Integration of Foreigners in the Context of the Labor Market and of the Amendment to the Slovak Asylum Act

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Abstract: The paper deals with the amendment to Slovak Act no. 480/2002 Coll. on asylum, which entered into force on June 1, 2022, in the broader context of the employment of foreigners. The amendment in question was adopted in response to the international situation which arose as a result of the war in Ukraine. The aim of the article is to present the purpose of the amendment and the changes it brings in an effort to unify the rules and facilitate the initial integration of incoming people. The author perceives inclusion in the labor market as one of the key factors influencing the overall quality of life, starting with the economic side and ending with a sense of usefulness and self-worth. Even with regard to the needs of the Slovak labor market, it is more than desirable that the process of applying for foreigners in various job positions is as simple as possible.

1. INTRODUCTION

Migration is a common phenomenon in today's world – more than 244 million people currently live outside their country of origin, while up to three-quarters of them migrate voluntarily – for work, education, or a better standard of living. Refugees from war or persecution do not have this option. Running away from home is often the only option for them, and while we can return, for them returning may mean putting their lives at risk (Králiková, 2016). This fact is more relevant today in Central Europe than at any time since the end of the Second World War. Of course, there are still many people who change their place of residence in order to find new opportunities or a higher quality of life. But Slovakia is currently facing an unprecedented influx of people coming from a country threatened by an active military conflict. These are mostly mothers with children, often minors, who require compulsory school attendance and placement in a preschool if the mother even wants to think about work. Available places in kindergartens and schools are only one of the long-term unresolved problems of Slovakia. Králiková (2016) notes that for many newcomers it is a journey from scratch. Without work, housing, knowledge of the language and important social relations, help from the state is essential for their successful start. The integration process is always two-sided. It does not only concern those who should integrate, but also the majority society, which can accept newcomers without having to give up their identity. Not only the refugee's willingness to integrate, but the support of society, good policy setting, or openness of relations between people, influence the success of integration.

According to Act no. 404/2011 Coll. on the residence of foreigners, a foreigner is a person who is not a citizen of the Slovak Republic. A migrant is a person who, for any reason, has changed...
the country of their permanent or habitual residence and has moved from the home country to another country for at least three months. The Slovak legal order does not use the term migrant, but a foreigner. An asylum seeker is a person who has applied for asylum or supplementary protection in Slovakia and is awaiting a decision or who has already been granted asylum. A refugee is a person who, due to justified fears of persecution for racial, national or religious reasons, for reasons of holding certain political opinions or belonging to a certain social group, is outside the country of his or her origin and, due to these fears, cannot or does not want to return to this country. An asylum seeker is also in the Slovak meaning a foreigner who has met the criteria of the Convention on the Legal Status of Refugees, thereby being recognized as a refugee and granted international protection in the form of asylum. In the Slovak legal order, this refers to a foreigner who has fulfilled the conditions set by the Asylum Act and to whom the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic has granted asylum. Asylum is therefore a form of protection granted to refugees in Slovakia. The term supplementary protection, which is often inflected today, means a form of protection that is provided to those asylum seekers who have serious reasons to believe that they would be exposed to a real threat of serious injustice if they were to return to their country of origin. Integration, on the other hand, can be seen as a two-way process in which communities of foreigners and the receiving society get to know and influence each other. To integrate means to create a new unit by joining different parts – to unite people of different ethnic and cultural origins into one unit (society) based on equality. So we could rather talk about the creation of an integrated, cohesive society, based on jointly shared values, than about integration into the existing structures of society (Z cudzincov domáci, 2021). While integration itself is a common goal of the European Union, Member States have autonomy in creating and implementing their own legal and political framework to support the integration of nationals of third countries into the labor market (Bošelová, 2021).

According to available data, 150,012 foreigners lived in Slovakia at the end of 2020, most of them – 90,806 – from countries outside the European Union (hereinafter referred to as "EU"). The largest group from the so-called third countries for a long time – regardless of the war – are Ukrainians, followed by Serbs, Vietnamese, Russians and Chinese (Z cudzincov domáci, 2021). The number of migrants from France and the Republic of Korea has grown quite significantly in previous years, which can be explained by the influx of foreign investments from these countries (Slovak Governance Institute, 2015). Between 2004 and 2019, the number of foreigners living in Slovakia increased sevenfold (TASR, 2021). They work in industry, on construction sites, in gastronomy, as well as in multinational companies and medical facilities. They study at Slovak universities. Nevertheless, as Rojo (2021) states, foreigners often become a topic only thanks to non-governmental organizations. Understanding the system in which a foreigner finds herself or himself and the ability to provide in public institutions what she or he needs for everyday life is one of the conditions for successful integration into society. In Slovakia, this is a challenge for foreigners for several reasons. In addition to prejudices and cultural barriers, the reason is the unpreparedness of authorities and officials. Most foreigners point to the language barrier and the absence of information available in several language mutations. The state integration policy from 2014 did not at all reflect the migration waves from 2015 and 2016, and even its appropriately set parts were implemented only very slowly, while one of the biggest problems remains the unclear distribution of competences and responsibilities for the overall integration of foreigners. The Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family, therefore, focuses almost exclusively on integration into the labor market; the Department of Migration and Integration at the Migration Office of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic pays attention only to those who have received asylum or supplementary protection in Slovakia. These were very
low numbers before the war – for example, in 2020, 11 people received asylum and 27 received supplementary protection (Rojo, 2021). Understandably, with the progress of the military conflict beyond our borders, the number of people who expressed interest in staying on our territory and requested (in this case) temporary refuge increased. Many of them perceive the situation as only temporary and plan to return to Ukraine after the conflict calms down. For some refugees, Slovakia is only a transit country, but given our previous normal conditions, a still high number of people plan to stay in Slovakia permanently.

2. INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT OF FOREIGNERS IN SLOVAK CONDITIONS – STARTING POINTS

Employment is a key part of the integration process (not only) of refugees. It is essential for self-realization, economic independence, but also the full integration of incoming persons into the new society. The contribution they represent to the host society is often most visible through their work (Meššová, 2021).

Already in 2009, Vašečka drew attention to the fact that Slovakia has not created good prerequisites for the success of the integration process of migrants, and the restrictive approach to them was also manifested in the legislative sphere. As an example, the law on Slovak citizenship from 2007, which tightens the conditions for acquiring state citizenship through naturalization or the asylum procedure, can be cited. In addition, foreigners are perceived stereotypically in Slovakia, and attitudes towards them are often based on slowly changing prejudices. Compared to other EU countries, we have little experience with foreigners and awareness of groups living in Slovakia is also very low. In addition, the perception of migration as a tool for mitigating the effects of the demographic crisis is still absent among the inhabitants of Slovakia – foreigners are rather perceived as a burden on the state budget. Likewise, the overall management of issues related to migration is thoughtless, uncoordinated and understaffed (Vašečka, 2009).

Although it cannot be disputed that the influx of refugees in the first days and weeks after the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine was unprecedented, this situation also showed the unpreparedness of Slovak institutions for similar scenarios when, in addition to the support of the armed forces and the police, a decisive part of the activities rested on the shoulders of volunteers and non-governmental organizations, and only later, these activities began to be covered by an authorized private company, not the state with its capacities.

The integration strategy of the Slovak Republic formally falls under the competence of the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family, which developed a conceptual document entitled "Strategy for the labor mobility of foreigners in the Slovak Republic until 2020 with a view to 2030". For this strategy, the measures are primarily aimed at nationals of third countries, since the same rules apply to the employment of citizens of the EU/European Economic Area (hereinafter referred to as the "EEA") as to the employment of citizens of the Slovak Republic, and therefore Slovakia does not emphasize the employment of citizens of the EU/EEA special legislative restrictions. Therefore, the target group of the presented strategy is not refugees or asylum seekers. The strategy focuses on the controlled (regular/legal) labor mobility of foreigners aimed at compensating for the lack of available labor on the labor market in the Slovak Republic (Stratégia pracovnej mobility cudzincov v Slovenskej republike. Ministerstvo práce, Sociálnych vecí a Rodiny Slovenskej republiky, 2018). This document – as well as previous versions: Concept of Integration of Foreigners in the Slovak Republic (2009) and Integration Policy of the Slovak Republic (2014) – tries to systematize the inconsistent and ad hoc approach to
integration applied in the '90s of the last century and the beginning of the first decade 21st century. In general, these policy proposals recognize the labor shortage in the Slovak labor market and identify several concrete steps aimed at attracting foreign labor. The employment of foreigners is governed by the third part of Act no. 5/2004 Coll. on employment services (hereinafter referred to as the "Employment Services Act"), which states what conditions must be met for a company to employ third-country nationals. Asylum seekers are subject to a different set of regulations, which largely fall under the purview of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic (Bošelová, 2021). The field of labor mobility and integration of foreigners into the labor market in the European Union is dealt with by the Fund for Asylum, Migration and Integration, which falls under the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic and its goal is to manage migration flows and support legal migration to Member States following their economic and social needs, as well as ensuring the integrity of the immigration systems of the Member States and supporting the real integration of nationals of third countries (Kačírková, 2018).

The new migration policy in the form of the document "Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic with a view to 2025" was approved by the government in September 2021, but it is only a framework document. It also includes the area of managed economic migration, in which migration policy creates a basic framework for the arrival of foreign employees, entrepreneurs, students and academics. Emphasis is also placed on economic migration given demographic developments or, for example, the transition to a climate-neutral economy. However, according to experts, the problem, and at the same time the basic prerequisite for success, were, are and will be financial resources. As the Director of the Migration Office Ján Orlovský also points out, the lack of attention paid to the integration of foreigners is also a question of the mindset of Slovak society. Similarly, as Vašečka (2009) pointed out, we still do not see migration as an opportunity. Until these changes in the public space, it is difficult to seek support (Rojo, 2021). Regarding the employment of foreigners, statistical data is regularly published by the Central Office of Labor, Social Affairs and Family. It provides an overview of employed EU citizens and third-country nationals, divided according to whether they have been granted a work permit on the territory of the Slovak Republic or were able to work without a permit (Z cudzincov domáci, 2021). Currently, statistics are available for the first four months of 2022 (ÚPSVaR, 2022) and it is obvious that the changes in development were caused by the arrival of job seekers from Ukraine.

In terms of legislation, in connection with the integration of refugees into the labor market, the Act on Employment Services can be mentioned, both because it regulates the authorization of asylum seekers and persons with supplementary protection to enter into employment relationships, but also because it contains detailed adjusted legal relations in connection with the provision of employment services in Slovakia. Although the Act on Employment Services mentions the citizen in most of its provisions, asylum seekers and persons granted supplementary protection are considered to have the same status as citizens in legal relations under this Act. They are also entitled to access to employment without any restrictions in accordance with the principle of equal treatment and the prohibition of discrimination. In addition, the Act on Employment Services classifies persons with granted asylum and provided supplementary protection among disadvantaged job seekers, in connection with which it provides them with specific forms of support beyond the Act in order to apply and remain on the labor market. Relatively recently, Act No. 112/2018 Coll. on the social economy and social enterprises and on the amendment and supplementation of certain acts (hereinafter referred to as the "Social Economy Act"), which can also be classified as relevant legislation in the field of integration of persons entering the labor market in Slovakia. The aim of this act is to support social entrepreneurship through social
enterprises in which disadvantaged or vulnerable persons can obtain temporary employment in order to acquire working habits. With the work habits acquired in this way, they can subsequently look for permanent employment elsewhere. The Social Economy Act also includes asylum seekers and persons with supplementary protection as vulnerable persons for the purposes of social entrepreneurship. Last but not least, the regulation of labor relations, working conditions, remuneration for work performed, the scope and regulation of working hours, the right to rest, and other guarantees protecting all employees on the territory of the Slovak Republic, including refugees, are enshrined in Act No. 311/2001 Coll. Labor Code (Fajnorová & Chaloupková, 2021).

In general, the employer has a reporting obligation when employing a national of a third country. He is obliged to report in writing job vacancies, their number and characteristics of the position, to the Headquarters of labor, social affairs and family (in the case of a Blue Card application). The employer is also obliged to inform the Office of Labor, Social Affairs and Family in writing about the commencement of employment and the termination of employment of a citizen of a Member State of the EU, his family members and a national of a third country within seven working days from the date of commencement of employment and within seven working days from termination of employment (MPSVaR, 2022).

It is a widely held opinion and a repeatedly presented concern of part of the public that foreigners take jobs from residents, but practice shows the opposite. Experts agree that Slovakia is a small and open economy, where the labor market is dynamic and flexible, but integration and asylum policies have remained too rigid for a long time. Between 2013 and 2019, for example, the number of workers increased by more than 250,000, of which tens of thousands of positions were occupied by foreigners and did not displace domestic employees. On the contrary, unfilled vacancies keep breaking new records. Immigrants, more than domestic workers, fill vacancies in those occupations, sectors and regions where labor is in short supply. In this way, they fill vacancies in the labor market, improve the prospects for investments, increasing employment and economic growth. According to economists, foreigners are always at a disadvantage compared to natives in the labor market, as they do not know the language, regulations, or customs. This is also why foreigners do not push wages down. Employees from abroad often fill jobs that, for various reasons, locals are unwilling or unable to fill, thereby supplementing domestic workers. Every new worker is also a new customer and consumer. Highly qualified refugees can even increase the overall productivity and thus the wages of Slovaks. Keeping foreigners in the country brings tax revenues for public finances. In addition, Slovakia is among the fastest aging economies, which causes problems with the sustainability of public finances. The number of people of working age is decreasing and the number of retirees is increasing, which experts have been pointing out for a long time, calling on the government to find solutions and prevent future problems. Taxes on the income of working foreigners will generate money for better public services, or the first pension pillar, without the need to increase taxes or the cost of education. However, without an active approach of the state in placing refugees on the labor market, there is a risk that highly qualified workers will move elsewhere and Slovakia will rather have more difficult-to-employ people, to whom it will provide mainly humanitarian aid. At the same time, according to a recently conducted survey by the AKO Agency on a sample of 1,000 respondents, 83.8% of respondents support facilitating the entry of highly specialized foreigners into the Slovak labor market. Specifically, 61.1% of respondents think that access for specialists such as doctors, scientists, teachers, or nurses should be made easier, and another 22.7% of respondents think that it should probably be made easier (Webnoviny.sk, 2022).
Among other things, Slovakia's long-term problem is the already mentioned aging of the population. According to demographic forecasts, Slovakia will be among the oldest countries in Europe by 2060, but it is still among the countries with the lowest immigration rate in Europe (Slovak Governance Institute, 2015). The situation in Ukraine partially, and probably only temporarily, reversed this trend, but the ability to integrate incoming persons is still questionable.

As for the obstacles that foreigners have to overcome when trying to get a job in Slovakia, in addition to knowledge of legislation and orientation in the system, ignorance of the language appears to be the biggest problem. Almost all respondents of the study, the subject of which were interviews with foreigners, said that mastering the Slovak language would help them immensely in dealing with bureaucratic processes. The disparity can also be seen in the number of advertised vacancies. Of the offers active in 2021, only about 14% were written in English. Most often, these are positions in information technology, management, administration and economics, finance and accounting (TASR, 2021). Closely related to language skills is the question of whether highly qualified foreigners can find employment in jobs that match their qualifications or experience. This is a basic prerequisite for labor migration to bring the greatest possible benefits to the receiving countries as well as the migrants themselves. In general, migrants face many barriers in host countries that prevent them from finding a suitable job, and the so-called "downskilling" (Slovak Governance Institute, 2015). Asylum seekers and people granted supplementary protection also encounter many other problems. They face rejection from hostels or apartment owners, and they also encounter mistrust when looking for work. Even skin color or the traditional way they dress can decide not to be hired (Králiková, 2016). A serious problem faced not only by refugees but also by labor migrants, especially the low-skilled, is their vulnerability and threat of labor exploitation or unauthorized employment in disadvantaged working conditions. Very limited work opportunities, which they have, often force them to accept work in inappropriate conditions, contrary to the Labor Code, or even humiliation (Liga za ľudské práva, 2020).

3. SLOVAK ASYLUM LAW IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT CHANGES

In connection with the above, there appears to be an effort to amend Act No. 480/2002 Coll. on asylum (hereinafter referred to as the "Asylum Act") as a positive step towards better applicability of job seekers from the ranks of foreigners, who are currently arriving due to circumstances mainly from outside Ukraine, on the Slovak labor market. In the following section, we will describe the adopted changes to the asylum law.

The Asylum Act regulates the procedure for granting asylum, the procedure for granting temporary refuge, the rights and obligations of asylum seekers (waiting and granted), foreigners who have been granted supplementary protection, foreigners requesting temporary refuge and emigrants, as well as the competence of public authorities in the area of asylum, supplementary protection and temporary refuge, but also regulates the integration of asylum seekers into society and stay in asylum facilities. Attention is also focused on the methods of termination of asylum, as well as on the procedure for revocation of asylum, which begins at the initiative of the Ministry, or on the cancellation of supplementary protection. The Act further regulates the rights and obligations of applicants, asylum seekers and foreigners who have been granted supplementary protection. The Migration Office of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic is the first-level administrative authority that decides on the granting of asylum and the provision of supplementary protection.
At the beginning of June 2022, an amendment to the Asylum Act came into effect, which allows foreigners to access the labor market earlier. In general, the amendment to the law systematically regulates the initial integration of asylum seekers and foreigners who have been granted supplementary protection. Further modifications arose from knowledge of application practice and the need to harmonize the legal order of the Slovak Republic with the law of the European Union. Asylum seekers will have access to the labor market already six months after the start of the asylum procedure (contrary to the nine months applied before). As the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic states on its website, the most important changes include the following:

- the hierarchy of protection statuses granted to foreigners in the Slovak Republic is adjusted – it mainly concerns the prioritization of the assessment and provision of additional protection due to serious injustice before the granting of asylum for the purpose of family reunification, but also before the granting of asylum for humanitarian reasons;
- as part of the initial integration, a one-time allowance in the amount of 1.5 times the living minimum for one adult will also be provided to a foreigner who has been granted supplementary protection;
- the provision of a new allowance for asylum seekers and foreigners who have been granted supplementary protection, namely the integration allowance, is also being introduced; it will be provided in the amount of 1.75 times the amount of the subsistence minimum, with the fact that family members living in the same household will be assessed together. The allowance will be provided for six months;
- the provision of social and psychological counseling and cultural orientation courses is established for asylum applicants based on their individual needs;
- the aforementioned deadline for asylum seekers' access to the labor market is shortened, from 9 to 6 months, which will support their integration process and enable them to obtain their funds;
- the period for which the applicant is allowed to stay outside the residence camp (so-called long-term pass) is established (MV SR, 2022).

Králiková (2016) recalls that Slovak politicians tend to say that Slovakia is only a transit country in which foreigners do not want to stay. However, as shown by the results of the MIPEX international study, which evaluates the quality of integration policies, our integration policies are currently set up in such a way that they do not even allow foreigners to fully integrate into Slovakia. The amendments to the law in question represent ad hoc legislation, which is the result of the war in Ukraine, although the need to open the labor market for foreigners has been talked about for a long time by the employers themselves, who are struggling with a labor shortage and the government has been under pressure to release the conditions when the supply of vacancies far exceeded the demand from potential employees.

In response to the military conflict, the Act also incorporated the concept of temporary refuge, which is provided to protect foreigners from war conflict, endemic violence, the consequences of a humanitarian disaster, or systematic or mass violations of human rights in their country of origin; to provide temporary refuge, a foreigner is a national of a third country according to the Act on the Residence of Foreigners (Section 29 paragraph 1 of the Act on Asylum).

Earlier, in March 2022, the Act on Asylum was amended together with the Act on Employment Services by Act No. 92/2022 Coll. on certain additional measures in connection with the situation in Ukraine (known as "Lex Ukraine"). Pursuant to § 31 par. 1 and par. 10 of the Act on Asylum, from 30.3.2022 a document of tolerated stay in the territory of the Slovak Republic

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is issued to a national of a third country with the designation "temporary refuge" because this designation better corresponds to the purpose of this type of international protection. Document of tolerated stay in the territory of the Slovak Republic with the designation "expatriate" issued before 30/3/2022 is considered a document of tolerated stay in the territory of the Slovak Republic with the designation "temporary refuge". Pursuant to § 54f of the Asylum Act, an asylum seeker who is a citizen of Ukraine or a family member of a citizen of Ukraine, during the duration of the emergency situation declared in connection with the mass influx of foreigners to the territory of the Slovak Republic caused by the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine, may enter into an employment relationship even before the expiration of nine months from the start of the asylum procedure. For the purposes of the first sentence, a family member of a citizen of Ukraine considers the spouse of a citizen of Ukraine and the parent of a minor child who is a citizen of Ukraine. The employment of this nation is in accordance with § 23a paragraph 1 letter h) Act on Employment Services (ÚPSVaRb, 2022).

4. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION ON THE INTEGRATION OF FOREIGNERS (NOT ONLY) IN THE LABOR MARKET

The Integration Policy of the Slovak Republic emphasizes in several places equality, equalization of disadvantages and prevention of discrimination, and clearly supports the adoption and implementation of measures aimed at suppressing manifestations of racism, xenophobia, discrimination and other forms of hatred and intolerance towards foreigners. It points out that persistent discrimination is a serious obstacle for foreigners to choose a job. However, it should be emphasized again that the Integration Policy of the Slovak Republic was adopted in 2014, i.e. before the so-called refugee wave to Europe (2015), since the social and political atmosphere deteriorated and migrants became the target of attacks, demonization and hoaxes (Fajnorová & Chaloupková, 2021).

Therefore, one of the possible support mechanisms for the integration of foreigners not only in the labor market could be the creation of a new job position: intercultural worker, primarily in public institutions and offices, especially those with whom contact is necessary in the case of foreigners obtaining the necessary documents and permits in Slovakia. We do not have to look far for inspiration – for example, in the National Occupational System of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, an intercultural worker is defined as one who "provides assistance, including interpretation, in negotiations between migrants and public institutions, supports the coexistence of the majority and migrants, helps the integration of migrants and migrant communities into mainstream society" (Rojo, 2021). As the author further states, the so-called cultural mediators are active in Slovakia, and are usually brought together by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Cultural mediators from foreign communities help their compatriots and also create space for mutual understanding between communities and mainstream society, but for now, they provide services to non-profit organizations rather than municipalities or authorities. Another of the priorities in the field of integration of migrants is "to introduce a professional subject in the study of social work, which would be focused on the possibilities of using methods of social work and social policy in the integration of foreigners in the Slovak Republic" (Rojo, 2021).

For comparison, in Finland, every foreigner has the right to complete an integration process lasting up to 5 years after arriving in the country. Part of it is language study with the receipt of a financial contribution, as well as support in finding a job, study place, or providing support in starting a business. This process is covered by the Labor Office, and help can also be obtained
from the non-profit sector. There are several organizations profiled in Finland that help foreigners with resumes, job searches, language learning, etc. Finnish companies as well as non-governmental organizations are particularly supportive of volunteer activities and internships. It is also a way to be in contact with potential employers, to get references and to practice the language, which, like in Slovakia, is often a necessary condition for performing work with a higher required qualification (Vyšná, 2021). Practice in the form of work placements has also proven itself in the integration of refugees in Norway, where it helps to reduce mutual mistrust and enables the foreigners to better orient themselves and get used to the work rules. At the same time, it is also an economic stimulus for employers. The Norwegian example thus shows that good integration policy settings can be mutually beneficial (Králiková, 2016).

In the research study by Fajnorová and Chaloupková (2021), one can find other argumentatively supported and clearly elaborated proposals of recommendations, which, after their implementation in practice, can significantly support the better employment of foreigners/refugees in the labor market. Inspiration can also be found in already tested foreign projects, which Špačeková (2014) describes in her study.

5. CONCLUSION

As stated by Vyšná (2021), migration to and within Europe is unstoppable. If we want to manage cultural clashes, it is important to solve many other things besides high-quality political leaders. For example, well-set integration processes, access to free education and enough adequate job opportunities. Policies in the field of labor market integration can only be successfully implemented if there is a strong partnership between the private and public sectors (Bošelová, 2021). Marczyová (2018) confirms the assumption that the integration of foreigners is a lengthy and demanding process that requires the active participation and cooperation of several entities: the state, organizations, and municipalities, but also individuals and foreigners themselves.

Successful integration plays an important role in the development of the Slovak Republic – one cannot disagree with this statement by Marczyová (2018). Our goal was not to analyze in detail the amended provisions of the Act on Asylum, nor to assume or evaluate their possible effects. Time and its practical application will show the impact and consequences of the new legislation. The motive we followed in the article was to present the relevant provisions of the law in a wider societal context, pointing out already known problematic areas. Currently, it is not possible to successfully predict further developments both on the domestic political and international scene, so we tried to summarize the available information on selected aspects from the last period, as the situation is dynamically changing. The domestic situation is significantly influenced by the unstable conditions in the current government coalition, the international situation is dominated by the war in Ukraine and the rapidly developing global economic situation, exacerbated by the shortage or constantly threatened shortage of raw materials and disruption of supply chains. Both scenes – national and transnational – combine attempts to find suitable solutions to deal with rapidly rising energy prices and an unexpectedly high rate of inflation.

All the mentioned factors have the potential to influence the public’s attitude towards the integration of foreigners into the Slovak labor market and the support provided by the state in this regard. As analysts already predicted at the beginning of the wave of refugees from Ukraine, the potential to help will be exhausted relatively quickly, and there is a danger that public opinion will shift from seeking massive support to more or less open criticism of aid. This is already happening in
many cases. It is therefore to a large extent the responsibility of public officials and those who will implement the relevant provisions of the law in practice to communicate the need for support appropriately so that it does not provoke further unnecessary passions and does not lead to even greater polarization of society, exhausted by the pandemic, but so that it succeeds into the greatest extent possible to achieve the desired goal – a "win-win" situation, when on the one hand we as a country can provide effective assistance and create suitable conditions for those who need it and who show an interest in it, and on the other hand we also support the Slovak economy, struggling with overall labor shortages and an increasing outflow of highly skilled workers, which is currently most visible in the healthcare sector, that is at risk of collapse. An appropriately set asylum policy and measures to support integration can be an enrichment for all involved – but at the same time, whether the final result will be successful also depends on them.

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