended direct financial support for families and persons taking care of the elderly (long-term care allowance – the highest labour protection comparable to maternity leave) (Koncepce rodinné politiky 2017).

The areas which are still considered to be a priority also include modifications on the labour market to allow for coordination of family and working life (preference of part-time work, flexible working time, etc.) and support for housing for low income groups of the population (first flats, social housing). Despite the apparent progress, there is still a lot of room for improvement in these areas, requiring a huge amount of investment and political will.

The fear of high financial costs and strong political sensitivity are also reasons why despite the clear need, the major steps toward a radical reform of the pension system have not been adopted. The present continuous system is unsustainable in the long term, but its modification, which would reduce the pension burden from the national budget and at the same time required people to save individually or otherwise contribute to their retirement benefits, is extremely unpopular. In 2013, the government adopted a reform that consisted in the introduction of the so-called three pillars of the pension scheme, or three parallel sources of retirement pension. The state budget, i.e. the funds of the current pension account remained as the first source. The newly established second source consisted in a selected commercial pension fund, where the citizens deposited part of their wages. Participation in this scheme was voluntary, but once someone opted so, it would become a permanent commitment. The fund managed the deposits and appreciated their value. The pension from the second pillar was based primarily on the merit. The third pillar represented investments and savings of the citizen, especially in commercial and voluntary supplementary pension schemes. Voluntary saving schemes are financially supported in the Czech Republic – whether by a state contribution or reducing the tax base by the amount paid to the supplementary pension scheme. However, this reform became politically unpopular, as, according to the critics, it introduced income inequalities among the future pensioners, and the new government, coming to office in 2014, abolished the scheme at the end of 2015. Only the first and third pillars remained, with the pension system based on a continuous funding from the state budget practically unchanged. Approximately 60% of the economically active people maintain reserves for their pension in estimate, but the total number of participants of pension schemes have decreased significantly (from 5,078,835 in 2013 to 3,690,476 in 2017); at the same time, the amount of regular deposit is insufficient (Ekonomika ČNB 2018).

5. Migration trends: Perceptions and responses

In the first third of the 20th century, Czech people left the country especially for economic reasons, in other decades the reasons were mainly political. The second world war brought massive ethnic cleansing and movements of the population that took place in the territory of the Czech lands. The result is almost a monolithic ethnic structure of the Czech Republic, which was and still is to a considerable extent a true nation state not only in the political sense, but also in ethnic terms. For most of the second half of the 20th century, the Czech society lacked opportunities of normal contact and communication even with the closest neighbours due to the nature of the ruling communist regime. Also, the failure or practical absence of policies dealing with the integration of the Roma people, coming to the Czech Republic in the second half of the century, helped to develop prejudices against other ethnicities. It can be said that several generations grew up without the possibility of intense direct contact and unmediated experience with foreigners or other nationalities. The absence of this experience may also contribute to the sensitive perception on the subject of modern migration, which is very intensively viewed by the Czech public and some political groups and it has been turned into a security issue.

5.1. Legal migration

Only after 1989, when the opening of the borders brought unprecedented opportunities for free travelling, studying and working abroad, there was a confrontation with foreign nations, ethnicities and cultures. Also, the Czech Republic opened to foreigners who increasingly visit the country not only as tourists, but still more often in order to work, study or pursue the prospects of a long-term stay or permanent residence. The number of foreigners with permitted residence has increased from 35,198 in 1990 (*Vývoj počtu cizinců a jejich zastoupení podle státních občanství 2010*) to as many as 535,970 in 2018 (*Cizinci s povoleným pobytem 2018*).

In terms of legal migration, those coming from Ukraine and Slovakia hold dominant positions. The formers are motivated predominantly economically (even though the number of students is also growing) – these migrants come to the Czech Republic, in particular, in search of employment. They are employed, usually in low skilled jobs in construction, agriculture, selected services, but sometime they also perform jobs of medium qualified sectors, e.g. in health care. The number of immigrants from Ukraine currently amounts to more than 120,000 people (36,570 with temporary residence permit, 83,861 with permanent residence) (*Cizinci s povoleným pobytem 2018*). This number is likely far from being final because of the lack of labour force in the labour market in the Czech Republic and growing demand for workers from abroad, as well as the enormous interest of Ukrainians in working in the Czech Republic – the number of their applications for employee cards is increasing. Since 2016, the quota provided by the Czech Government for the acceptance of applications of Ukrainians increased from 170 to 1,000 per month. In addition, based on the pressure of the Czech businesses, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established the Ukraine Project, which enables Czech employers to look for their future workers directly in Ukraine. They then have the opportunity to obtain permit in an accelerated procedure. In the last two years,

there were a total of 10,104 applicants within the project. Originally, the intention was to bring 3,800 Ukrainians to the Czech Republic each year.

The second place in terms of the number of immigrants is occupied by the Slovaks, who come to the Czech Republic both for working and studying. After the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, many Slovaks returned to Slovakia and their number in the country dropped, but since the beginning of the last decade, a continuous and very strong flow of immigrants from the Slovak Republic has been recorded. The current number of Slovaks in the Czech Republic amounts to 113,000 persons (64,855 with a temporary stay and 48,322 permanent residents). A large proportion of them are university students and the age and educational structure differs significantly from the immigrants from Ukraine or other countries. From the Slovak perspective, the situation can be even described as a brain drain.

In total, there are 43,622 foreign students at Czech universities (14% of all students), about half of them being citizens of the Slovak Republic. This means more than 22,500 students (cf. only 3,700 students in 2000). The best students of the Slovak schools go to the Czech Republic – 70% of the secondary school leaving elite continue their studies at universities in the Czech Republic (elite = best 10% among the secondary school students). After finishing their university studies, half of the Slovak students remain in the Czech Republic where they get their first job opportunities and establish families. The situation is similar for the doctoral level: 34% of the Slovak candidates want to stay in the Czech Republic, others plan to go elsewhere into the world, only 6% want to return to Slovakia. The reasons for the attractiveness of the Czech education system for young Slovaks, in particular, include the language proximity, the higher quality of education and the fact that the system is free (99.5% of Slovaks do not pay for the study) (FISCHER–LIPOVSKÁ 2015).

The expenses of the Czech state for one Slovak student amount to €2,680–3,160 per year (cost of study, accommodation and food, etc.), on the other hand, the yearly benefit for the Czech Republic from one Slovak student is between €3,240–8,800, in sum, more than €24,000,000 each year (HRONOVÁ 2015). The migration of the Slovak elites has a significantly positive demographic and economic impact on the Czech Republic, which gains highly skilled and young people. Today, the Slovaks in the Czech Republic are younger and more educated in average than the majority of the Czech society. Slovaks constitute also the most dynamically growing ethnic minority – their number has increased from around 20,000 to more than 110,000 in just 15 years.

5.2. *Illegal migration*

In terms of illegal migration (and, in particular, in comparison with the countries of Western Europe), the Czech Republic is not seen as an attractive destination country. Even the migrant and refugee crisis in 2015–2016 did not hit the Czech Republic to a major extent; since it was not and is not an important transit country (CHOVANEC 2016), despite being the neighbour of the main European destination country – the Federal Republic of Germany.

Foreigners residing illegally on the territory of the Czech Republic can be divided into three categories. The first group consists of the so-called migrants in transit who move through the Czech territory, primarily towards Germany. The number of persons in this category is declining. In 2017, the Alien Police arrested 172 migrants in transit in total,

whereas in 2016 this number was 511 and at the time of the peak of the crisis in 2015, they were as many as 2,294. This category includes mainly citizens from Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq.

The second group of foreigners with illegal status are those who typically entered the Czech territory legally but exceeded the permitted period of residence, thus, their stay has become illegal. There were 4,316 of such persons found in 2017. Most frequently the illegal residences were detected among the nationals of Ukraine (34%), Russia (7%) and Vietnam (7%). Most of these foreigners were discovered in the capital (40%), at international airports (20%) and in the territories of the Ústí nad Labem (8%) and South Moravian (7%) regions.

The third category of illegal migrants consists of the foreigners detected when illegally crossing the external Schengen borders (at international airports). In 2017, there were 250 of them. This category is dominated by the nationals of Albania. The total number of illegal migrants in the territory of the Czech Republic in 2017 was 4,738 in total, the sum of the above mentioned categories. Compared to the previous year, there is a slight decrease in this number by almost 10% (or 523 persons).

The area in which a significant increase was identified in 2017, is the illegal employment, or illegal work performed by the foreigners. This trend had a strong impact on the number of decisions on the administrative expulsion. This was issued in 2017 by the authorities for 5,119 persons, and in 3,111 (60%) cases the reason was illegal employment. This is a 100% increase compared to 2016. The largest groups of foreigners in this respect are the citizens of Ukraine (84%) and Moldova (15%) and it can be expected that this trend will continue, owing to the introduction of a visa-free regime for the citizens of Ukraine (in June 2017) (RENDLOVÁ 2018).

5.3. Asylum seekers

The Czech Republic is a stable, secure and economically attractive country and may provide temporary protection or political asylum also to those persons who appeared illegally in its territory. However, the numbers of asylum seekers are generally very low (28 asylum applications per one million inhabitants, while the European average is 702 applications) (ČT24 2017). The key condition for granting an asylum is a proof of the reasons for providing the protection and the information of asylum applicants subsequently investigated in the country of origin of the applicant. This is the reason for a relatively long process of the asylum procedure and also a very low success rate from the perspective of the applicants. In the last ten years (2007–2017), asylum was granted to only 1,134 persons (Azyl udělen podle let [2007–2017] 2018).

During the 1990s, many asylum seekers, especially citizens of the former Yugoslavia, applied for asylum and received most often the so-called temporary refuge, allowing them to remain for the duration of the conflict. Afterwards, most of the refugees returned to their home country (for example, 903 people returned to Kosovo out of the total of 1,034 with a temporary refuge in the Czech Republic). Higher numbers of applicants from other countries appeared in 1998, 1999 and 2000, when more than 4,000 persons from Afghanistan applied for asylum in the Czech Republic; and in total 57 applicants were

granted asylum. The most significant number of applicants from a single geographical location appeared between 2003 and 2004, when 15,856 persons from the Caucasus asked for protection. Asylum was granted only in 1–2% of the cases (Migrace v číslech 2018).

The annual numbers of applications for international protection in the Czech Republic are generally low – maximum between 1,000 and 2,000 applications per year. The exception was the period at the turn of the millennium, and quite extraordinary was the year 2001, when there were 18,094 applications for asylum. This number was further decreasing and since 2007, it is around 1,500 applications per year. Even in 2015, when Europe was facing the migrant and refugee crisis, this problem did not appear in the number and composition of asylum seekers in the Czech Republic – there were a total of 1,525 applications, with the most prominently represented nationals of Ukraine (694), Syria (134), Cuba (128), Vietnam (81), Armenia (44), Russia (43), China (40) and Iraq (38) (ČR 2016).

The most recent figures from 2017 do not represent a radical change. There were 1,450 asylum applications in total (out of which 308 repeated), most of them, again, from Ukraine (435), Armenia (129), Georgia (129), Azerbaijan (127), Vietnam (82), Cuba (68) and Russia (57). Generally, it is possible to say that in the long term the group of asylum applicants includes the largest numbers of those originating from the countries of the former Soviet Union (in particular, Ukraine), as well as Vietnam and Cuba. The numbers of applicants from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan or from African countries are relatively low (RENDLOVÁ 2018).

Despite these numbers, the Czech Republic recognises the growing numbers of international migrants and the fact that migration becomes an important pan-European social, economic, cultural and security challenge. The highest-level strategic document of the Czech Republic, the Security Strategy of the Czech Republic, adopted by the government in 2015, pays significant attention to migration and its negative aspects (Bezpečnostní strategie České republiky 2015). The concerns include both the possibility of massive and uncontrolled migration into Europe including the Czech Republic and the possibility of insufficient integration of the coming foreigners. The same concerns are accentuated by the adopted National Security Audit from 2016 (Audit národní bezpečnosti 2016). The increasing economic and security importance of migration was reflected by the government by adopting the new Strategy on Migration Policy of the Czech Republic in July 2015. The strategy sets out seven principles, sorted in order of priority, that represent fundamental subjects in the area of migration – security as an all-embracing element, integration of foreigners, illegal migration and return policy, international protection (asylum), external dimension of migration, legal migration, free movement of persons within the European Union and the Schengen area, as well as coordinating the common policies of the European Union. The principles are further elaborated in the text following up on the set targets, which the government seeks to achieve in the area of migration at the national and European level (Strategie migrační politiky České republiky 2015).

5.4. The securitisation of migration

The increasing numbers of foreigners arouse emotions within the Czech public. The majority of respondents in public opinion polls declare negative attitudes towards foreigners and 58% of the respondents consider foreigners as a problem for the Czech Republic. There are concerns of

increased crime rates, spreading of diseases, newcomers abusing the social system, increased competition in the labour market, etc. (SAV 2018). The attitudes are even more negative towards the refugees (asylum seekers). The majority of respondents (69%) hold the opinion that the Czech Republic should not receive refugees at all, a quarter (25%) of them approve their temporary admission until they are able to return to their country of origin, and only 2% of the respondents believe that the Czech Republic should accept refugees and allow them to settle in the country (CVVM 2018).

The refugees are not perceived as people in distress, rather, as a security threat, in particular those coming from Muslim countries and Africa. There are apparent concerns of deterioration in the security situation and the dominant issue is associating the refugee problem with Islamic extremism and terrorism. Public opinion polls report only a low percentage of respondents with unclear opinion on immigration – this indicates that the issue attracts strong public interest, with a relatively stable (and predominantly negative) position. It is characterised by a rigid refusal of any immigrant, regardless of their origin and the cause of their departure (a mostly negative attitude also applies to migrants from Ukraine, even if there is a slightly more tolerance towards this group). It can be assumed that migration is securitised, i.e. interpreted as a security threat by the media (NEUMANN 2015), certain political forces, the president of the country, or other persons who have sufficient authority and possibilities to influence public opinion (TKACZYK–MACEK 2015). Based on empirical data from public opinion polls, it seems that the negative interpretation of migration is accepted by a significant majority of the Czech society, which feels threatened by immigration and requires strong, fast, simple and forceful or restrictive measures by the state or anyone who answers these concerns with their political offer. It is no coincidence that the parliamentary elections in October 2017 represented a major success of the anti-immigration Freedom and Direct Democracy party with 10.64% of votes and the winning of 22 seats (out of 200). This was the first time in the modern history of the Czech Republic when a primarily anti-immigration party entered into the Parliament, recording such a dramatic electoral success. The subject of migration was also strongly present even in the direct presidential election in early 2018, when especially in the second round, the incumbent and subsequent tight winner Miloš Zeman (51.36% of votes) was referring to his challenger Jiří Drahoš (48.63%) as the one who welcomes migrants.

6. Conclusion

The Czech Republic is undergoing a dramatic demographic change that will have long-term and major implications for the social, economic and security dimensions. In the course of the 20th century, the population gradually abandoned the extensive type of reproductive behaviour and this trend was definitively strengthened after the establishment of qualitatively different conditions after 1989. The result is a situation, in which the Czech society is ageing and faces the frightening prospect of depopulation. At the same time, it fluctuates between the fears of migration pressures and the need to secure sufficient available and skilled workforce for the current and future labour market. And as there is still insufficient political will to prepare for the consequences of the deep demographic changes on time in the coming decades, we can expect distortion of social cohesion and solidarity among generations, the collapse of the social system in its current form, the impoverishment of the state and

society, increasing pressure on the redistribution of limited resources of the state in favour of social agendas, and lack of personnel for the operation of the state, including the armed and security forces.

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