

REFUGEES, IMMIGRANTS, AND THEIR CHILDREN IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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Problems of migration are very relevant for all the states in the EU, as well as for the whole world. At the end of December 2006 there were 323 343 foreigners with permanent and long term residence in the Czech Republic. The most frequent five nationalities of these foreigners were the following (number of foreigners): Ukrainian (102 594); Slovak (58 384); Vietnamese (40 799); Polish (18 894); Russian (18 564), and others (82 221). Foreigners with permanent and long term residents represent about 2,3% of inhabitants of the Czech Republic. Above mentioned nationalities show, how multifarious is the composition of inhabitants in this post-communist state and how important is the endeavour to provide successful integration.

This presentation will inform about legal and social system concerning asylum seekers, recognized refugees and immigrants, and their children in the Czech Republic.

SOCIAL WORK AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

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From a historical point of view it has been necessary for different groups of citizens to fight for or to demand their rights or equal opportunities, as it has not happened voluntarily. It has always been not easy to get equal opportunities depending on which community/country it has been. However, equal opportunities can not be discussed without issues of gender and ethnicity. Sometimes it is also related to sexuality, culture, and religion as important factors. There are many examples of that in history, for example, women's fight for equal opportunities, civil rights' movements in USA, apartheid in South Africa, etc.

The International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of Schools of Social Work made a declaration of ethical principles which can be used in social work to support the claim for equal opportunities. Equal opportunities can also be given or gained through other means, as mentioned below.

The Danish welfare state is under pressure in those days and several changes have already been introduced there, which have influenced the principle of equal opportunities in social work, and there might come more in the future. There are different ways to draw attention to and to reach equal opportunities. The different approaches have their benefits and disadvantages.

In Denmark, awareness about equal opportunities exists for a long period already, and it has been given through legislation, but there are still problems for certain groups in the society, for example, the socially marginalized groups. In 2002, the Government established The National Council for Socially Marginalized People as a way to give a voice for those people. The work-shop will enlighten the work of the Council and the process of gaining equal opportunities.

Equal opportunities can also come through service users who speak from their own experiences through cooperative societies in order to reach the political system, for example, unions of people with mental illness, of homeless people, etc.

Mobilization through the population organized by organisations, students, labour unions, etc. can be another way to speak for rights and equal opportunities. This will be illustrated by the campaign initiated by the Danish branch of ICSW. The campaign ran for almost 2 years under the headline of “Let us create a socially decent Denmark for all of us“.

**TOWARDS EMPOWERING PRACTICE OF SOCIAL WORK:
ACTIVATION AND SUPPORT OF EMPLOYMENT AS A PRACTICE
OF SOCIAL WORK IN THE MUNICIPALITIES**

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The aim of the study was to analyse how the development of activation and employment support services for long term unemployed and for persons with disabilities has affected social work practices in the municipalities in Finland. The data consists of interviews and training materials collected in 2003–2004 in the Helsinki region.

The theoretical framework of the study relies on the conceptual discussion on empowerment, social work, and rehabilitation in Finland in the beginning of the 2000's. The social work practice descriptions and evaluations of the interviewed are compared to the good practices of activation and social work described in the literature and in the relevant research and development projects. The implications and stipulations on customer-oriented practices in the municipalities of the new workfare paradigm of social policy are being evaluated, as well.

As a member of a multidisciplinary team, social worker brings comprehensiveness and larger societal views to the problems of employment and disability. Social worker's views and practices concentrate on the barriers of employment and aim at overcoming them. Assessment of the life situations of the clients, case management, counselling of long processes, and securing the rights of the clients is the core content of empowering social work practices.

Empowering social work practices in the municipality social welfare services were previously coincidental. The change has been rapid and thorough in the beginning of 2000's, and it has brought new perspectives to the aims and practices of the client work, and the network of cooperation has broadened and become closer. The multisectoral cooperation in activation, employment and vocational rehabilitation services is considered to be primarily well functioning and effective. However, the encounter of varying work cultures, practices, values, and service models has brought about contradictions, as well.

At the present moment there is a continuous re-organizing process of client work and work organizations in the municipalities. During the last two years numerous joint employment service centres have been established, primarily in urban areas, in co-operation with employment, social welfare, health care, and social insurance authorities. This development is changing the local service cultures from sectoral approach towards close partnership and comprehensiveness in client work.

Various stipulations and mechanisms are endangering the establishment of empowering social work practices in the municipal social welfare services. The high turnover of workers, recruitment problems, case load, and introduction of new tasks and responsibilities also hamper the establishment of the new practices. The conditions of social work have become unstable.