

Jiří Málek

CV: Jiří Málek graduated from The Institute of Chemical Technology in Prague. He was active in the youth movement and in the Communist Party and was in charge of education, universities, and academic science for the municipality of Prague. After 1990 he was active in private business and then in the Party of Democratic Socialism. He is a chairman of the managing board of the Society for European Dialogue (SPED) member of the transform! europe Managing Board.

Main points for the presentation on MIGRATION, Prague 30.11.2015

I would like to concentrate my presentation on just few aspects of the discussed topic, the ones I tend to consider in some ways to be specific for Czechia.

An initial review of the migration-related situation in Czechia and the status of foreigners in the country.

There are several perceptions of the current migration situation in Czechia. One of them is that Czechs do not like the idea of having lots of foreigners living among them, that they are in general not found of migrants and are reluctant to continue accepting new incomers. The reality is somewhat different. For example, a visitor to one of the large shopping malls in Prague would almost certainly notice that he/she is served frequently by foreigner workers, primarily by the economic migrants from the CEE region. This insight actually reflects the Czech reality. The facts and numbers are telling a similar story:

| | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Czechia | | |
| inhabitants – by 2014 | | 10 538 000 |
| Foreigners in total | | 449,3 000 |
| Incl. | Ukrainian | 120 000 †) |
| | Vietnamese | 60 000 |
| | Russians | 35 000 |
| | U.S. citizen | 7 000 |

†) certain estimations state that a similar number of Ukrainians are living in Czechia illegally, for example by extending their stay beyond the validity of their entry permits.

Tab. 1

Foreigners

| Datum Date | Celkem Total | Muži Males | Ženy Females | Nezjištěno (pohlaví) Not identified (sex) | Trvalý pobyt Permanent stay | Ostatní typy pobytu Other types of stay | Ukrajina Ukraine | Slovensko Slovakia | Vietna m Viet Nam | Rusko Russia n Federa tion | Německo Germany | Polsko Poland | Ostatní Other |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|---|-----------------------------------|--|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|--|--------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 30.9.2015 | 461 880 | 260 847 | 201 033 | | 258 813 | 203 067 | 105 153 | 100 241 | 56 659 | 34 757 | 20 315 | 19 738 | 125 017 |

31.12.2013

| Státní občanství | Celkem Total | z toho ženy Females | % žen Females (%) | Pobyt nad 12 měsíců Residence permits over 12 months | z toho ženy Females | z toho trvalý pobyt Permanent residence | z toho ženy Females | Azyl Asylum | z toho ženy Female s | Víza nad 90 dní Over 90- days visa | z toho ženy Females | Citizens hip |
|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|---|---------------------------|--|---------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|--|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Celkem cizinci | 441 536 | 191 621 | 43,40 | 431 000 | 186 335 | 236 557 | 111 844 | 2 347 | 958 | 8 189 | 4 328 | Foreigners, total |
| Celkem EU 28 | 173 593 | 68 603 | 39,52 | 173 593 | 68 603 | 68 103 | 33 025 | - | - | - | - | EU28, total |

In total in Czechia do live 461880 foreigners belonging to appr. 50 nationalities. This proves wrong the allegation that Czech society is ethnically homogenous, contains a really small number of foreigners and displays the signs of xenophobia.

The situation in Prague is particularly interesting since this city has a significantly higher share of foreigners in comparison to the country in total. In fact, while in the whole country the share of foreigners reaches 5 %, 36 % of them do actually live in Prague making up to 13 % of the city-dwellers. Some city districts displays even sharper picture. For example, foreigners make 20 % of the registered inhabitants of Prague city center.

In a long-term prospective the co-existence of foreigners in Czechia never seemed to pose any sort of a serious problem. Naturally, in comparison to Prague the share of foreigners living in villages and towns is substantially lower (so-called ethnic and national „purity“). But this is caused primarily by such economic reasons as employment opportunities, cost of rent and price of properties. On the other hand the realities of, for example, Central Bohemian region show that the retail service in basic food items and wares is reaching the inhabitants of the small villages only thanks to our compatriots of Vietnamese origin who operate the local convenience stores.

In summary, the Czech migration reality is far more complex and diverse then it may happen to seem from remote. And it is by no means worse than in most of Europe.

The situation in Central Europe and in Czechia in particular is certainly influenced by historical circumstances of the social developments. Hence I would like to open a second part of my presentation by referring to Tony Judt, a British historian and intellectual who has once said: „ How much of historical alphabetism may be squeezed into one analogy“. And to react this way to an argument that is quite frequently used while the approach of central- and eastern European states toward current immigration wave is being discussed. The argument of reminding the citizen of this region about the help that was provided by the western societies to the eastern-european emigrants in 1956 and 1968 – the help that these countries shall be thankful for. I prefer not to speak for my Hungarian friends and will address the facts and numbers for the Czech/Czechoslovakian emigration history.

The entire emigration from Czechoslovakia in the period 1948-1989 reached 250 thousand people. Approximately 80 thousand of them left their country in the years 1968-1969, another 140 – 150 thousand in the next 20 years (1969-1989). The specifics of the 1968-1969 emigration stream was that a large part of it was made up by children (24 %) and young people (41 %). The social structure of those who had departed was quite mixed- there have been the real and potential victims of the regime as well as people who lost their faith in the ideas of socialism due to the intervention of the Warsaw Pact countries, pure economic migrants as well as intellectuals. Most of them originated from big cities- primarily Prague and Bratislava. There have been also the ones who had been forcefully deported in mid- 70s for their

opposition to the regime of “normalization”. This group included the intellectuals, left-wingers, writers, artists and performers, dissidents etc. There has been also a target immigration of people of certain nationalities (Jews) who left their motherlands for the large variety of reasons.

On the other hand, in Czechoslovakia used to be approximately half of a million people that have been expelled from Communist party and had all reasons to expect some sorts of persecution or at least worsening of their social, economic or political status. But these ones have emigrated only in small numbers, many of them returned back to the communist movement after 1989.

Therefore, the argument that the former assistance of West-Europeans demands from Czechs the reciprocal approach towards current migrants does not seem to be very convincing.

The attitude of Czechoslovak society towards the emigration of 1969-1989 was not uniform at all. Quite significant part of the society was not hostile to the ideas of socialism (more than 10 % of the adult population held membership in the Communist party) and felt no sympathies to their departing compatriots. Even the dissident movement was and still is split in its attitude toward the post-August emigration wave. “Emigration-68” became a part of the Cold war confrontation. The ones who departed had to pass all sorts of mandatory filters that had been put in place for all incomers to the “free world” by CIA and their counterparts. The new immigrants were required to furnish the detailed information about themselves and their former surroundings. These files served as an important source of intelligence information. The emigrants have been made subject to the program of their re-allocation to the host countries, some of them had to wait for it obediently in the refugee camps (for example, Treiskirchen) for more than a year. This was a “golden era” of secret services on both sides of the “Iron curtain” who took advantage of the large migration flows by actively recruiting and implanting the agents wherever possible. It is very naïve to assume that nowadays something would be different and the management of secret services of all sorts will miss the opportunity of implanting their agents through the widely-opened European doorways.

Our historical recourse would not be complete without addressing the emigration flows of 1938-1939. It consisted mostly of the young men who departed in order to fight against Nazism leaving their families behind in a complete uncertainty. Poland and France accepted these young Czechoslovaks rather coldly in a fear of spoiling the relations with Hitler. French authorities enrolled them into the Foreign Legion and sent to pacify the colonies, recalling them to the defense of France only when things turned sour. In Poland and then in the USSR these Czechoslovaks first passed the hardships of concentration camps before being enlisted to the fight, the fight that eternally has inscribed their names to the history of the Czechoslovak and European Resistance to the Nazism. Therefore it is very difficult to explain nowadays to the Czech people how come so many young Syrians immigrate leaving their families to the IS atrocities without an attempt of giving it a fight.

I would also like to mention the Greek migration in the 50’s when Czechoslovakia has hosted 12-13 thousand Greeks including many orphans fleeing the civil war in their country. Our country served up to the mid-60s as a home for a large Spanish community that has fled the Franco regime. These have been mostly the members of the left-wing parties who grouped around Dolores Ibarruri a S. Carrillo. Starting from 60’s there has been an inflow of Vietnamese students; some of them had decided to stay thus creating a nucleus of the Czech Vietnamese community. After 1989 Czechia has hosted around 30 thousand refugees from former Yugoslavia who have received a warm treatment and sympathy.

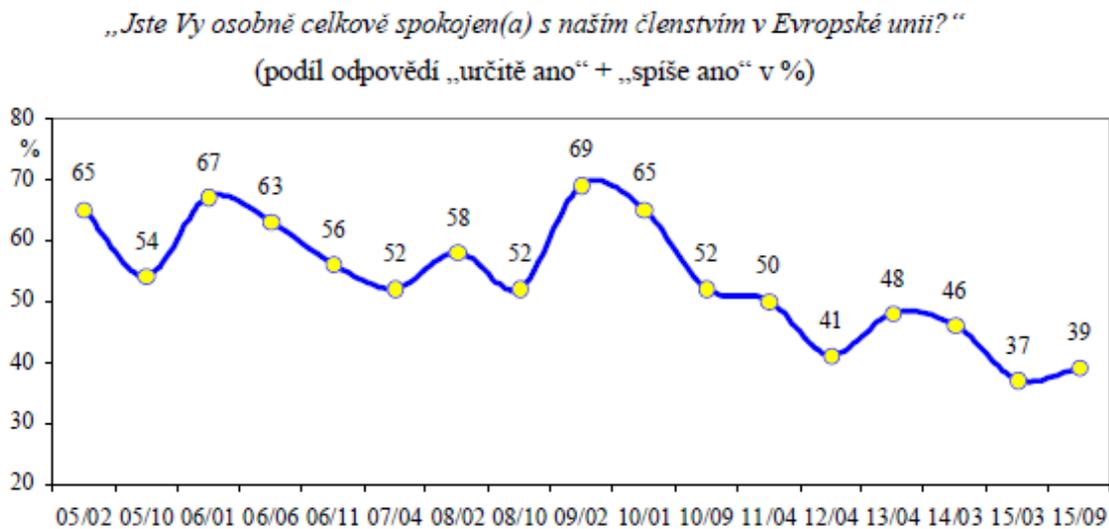
The third part of my presentation is related to the certain aspects of the current migration and attitude of the Czech left-wing movement toward it. The main idea shared by the significant part of Czech left was articulated by Václav Bělohradský, a left-wing sociologist and philosopher, former emigrant and currently a professor at the Italian University in Trieste. He said: “It is a moral duty of Europeans to help the refugees since it was actually us who have caused their suffering first by colonialism and then by *maidanisation of the international politics* that has undermined the states of the Middle East. The solution to this crisis shall be not the integration of millions of stateless people to the European countries but the definite ceasing of

the bloody period of maidanism and euro-american foreign policy engineering". Here there is a need to define what the term "maidanism" stands for. This is defined as "irresponsible euro-centrist distortion of historical context of states whose political systems are assaulted by the West. The activists of maidanism use their positions and influence in the societies for spreading the simplified view on the processes of creation, evolution and ceasing of political regimes". According to V. Bělohradský "Maidanism primarily defines the notion of democracy as the street-expressed "will of the people" that legitimates the intervention of the West as well as severely undermines the historical circumstances of the creation and functioning of democratic regimes". And this is the very point that can help to find the understanding of the problems we are currently facing. One of the consequences is "an unstoppable degradation of the leftist movement as well as of any other ideological alternative to the existing "status quo" (a neo-liberal concept of capitalist globalization), an increasing incapability of taking lessons from the occurring crises that are considered to be important sources of information. The lessons from crises are wasted; their potential of causing the necessary changes is missed. The alternative-based thinking is a deep-rooted European feature, the lack of an alternative is causing the narrowness of minds. Maidanism is a functional substitute of the faith in the existence of an alternative. This is the very ideology that the West is using in order to sustain the economic globalization that does not allow any alternative. **All its crises end up in enhancing the factors that have caused them in the first place**". Unfortunately the European left (as movement, not as a party) is not realizing the full scale of an issue and is not thinking through the key aspects of it.

And what about the situation in the CEE region? CEE is a European subsystem but this does not mean that it is just a simple featureless part of the continent. The region's specifics appear in different ways – from very slight and unimportant to the straining ones in their political consequences. In this context I would like to refer to the idea of Veronika Sušová-Salminen, a Czech left-wing historian currently living in Finland. „The current refugee-migration crisis has highlighted the lack of unity in a very apparent way: in an old-new gap between East and West". This is a further political moment that was not actually caused by the migration crises, "au contraire" the difference in the approaches toward this crisis is caused by the mutual non-understanding between East and West. As long as we will not take this into consideration we will keep ending up in the dead-end of assuming the different political roles of European political forces. The migration crisis has simply brought this previously unnoticed by many people reality into the spotlight. "The approach towards Eastern Europe never has been an even and symmetrical process. The process of EU expansion to the East took place ... under the flag of semi-periferie. As a result, this region came under an unrestricted and brutal globalization on the political, cultural and economic levels. The deployed transformation model based on the deep-rooted liberalism has brought the early unknown levels of social inequality, criminality, poverty, unemployment, selfishness and consumption-oriented democracy". No-one in Europe including the left forces is not mentioning that in Europe itself we do have plenty of economic migrants for the reason that these people are formally EU citizen. But in some regions of, for example, Bulgaria there are plenty people who are living on less than 100 EUR a month, and thus it shall not be surprising to see the EU- beggars on the streets of EU cities. All this by one way or another influences the perception of the migration crisis by the inhabitants of CEE who are already affected by the significant level of poverty. The migration crisis demonstrates, according to the quoted author, that the crisis at the semi-periphery always means the crisis of the center. This is valid as well for the left movement. The crisis at the left structures of the semi-periferie is the reflection of the crises of the left thought as a whole. This is a crisis of the insufficient and unconvincing leftist vision.

The migration crisis reflects and highlights the crises in the approach of the Czech population towards european integration and towards the EU itself. Let us take a look at the actual situation (second half of 2015). The graph 1 describes the attitude on CZ population as a whole towards the EU. It displays the percentage of positive or conditionally –positive answers received in polls to the question of satisfaction with Czechia membership in the EU.

Graph 1



Question: “Are you personally satisfied with our country membership in the EU?”
(the share of answers “certainly yes”+“probably yes”).

The same poll based on voting preferences of the questioned provide the following results – see Graph 2.

More than 50 % of satisfaction is observed by supporters of the following political parties – TOP 09 and ODS (both right-wing liberal parties), KDÚ-ČSL (Christian democrats). The negative approach towards the EU dominates in the ranks of supporters of ANO (a centrist, relatively not profiled political movement), ČSSD (soc. democrats), KSČM (communists). The clustering is based on voting preferences, not on parties’ membership.

The next graph (Graph 3) displays the alleged results of a hypothetical referendum on EU-accession in case it would take place at the end of 2015 (blue coloring- for accession, red- against). Currently the EU-accession would be supported by only 38 % of Czech citizen. The highest result was reached in 2011 when this number has amounted to 59%, all later opinion polls brought less than 50 % results. This data clearly shows the negative approach of Czech population is not based just on the migration crisis. This is most probably the result of deep penetration of consequences of the economic crisis to the mindset of Czechs and their dissatisfaction with the role the European elites in handling it. These very elites has mostly benefited from the crisis leaving the rest of societies to pick the bill. These processes are certainly reflected in the societies’ views.

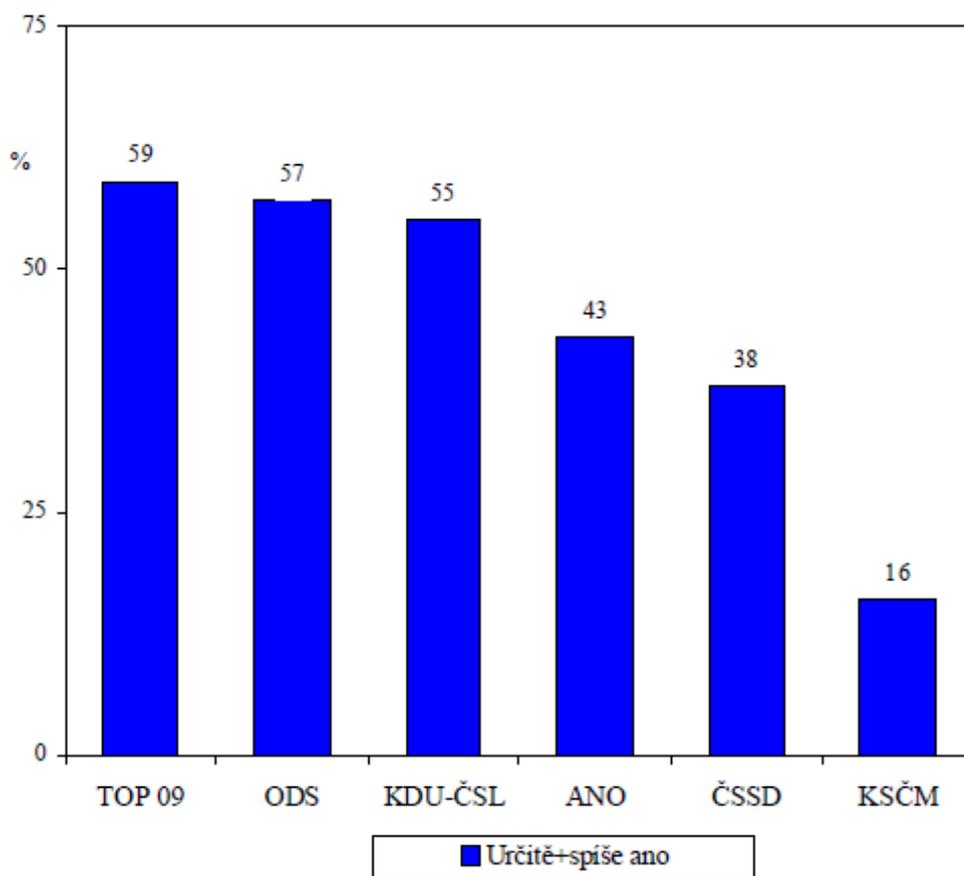
Now few words about a naïve idea of some EU representatives that the threat of getting the EU subsidies cut would influence the approach of people in Czechia towards migration. This just demonstrates the complete ignorance of the current situation and of the mentality of people. Due to the fact that many Czechs actually do believe that the country contributes to the EU funds more than it gets from them (actually it is vice versa) and anyway most of the received subsidies allegedly disappear in the corruption schemes, people do not expect the cut of subsidies to affect their lives in a significant way. People are not eager to “trade their views for an EU coin”. Perhaps on a Czech scale this is not that important, but in case of Poland, the EU strategic-size country, this could be far more dangerous. An interesting result is also brought by the answers to a question if it ever would be possible to form a some sort of a “european nation”- see Graph 4 (blue and purple for “yes” and “probably yes”, yellow and grey for “probably not” and “not”). Within the time span the level of positive answers has declined – but it has never reached the

majority. We have to use these facts in our arguments and shall convert them into the plausible communication strategy with people.

Quite interesting are the results on the approach of population towards NATO. It seems that Czech population sees in this military organization some sort of a “last resort savior”. Half of the Czech society considers the membership of our country in the EU and NATO to be of the same importance. But between the once who make a difference the share of NATO supporters (34 %) is clearly prevailing over the ones who tend to believe in a higher importance of the EU (16%). The Czech membership in NATO is supported by two-thirds of the society (69%) and rejected by one-fifth (22%) with 10 % of respondents preferring to avoid a clear-cut answer. This opinion dominates across all voter-preferences specter with an exception of KSČM, whose supporters are split into 2 almost even groups (this fact makes it somewhat difficult for communists whose program clearly rejects country’s NATO membership)

„Jste Vy osobně celkově spokojen(a) s naším členstvím v Evropské unii?“

Podle stranických preferencí (podíl odpovědí „určitě ano“ + „spíše ano“ v %)



Pramen: STEM, Trendy 09/2015, 925 respondentů starších 18 let

(Údaje za stoupence KDU-ČSL, TOP 09 a ODS jsou vzhledem k jejich nízkému počtu v souboru pouze orientační.)

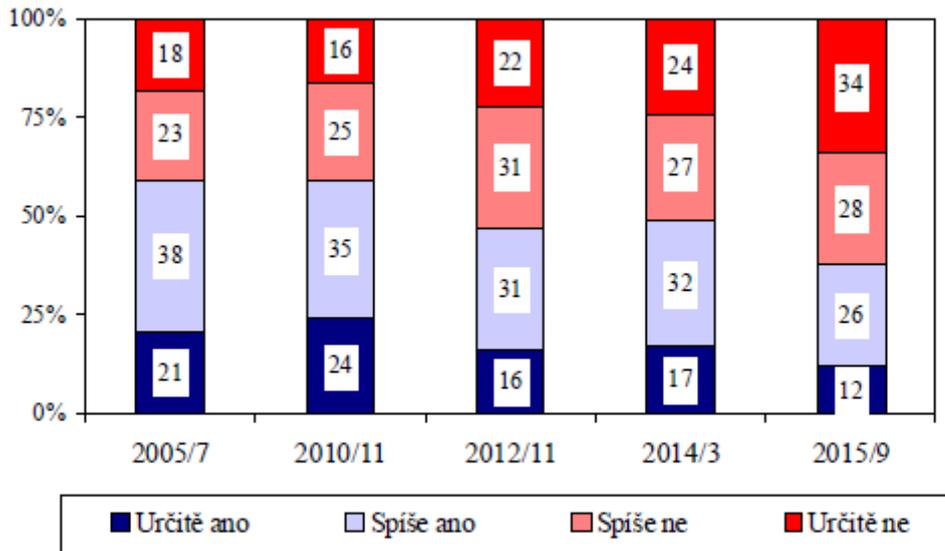
Graph 2

“Are you personally satisfied with the membership of our country in the EU?”

According to the voter preferences (share of answers “certainly yes”+ “probably yes” in %)

Source: STEM, Trendy 09/2015, 925 respondents older than 18 years

„Kdyby se u nás znovu konalo referendum o vstupu do Evropské unie, hlasoval(a) byste pro vstup?“



Pramen: STEM, Trendy 2005 – 2015

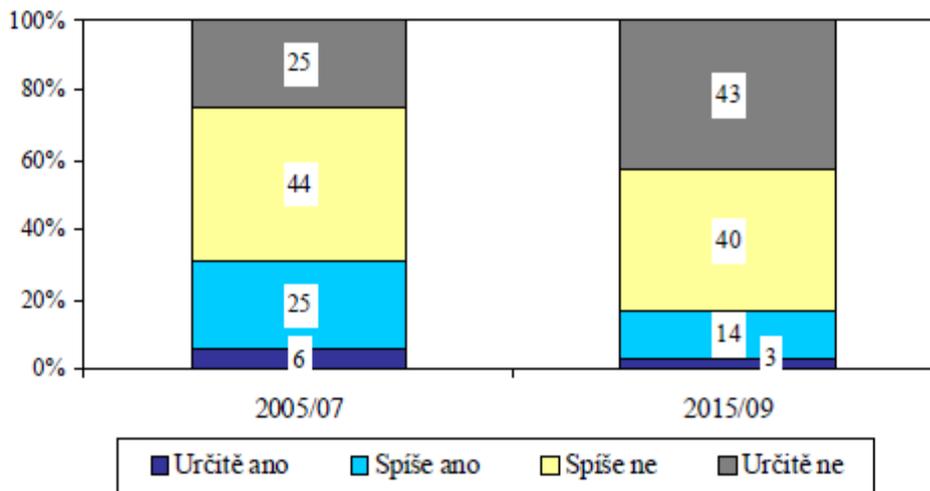
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Graph 3

“In case there would be again a referendum on the EU accession, would you vote for it? “

- Certainly yes
- Probably yes
- Probably not
- Certainly no

„Myslíte si, že jednou vznikne něco jako evropský národ?“



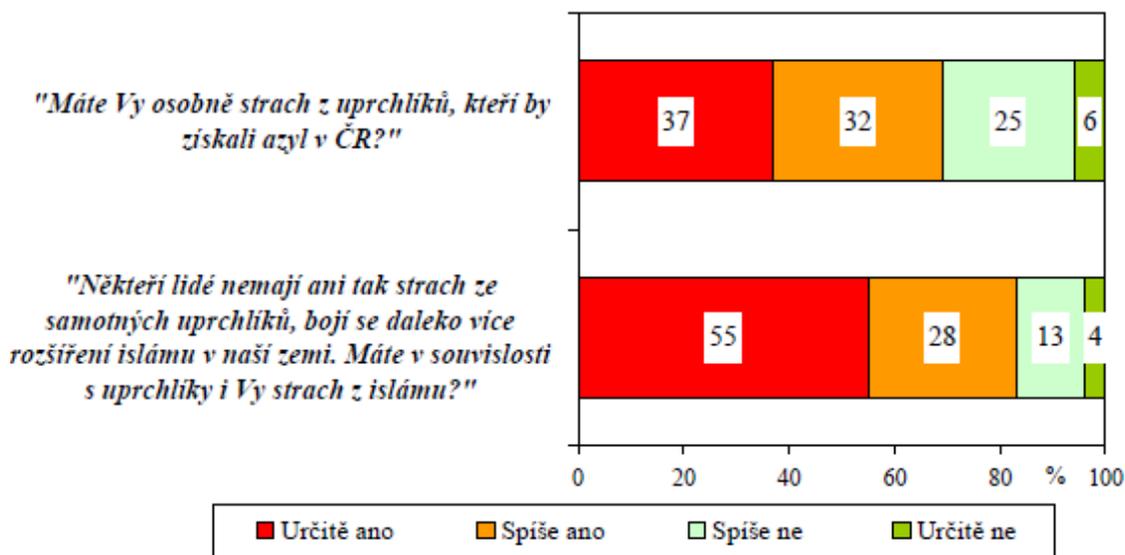
Graph 3

“Do you think there will be one day a something like a European nation?“

- Certainly yes
- Probably yes
- Probably not
- Certainly no

As long as the migration problematic is concerned, it will be interesting to observe how Czechs treat the refugees and Islam. The data can be found in a Graph 5: "Are you afraid of the refugees and Islam?"

Strach z uprchlíků a z islámu



Fear from refugees and Islam

"Do you personally have fear of refugees who receive the asylum in Czechia?"

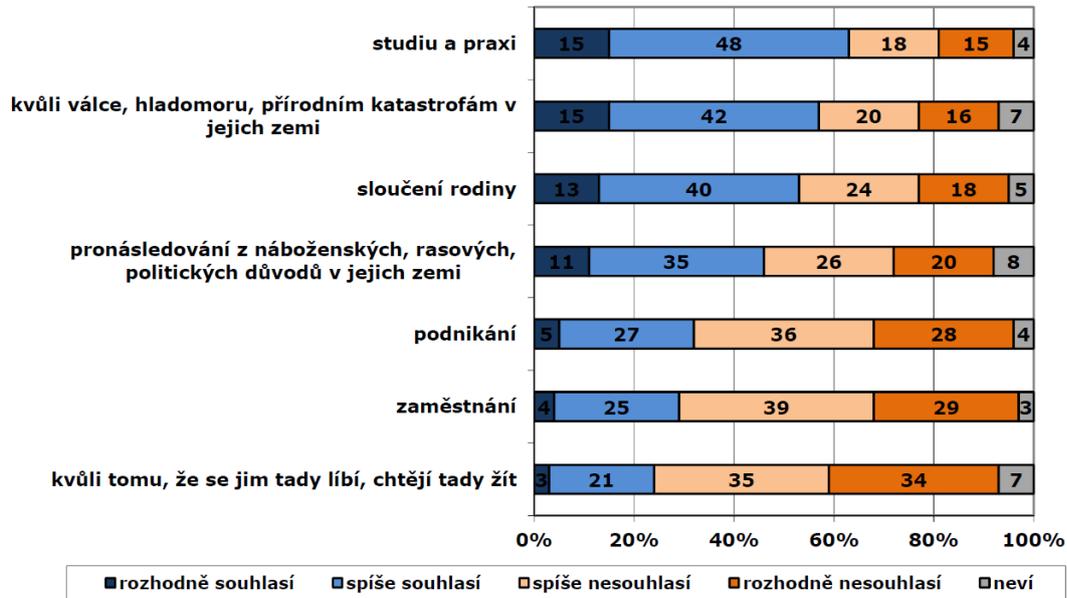
"Some people fear not the refugees but the spread of Islam in our country. Do you have in regards with refugees the fear of Islam?"

- Certainly yes
- Probably yes
- Probably not
- Certainly no

It is evident that apart the fear of refugees the society is possessed by a far stronger angst of Islam (83%). In the second question people are asked not just about the refugees but about people of a certain religion without regards from where they came from. How this became possible? We tend to think that is the result of the dumb anti-Islam propaganda of the Bush-junior administration related to "September 2001" events. This is a propaganda rooted in the geostrategic considerations. It is necessary to add the current system of differentiated approach towards the Islamic countries that are sorted to the "good" (Saudi Arabia and Gulf nations) and the "evil" ones. As well as the suspicion that the IS export of oil is beyond the scope of the Western military targets.

The last graph shows the attitude of the Czech society towards the reasons of immigration to the country as well as towards the official cause of issuing CZ residential permits to foreign applicants. Actually, it displays the complexity of the issue.

Graf 3: Umožnit pobyt cizincům kvůli následujícím důvodům²



Graph 3

On what reasons foreigners may be issued a residential permit in Czechia?

Stadium and internship

For the reasons of war, famine or natural calamities in their home countries

Unification of families

Pursuit and repressions on the racial, religious or political grounds

Business

Employment

Because they like it here

Certainly agree

Probably agree

Probably disagree

Certainly disagree

No opinion

The reasons that are considered acceptable by the most of the society are the education, war/famine/natural calamity at the home countries and the unification of families. Less than half of people agree with the reason of persecution on political, racial or religious grounds (close to a half, 46%), business and employment (29%) and “because they like it here” (24%). This numbers clearly show that Czech society is not generally skewed against the incomers and is ready to accept them- but only on certain grounds. This is also related to the way the mass-media present the incomers and the grounds for the arrival as well as to the social and economic impact of migration on local population- both real and perceived (fear of employment competition and of the possible reduction of existing welfare programs).

The provided information is just a certain viewpoint of the complex and multi-level reality that nevertheless offers a general definition of it. The events shall be always viewed from a viewpoint of existing links that can be defined as “economy- interests-politics”. This is related to the economic basis transformed into interests of certain classes and groups that consequently collide and compete in a political struggle of different views. It is necessary to notice the fact that both in Czechia and Eastern part of Germany where the radical left forces became the parts of local governments they accepted responsibilities for the “building of the capitalism” and the well-being of their regions. In this case they carry a significantly higher responsibilities in comparison to their peers that probably stand on a “pure” positions but play nevertheless a marginal role in the political process of influencing the society matters. In both Czechia and Germany the left forces shall politically fight against the forces like PEGIDA and strive for

the support of population across the complete political spectrum. In some places this political responsibility is handled somewhat better, in other places somewhat worse.

Conclusion: Citizen of the countries belonging to the Vysegrad 4 (V4), at least the ones of Czechia, is normal people without the tendency of being xenophobic. They used to manage and will manage to co-exist with the newcomers to their land, they have certain historical experience and possess their own set of values. They tend to act according to their class and group interests. They belong to Europe but are not eager to keep this bond at any price. They do not tend to believe that just their opinions and values are the only right and valid ones. However, they strive to be treated as equal partners of an effective discussion. And these points are valid both for left-wing activists and the ones that we describe as radical left.