

### Czech Republic

Permanent-type migration to the Czech Republic increased sharply in 2007, reaching over 99 000, compared to 63 000 in 2006. Ukraine accounted for almost 40 % of inflows, Slovakia and Vietnam some 13 % each and Russia about 7 %. About 3 in 5 immigrants are men.

Migration outflows in 2007 declined by about 21 000, with the result that net migration has more than doubled to over 80 000, a substantial increase in the migration component of population increase. The Czech Republic is among OECD countries with the largest projected decline in the working-age population over the period 2005-2020, assuming migration levels comparable to those observed from 2001 to 2005. At the net migration level observed in 2007, however, the working-age population in the Czech Republic would increase slightly between 2010 and 2020.

In the most recent year (2003) for which data are available on labour migration, it accounted for at least 60 percent of total immigration, placing the Czech Republic among OECD countries admitting the highest proportion of labour migrants.

The foreign population rose more than 20 % in 2007 to reach 392 thousand persons. This represents 3.3 % of the total population, still relatively low figure among OECD countries. Most migrants are from neighbouring countries, with the same three countries leading inflows and stocks. Ukrainians account for almost one third of all resident foreign residents, Slovaks for 17 % and Vietnamese for about 13 %.

Asylum seeking has been steadily declining in the Czech Republic since its high point in 2001, when over 18 000 requests were registered. In 2007 the number stood at barely 1 900, placing the Czech Republic among OECD countries with relatively low levels of requests per capita. Asylum is rarely granted, with only 191 applicants receiving status in 2007.

Policy developments since 2007 include a more precise definition of the situation of foreign family members of Czech nationals who are not citizens of another EU state. These persons, as of 2007, have the same rights in the labour market as Czech nationals. In addition, the category of foreigners who do not need a work permit to take on employment was enlarged to include persons in need of subsidiary protection and persons in the Czech Republic for teaching or scientific work.

January 1<sup>st</sup> 2009 saw the introduction of substantial changes to the laws regulating the employment of foreigners in the Czech Republic. Work permits for foreign employees are now issued for two years and no authorisation to recruit from third countries is required. Persons who are foreign students, foreign graduates of secondary schools and universities or foreign family members who live with a resident of the Czech Republic do not need a work permit in order to engage in economic activity.

A so-called “Green Card” was introduced in 2009 to speed up entry procedures and reduce administrative burdens for both employers and foreign workers. It is primarily aimed at highly qualified and skilled workers, but does not exclude the possibility of recruiting low-skilled workers for occupations in demand. The Green Card is a joint work-and-residence permit, for which there are three categories: 1) category A, for qualified workers with a university degrees or key staff; 2) category B, for persons applying for positions requiring a minimum of an apprenticeship certificate; and 3) category C, other workers. Maximum validity will be three years for categories A and B, and 2 years for category C. Only foreigners from certain third countries can apply (28 countries have been selected so far).

Finally, in 2009, the Czech Republic offered assistance for foreigners wishing to voluntarily return to their home countries in the context of the economic crisis (plane fare plus EUR 500). The number of persons applying, relative to those eligible, is small, although the programme achieved its initial target of 2 000 applicants.