

Irregular Immigrants and Their Economic Activities in the Czech Republic

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Transfer Review

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present selected results of the research project “International Migration and Migrants’ Illegal/Irregular Economic Activities: The Czech Republic in a Broader European Context” that is being carried out by the research team of the Department of Social Geography and Regional Development of the Charles University in Prague. The project is being worked out for the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic (between 2005-2007) and also have international links to two teams in Austria and Hungary (led by Michael Jandl and Judith Juhász)¹. Some results presented in this paper, however, were supported by other projects of the authors – namely by the Eurocores project „Trafficking and Forced Labour for Other Purposes than Prostitution: The Czech Case“ and by the research programme No. MSM 0021620831 of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the Czech Republic.

As the illegal migration and migrants’ illegal/irregular economic activities in the Czech Republic are only a little known phenomenon, our target was to explore this topic in its width by using quantitative as well as qualitative research techniques. We were primarily interested in irregular migrants themselves – in conditions in their countries of origin, reasons for migration, their living and working conditions in the Czech Republic. Furthermore, the role of Czech state and its migration policy, as well as the impacts of migrants’ irregular work on different levels (on the Czech state, on employers etc.) were not neglected. For the purpose of this paper, however, we focus only on the economic activities of irregular immigrants as they are tackled via different methodical approaches.

Globally, the irregular migration represents an important phenomenon with many important impacts upon societies and, thus, cannot be neglected in international migration research. It is worth mentioning that it is estimated at least 3 million unauthorised foreigners live in the EU, up from 2 million a decade ago (IOM 2003). Schatzer (2001) summarises that between 10 and 15 % of migrants already present in Western Europe, and between 20 and 30 % of new inflows, are undocumented. Other developed countries follow the same trend. For example, some 11 mil. irregulars might stay and work in the US currently.

Along with numerous immigration inflows that have reached the Czech Republic since the very beginning of the 1990s (as of December 31, 2006, 321,000 foreigners stay legally in the country), also irregulars came to find jobs and to start working on the Czech labour market. There is rather sporadic information as to how many of them operate in the country and under which circumstances and conditions. The estimates vary between 40 and 300,000 depending on who is taken into account and what methods are used e.g. (Drbohlav 2003, Intermundia 2005, Kroupa a kol. 1997, Drbohlav, Lachmanová, forthcoming). Via the given

¹ We have a common topic and, to some extent, similar methods have been used.

research activities we tried to contribute to shedding more light on these topical issues – not only on quantitative aspects but also on qualitative factors.

In our research we work with migrants’ irregular economic activities that we divide into two separate groups:

***Illegal** economic activity of an immigrant is considered to be a situation when an immigrant does not possess both a residence permit and a work permit/trade licence or he/she possesses a residence permit (e.g. tourist visa) but he/she does not have a work permit or a trade licence.*

***Quasi-legal** economic activity of an immigrant is considered to be a situation when an immigrant possesses a residence permit as well as a work permit/trade licence but he/she strongly violates work-related laws - e.g. he/she works in a different region, branch or profession or for a different employer than it is stated in his/her work permit, or he/she smuggles goods or is employed although having a trade licence.*

2. Methodology and survey design

2.1 Qualitative survey - interviews

Our qualitative survey is based on semi-structured interviews with 63 illegal or quasi-legal immigrants living in the time of the survey in the Czech Republic. Out of these, 9 immigrants were living “freely” in Prague and were contacted via our Ukrainian “mediator”. They were all Post-Soviet economic migrants.

The rest of interviewed persons (N=54) were immigrants who had somehow violated Czech laws² and were thus staying in Czech detention centres. Members of our research team were allowed to visit all 4 detention centres. Semi-structured interviews were accomplished by members of the research team in Russian, English, French and Czech language. Furthermore, some interviews were directly translated to Vietnamese and Chinese.

Altogether, the choice of our respondents was a rather purpose one. We are aware of the fact that “actual concrete patterns and contingent relations are unlikely to be “representative”, “average” or generalizable” (Sayer 1992).

Our main research questions had been set as follows: How does the migration process of an illegally working immigrant (or transit immigrant) look like? Which mechanisms and causes do affect the process? Are there any differences in this process between the Czech Republic and more traditional immigration countries of the EU? What is the individual behaviour of an illegal immigrant?

As was already mentioned, altogether 63 respondents (20 women and 43 men) took part. To describe them more we can easily divide them into two different subgroups according to their home country and to the character of their migration process: 1) migrants from the Eastern Europe – their migration is an economic one and the Czech Republic is their target country („economic migrants“)³, 2) migrants from Asia and Africa – their migration is rather a transit one („transit migrants“). Their basic characteristics can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Selected characteristics of qualitative survey sample (N=63)

Home country	Economic migrants (N = 38)	Ukrainians prevail (27)
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² Usually they had repeatedly violated residence regime, crossed or tried to cross Czech borders illegally or their identity had been unknown.

³ We attached to this group also some „specific migrants“ that were neither economic, nor transit ones.

	Transit migrants (N = 25)	Asia (21), Africa (4)
Age	Economic migrants	- 30 years = 19 30-40 years = 10 40 + = 9
	Transit migrants	- 30 years = 18 30-40 years = 5 40 + = 2
Marital status	Economic migrants	Single = 14 Married = 11 Other = 13
	Transit migrants	Single = 19 Married = 4 Other = 2
Education	Economic migrants	Basic = 9 Secondary = 22 University = 2 Not answered = 5
	Transit migrants	Basic = 20 Secondary = 5 University = 0

Selected results of this qualitative study will be presented in part 3 and compared with results obtained from methodologically different surveys.

2.2 Quantitative survey

As a part of our research we accomplished an extensive study of irregular migrants working in the area of Prague agglomeration. A questionnaire survey was realized from November 2005 to January 2006. Irregular migrants were defined as those who violate the residence and/or labour rules for foreigners. Our sample was not and even could not have been (due to the character of surveyed phenomenon) a representative one.

The selection of respondents and the filling-in of the questionnaire were carried out via 5 reliable “mediators” who had strong contacts within the immigration community.

The survey was targeted on three groups of irregular immigrants that were supposed to be significant in terms of their volume, as well as different from each other. The aim was to encompass the phenomenon in its width – to cover the most important variations of the study problem. The most numerous respondent group (N=69) formed Post-Soviet immigrants, especially Ukrainians that are not only the most numerous group of legal migrants in the Czech Republic⁴, but seem to be the most numerous in terms of irregular migration too (Drbohlav 2003).

Second group comprised of irregular immigrants from China and Vietnam (N=15) who are supposed to perform different occupations (e.g. in retail trade or in restaurants) as compared to Ukrainians. Finally, 15 immigrants from developed countries of the “West” (except the EU-15 states) were questioned – mostly from North America. Altogether 99 questionnaires were processed. The proportion of men and women was almost equal (males=53, females=46). Age and educational composition of the sample can be seen in Fig 2.

⁴ There were 102 594 Ukrainians legally staying (with long-term or permanent residence permit) as of December 31, 2006 (Migration Statistics).

Figure 2: Age and educational composition of the sample (N=99)

Age	< 24	25 - 29	30 - 39	40+	N/A	Total
Post-Soviet immigrants	12	13	25	18	1	69
Chinese and Vietnamese immigrants	6	3	4	2	0	15
Immigrants from the „West“	2	5	7	1	0	15
<i>Total</i>	20	21	36	21	1	99
Education	Basic or no schooling	Apprenticeship or special secondary	General secondary	Tertiary		Total
Post-Soviet immigrants	2	42	17	8		69
Chinese and Vietnamese immigrants	1	4	7	3		15
Immigrants from the „West“	0	1	0	14		15
<i>Total</i>	3	47	24	25		99

As to the structure of the questionnaire, we prepared 118 questions that were divided to different parts concerning conditions in home country, transfer to the Czech Republic, economic activities in the Czech Republic, accommodation and everyday life, social relations and personal characteristics (for the purpose of this paper, however, we will present only some results related to respondents' economic activities). Questionnaires were disseminated in Czech, Russian, English, Chinese and Vietnamese version.

2.3 Qualitative survey - Delphi method

To get experts' opinions and judgements of current situation in the area of irregular migration and migrants' illegal economic activities in the Czech Republic, but as well of its future prospects we used the Delphi method.⁵ This is an interactive research technique of collecting experts' opinions by a series of questionnaires interspersed with controlled opinion feedback (Linstone, Turoff 1975, Martino 1972, Drbohlav 1995). Its main distinguishing characteristics are anonymity among experts (panellists) and several rounds of questioning with opinion feedback to each round that enables panellists to confront indirectly their differing views and to modify them if necessary (Martino 1972, Masser, Foley 1986). Two main forms (subtypes) of Delphi can be distinguished. "Conventional Delphi" adds to the two above mentioned principles (anonymity, controlled opinion feedback) a third one – statistical representation of answers. It is used foremost as a tool for predicting future development based on consensus among experts. In contrast, the objective of "Policy Delphi" is not to produce a consensus but rather to analyse a policy problem and to look for possible solutions, while still respecting the main characteristics of the method (e.g. Turoff 1975, Martino 1972, Turroff, Hiltz 1996). In our survey of irregular migrants and their economic activities we applied both forms.

In a Delphi-like research the role of experts is a crucial one, although their number in a Delphi survey is not directly set and usually is not high, mainly about 15 to 35 panellists

⁵ For more on the Delphi method see Drbohlav 1995, 1996, 1997 or Lachmanová, Drbohlav 2004.

according to Gordon (1994). We followed this rule as our panel comprised of 32 respondents in the first round (November 2005 – February 2006)⁶ and 23 in the second round (May – June 2006). As our main interest was the situation on the field of illegal migration and migrants' illegal/irregular economic activities in the Czech Republic, we addressed only Czech experts dealing with the topic of international migration. The results of a Delphi survey, thus, must be seen only as a synthesised opinion of a particular Delphi panel (Gordon 1994).

Delphi technique was originally used for future forecasting but its application has subsequently been widened to surveys oriented towards highly complex problems with many converging factors or towards issues lacking appropriate background data (Rowe, Wright 1999, Martino 1972). International migration and especially illegal migration can be thus seen as a suitable area for a Delphi research. There are, however, only few migration studies that have been conducted by Delphi (see Loveless et al. 1996, Drbohlav 1997, Lachmanová, Drbohlav 2004). In the area of illegal immigration a Delphi-like survey was carried out by Research institute gfs.bern (gfs.bern 2005). More methodologically similar to our project is the Delphi survey performed by ICMPD as cooperation between both research teams took place during the study design period.

The structure and examined themes of our Delphi survey were based on a series of interviews with 30 selected Czech migration experts that had been accomplished beforehand (summer 2005). The Delphi study itself comprised of two rounds of questionnaires that were sent mostly by e-mail to selected Czech experts. Concerning economic activities of irregular migrants our main research questions were:

- (1) What forms of migrants' illegal economic activities do we have in the Czech Republic?
- (2) Why do we have migrants' illegal economic activities in the Czech Republic? What are the causes of them?
- (3) What impacts do migrants' illegal/quasi-legal economic activities have on the Czech Republic, on employers, on migrants themselves and on the country of origin?
- (4) What important measures should be applied to eliminate (to successfully combat) illegal/quasi-legal immigration and migrants' illegal economic activities?
- (5) What might be the future development of illegal/quasi-legal immigration and of migrants' illegal economic activities in the Czech Republic?

How these questions were answered represents one of the aims of this paper and it will be presented in part 3.

3. Results

3.1 Forms of migrants' illegal and quasi-legal economic activities

There are many forms of migrants' illegal and quasi-legal economic activities. Probably the biggest difference among them lies in "the level of illegality" (illegal x quasi-legal) that means whether the immigrant has, has had or has never had any required permit.

In the first Delphi round we asked the experts about possible forms of migrants' illegal and quasi-legal economic activities in the current Czech Republic. Then we created a list of these (sometimes overlapping) forms of not fully legal economic activities and sent it into the second round where the experts were supposed to choose five the most frequent ones (see Figure 3).

⁶ In the first round altogether 64 experts were contacted - the response rate reached 50 %. It might be caused by high complexity of the problem that goes hand in hand with the lack of information about illegal migration. Also filling-in of our questionnaires, especially of the first round, was a time-demanding process with no money reward. The panel of the first round, however, was a diversified one – its composition was as follows: academic and research circles (N=13), governmental organisations (N=6), non-governmental organisations (N=8), international organisations (N=2), 1 politician, 1 businessman and 1 representative of trade unions.

Figure 3: Forms of illegal/quasi-legal economic activities of immigrants (Delphi II, N=22)

Forms of illegal/quasi-legal economic activities of immigrants	In absolute terms
Pretending business activities (having a trade licence) whereas being employed (“hidden employment”)	18
Any illegal or quasi-legal economic activity organized by a "client" (broker)	18
Violating rules of an acquired visa/permit (this applies to 90-days or long term stay visas), e.g. change of profession or the area, etc.	14
Illegal work with a valid or lapsed tourist visa	14
Establishing of corporation with many partners by foreigners who later perform dependent work	10

The most frequent among the offered possibilities was: such a form of illegal economic activity when an immigrant possesses a residence permit and a trade licence but he/she works for someone thus he/she is in reality an employee not an entrepreneur (“hidden employment”). It must be noted that this type of behaviour is generally considered as violating working laws in the Czech Republic and furthermore trade licences are often misused in the same way by Czech labour force (Horáková, Kux 2003). The situation when an immigrant performs some kind of illegal or quasi-legal work that is organised by a middleman (in Czech context known as “client”) was chosen with the same frequency (18). This type of labour organisation is widely used in the Czech Republic and it seems that it is a rather specific system that is not so wide in other European states. Thus, we will describe it in more detail below.

Other frequent forms seemed to be to violate the purpose of the stay upon which was the visa/permit for a long term residence issued (e.g. to change profession or region where the migrant is supposed to work), as well as to work with a valid or lapsed tourist visa. Furthermore, establishing a common corporation by a group of foreigners who later perform dependent work (whilst being allowed in the country as business associates) is perceived as a frequent form of migrants’ economic activities that do not follow the law.

Based on the experts’ opinions we can generally characterize irregular economic activities of foreigners as being often organized by “clients” and somehow “legalized” by having (in present or in past) a visa or permit although not fully appropriate. Thus, the economic activities of “totally illegally staying foreigners” that have never had any visa or permit seem to be a much less often form.

Furthermore, we can look on the question of forms from the perspective of our quantitative survey. But we have to stress again that it was not a representative sample we worked with. We found that from our sample of 99 respondents (see Fig 4) more than a half (N=51) had at least a residence permit and even 36 respondents had a residence permit combined with a work permit – however, according to our definition they are classified as irregular because they somehow violate the work permit rules (hidden employment, working for other employer than stated in the permit etc.). On the other hand 48 respondents had no residence and work permit in the time of our survey. Nevertheless, majority of these respondents (42) had come to the Czech Republic legally on a tourist or business/work visa. Thus, the idea of marginality of “totally illegally staying foreigners” that have never had any

visa or permit and are performing economic activities in the Czech Republic seem to be supported from our quantitative survey.

Figure 4: Legality/illegality of the respondents

Residence	Work permit			Total
	Appropriate	Appropriate but...	Inappropriate	
Legal	0	36	15	51
Illegal	0	0	48	48
Total	0	36	63	99

3.2 Reasons for migrants' illegal and quasi-legal economic activities

In the first Delphi round we asked the experts why we have immigrants in the Czech Republic who are engaged in illegal or quasi-legal economic activities and also what brings them here? Subsequently we analyzed their answers and in a systematic way introduced them to our panellists (in a form of a list of the mentioned reasons) in the second Delphi round. The respondents were to rank them according to their perceived importance while using a scale from 1 (the most important) to 5 (the most unimportant reasons). Reasons evaluated as the most important are presented in the Figure 5.

Figure 5: The most important reasons for migrants' illegal/irregular economic activities (Delphi II, N=23)

Most important reasons	Importance
Established system of middlemen ("client system")	1.70
Strong demand on illegal (cheap and flexible) foreign labour, especially in manual works (e.g. construction)	1.78
Illegal employment (even of natives) is a widespread phenomenon	1.82
Too much bureaucracy in acquiring and applying for a work/residence permit	2.00

Note: Respondents ranked the reasons on a scale of 1 (the most important) to 5 (the most unimportant reasons).

The most important reasons bringing economic migrants with their illegal/irregular activities to the country are closely tied to "pulls". Specifically, an already established system of middlemen, strong demand for illegal foreign labour force and widespread "culture of tolerance" of illegal employment are considered to be the key reasons. Ineffective legal migration system seems to be as well an important determinant of illegal migration and migrants' illegal and quasi-legal economic activities. On the contrary, the role of the Czech Republic as a transit country (3.52), historical labour migration ties, especially with Ukrainians(3.29), as well as cultural and language proximity with some Central and Eastern European countries (2.95) were considered rather unimportant.

3.3 Client system – description

We have already shown above that the problem of migrants' illegal and quasi-legal economic activities in the Czech Republic is closely connected to a specific informal system of labour organization ("client system")⁷. This system has been established in the Czech

⁷ For more on this see Uherek 2004, Nekorjak 2005, 2007, Černík 2005, Intermundia 2005.

Republic during the second half of 1990's. Nekorjak (2005) describes it as a system consisting of four main types of participants (immigrants, middlemen/clients, employers and organized crime) which form two hierarchically organized levels (so called subsystems). The first level is based on relations between immigrants-workers and clients, whilst employers are only intervening to these relations. The second subsystem represents a "super-structure" of the first level and it is grounded on the relations between middlemen/clients and organized crime. Both subsystems differ to each other not only in types of participants, but as well as in their origins and functioning. We will focus, however, on the first subsystem which we had directly faced during our research.

We think that the first subsystem of the "client system" results from a situation where on the one hand a strong demand for cheap labour force exists and on the other the state is building more obstacles to the inflow of such a labour. Thus, a space for legal and illegal institutions is created (Massey et al 1998). In the Czech Republic, middlemen/clients became this kind of institution – they stay in-between immigrants-workers and Czech employers.

Clients are usually Post-Soviet immigrants whose main activity is to provide Czech employer with a required number (tens or even hundreds) of legal or illegal immigrant workers. Later client invoice their labour to the Czech employer and get their wages which he/she distribute among "their" immigrant workers. Client, however, retains a large part of the money. How much he/she retains is rather dependent on the moral profile of him/her. Besides his/her (sometimes exploitative) profit client also uses the money to pay for migrants' accommodation or in case of a loan existing between client and immigrant he uses the money as a refund. If he/she employs quasi-legal immigrants (according to our definition), then he/she (sometimes) may pay their taxes and social and health insurance. Client also may pay some money to above-standing mafia (the second subsystem).

It must be emphasised that such a client system affects only migrants working on the secondary labour market originated from Eastern Europe. Ukrainians are dominant group in the client system, however, during our research we found as well immigrants from Moldavia, Belorussia, Russia, Mongolia or Kyrgyzstan that were part of this system of labour organization.

At first in 1990's the role of a client was based on informal personal relations with migrants as well as with employers. Their role has subsequently become more professionalized and they have institutionalised themselves via formal establishment of a firm. Such a firm does business in one or more branches that are usually the same as the branches in which the client provides with immigrant labour. These branches are primarily construction, then manufacturing or services. The pressure to get legalized via own firm was closely connected to the tightening of immigration regime for third country nationals in the second half of 1990's. Furthermore, a pressure on (especially big) Czech companies to have all wage payments "clean" was another important factor. Thus, Czech companies were interested in subcontracting, which enables them to shift their responsibility for illegal or quasi-legal immigrant workers to the client. A form of legalisation of their activities via establishing a firm is advantageous for clients as well because firstly they can get a business visa which is easier than to get a work visa. Secondly, they can be employers of "their" immigrant workers and thus can more easily organize a work permit for "their" immigrants.

Globally, existence of middleman in the process of labour migration is a well-known phenomenon. However, in the context of illegal migration it is only partially discussed and even a lot of issues that are related to this phenomenon in the Czech Republic have not been mentioned elsewhere. For example Malheiros (1999) describes ethnic agents in Portugal who recruit construction workers from Cape Verde or Guinea. In the U.S. there are several articles that monitor the situation on the informal labour market after the IRCA (Phillips, Massey 1999, Durand, Massey, Parrado 1999). However, the scope of activities of clients in the Czech

Republic is much wider in comparison to middlemen from above mentioned articles. In the Czech Republic immigrant and client usually stay in touch throughout the whole stay and client not only organise the work, but provides immigrant with a lot of services such as providing with information, visa, work permit, transport, accommodation or security.

The client system has been revealed in both quantitative and qualitative surveys. In the quantitative sample 30 post-Soviet immigrants (out of 69) had a client. Thus, we divided post-Soviet immigrants into 2 subgroups and further analyzed (via T-tests for equality of means and Chi-Square tests) their differences. However, no great differences have been found with the exception of the following ones (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Characteristics where significant differences were found (p=0,05)

Ethnic background of co-workers
Size of a company where they work
Type of work in terms of time (temporary x permanent)
Income
Development of satisfaction with own life over time
Sex dimension

Those involved in the client system seem to have worked with their compatriots and other foreigners, whereas those with no client worked more with compatriots, foreigners and Czechs. Immigrants with a client are usually men, worked in bigger companies more temporarily, had lower income and their satisfaction over time rather increased.

As we stated earlier in the methodological part, we also interviewed 38 “economic migrants”. The omnipresence of the client system led us to find three distinctive types among “economic migrants”. Thus, we defined type A which is an economically active immigrant whose work is organised by a client – we named this type “Dependent”. Second type is represented by an irregular immigrant working on his own who has never had any client. We called them “Independent”. The last type is an irregular immigrant who initially had a client but later “freed” himself and worked on his own.

Key factor for “Dependent” was the relation of subordination to their clients. Migrants might get involved in the client system already in their home country. “Dependent” immigrants had only loose relations to other people in the Czech Republic. It seemed that even co-ethnic relations were rather weak. “Dependents” were rather pessimistic with no clear future strategy. Behaviour of clients differs – some are real exploiters, others are more like a “professional paid mediators”.

What told us “Dependents” about their clients?

R1 (man from Moldova, 37 years, special secondary education, divorced, no children) was working for some time on a tourist visa in the Czech Republic. He had a client who invoiced his work on a construction site and paid him only 35 to 45 CZK per hour (approx. 1,25€). Later he applied for asylum, moved to Prague and left the client. He was not allowed to work during the first year of his asylum application, however, he found himself a work on a construction site. His Czech employer did not want to pay him without any invoice so he had to find another client. This time he was paid 55 CZK per hour. When he had spared almost 2000 USD, he was attacked by some unknown men who he thought were from Ukrainian mafia. They threatened him with death so he gave them all his spared money. He thought it had been his client who told them about him because he knew how much money he had and where he hid them...

R2 (woman from Ukraine, 27 years, secondary education, married, 2 children) works in a restaurant in Prague. She washes the dishes and does whatever is needed. She has damaged hands due to daily washing of dishes and casseroles. She has a Ukrainian female client who paid her every month. She works everyday, even

on Saturday and Sunday for 11 to 13 hours. She has a day off only if she is sick, thus she has usually a one day off per month. Her client gave her 40 CZK per hour (approx. 1,4€) that makes 15 000 CZK per month (approx. 536€) plus she eats twice a day in the restaurant for free. She has no idea how much the owner of the restaurant gives to her client for her work...

R3 (man from Ukraine, 22 years, special secondary education, married, 1 child) works on a construction site. He says that clients varies, they want trust from their workers. However he was lucky with the choice of his clients. His current client takes care of him – for example in harsh winter he heats the construction site. Or when R3 was leaving home for a 10 days visit, his client gave him 500 CZK (18€) as a bonus for his great work...

R4 (man from Ukraine, 42 years, special secondary education, married, 2 children) worked on a construction site. He worked 12-16 hours per day, sometimes even 24 hours. He was paid 40 CZK per hour (approx. 1,4€) by his client. He did the work that Czech workers did not want to do. His client paid for him accommodation. The client gave him usually 1 000 CZK (about 36€) as an advance payment for a week, however, he often did not see the rest of his wages. After 7 months his client owed him 25 000 CZK (893€). The client told him that he did not make the invoice yet and that he was saving for R4's work permit...

„Independent“ immigrants are able to organize their work and life on their own, although their work conditions are sometimes harsh. Moreover, their income is higher than of „Dependents“. They usually have a strong support from various often well established, firm social ties (their families, friends from the same home country or from the Czech Republic). „Independents“ have clearer future strategies and often would like to settle permanently in the Czech Republic.

The third type in our interviews represents immigrants who were originally dependent on their clients but managed to left him and work on their own. Usually to leave a client is not a dramatic event, however, for the immigrants themselves it is difficult. It seems that having strong social ties is a helpful factor.

To conclude, in our qualitative survey clients were Ukrainians, mostly men. However, some immigrant women had female clients who were performing the same activities as the male-client. The behaviour of clients differ, we heart stories about good, as well as about bad examples.

3.5 Branches with illegal immigrants

In the second Delphi round the experts were to make a guess at the branch structure of only illegal migrants (quasi-legal were not taken into account) working in the Czech Republic. Panellists got a list of 7 probably the most important branches and they should estimate the proportion of illegal immigrants working in that particular branch. Furthermore, they could add other branches if necessary. Thus, construction is proclaimed as by far the most important area where illegals operate. Experts thought that about 40 % of all illegally working foreigners worked on construction sites. Among other offered areas (except textile and food industries that lack a bit behind) services in hotels/restaurants, household services, retail and wholesale and agriculture follow, whilst no significant differences are apparent.

Estimation of branch importance in relation to illegal migrant labour force in the Czech Republic (Delphi II, N=20)

Economic branches	Share of illegal immigrants in the area (in %)
Construction	41
Hotels and Restaurants	13
Household services (housekeeping, caring, etc.)	12

Retail/Wholesale	12
Agriculture	11
Textile industry	9
Food industry	8
Other significant areas that were mentioned:	Teaching foreign languages, translation/interpret services, journalism

Note: 100 % is the whole amount of all illegally working migrants.

We can compare these estimations with the branch composition of our quantitative sample, however, it is not representative. If we take into account only illegal immigrants in our sample (N=48), about 35 % of them were working in construction (these were only Post-Soviet male migrants) and 28 % in hotels and restaurants (this was the case of Post-Soviet female migrants as well as of Chinese immigrants). Other important branches were services (such as cleaning) for female Post-Soviet migrants, education (English language teaching) for western immigrants and food industry for post-Soviet migrants. This branch structure is deeply influenced by the region (Prague agglomeration) where the survey was accomplished because some branches are simply not located in this particular area of Czech capital (e.g. agriculture or textile industry), thus, it is obvious that there would be no illegal migrants engaged in these types of economic activities. Other aspect influencing our branch structure is our ethnical composition of the sample that was made to encompass different types of irregular immigrants rather than to be “representative” of the reality.

4. Conclusion

The main goal of this paper is to introduce selected results of our research project. Therefore, the form is rather specific and does not follow traditional rules. For more details regarding theoretical and “philosophical” backgrounds see forthcoming articles of research team members.

Results presented above are only partial results coming from a rather complex study of the phenomenon of irregular migration and migrants irregular activities in the Czech Republic. In this paper we concentrated only upon their economic activities via applying three different methodological approaches – 1) quantitative survey based on questionnaires, 2) qualitative – Delphi survey and 3) qualitative survey – semi-structured interviews.

The experts’ assessments indicated that the most frequent forms of irregular economic activities of migrants in the Czech Republic are those when an immigrant possesses a residence permit and a trade licence but he/she works for someone thus he/she is in reality an employee not an entrepreneur (“hidden employment”), as well as, the client system of informal labour arrangement. This client-based model seems to be a typical Czech phenomenon, more complex than other middleman labour recruitment and organization systems across Europe. Based on the experts’ opinions and also from our quantitative analysis it has been proven that most irregular migrant workers primarily used legal ways when entering the country. Thus, the economic activities of “totally illegally staying foreigners” that have never had any visa or permit seem to be marginal.

According to experts the most important reasons bringing economic migrants with their irregular activities to the country are closely tied to “pulls”. Namely, an already established system of middlemen, strong demand for illegal foreign labour force and

widespread “culture of tolerance” of illegal employment are considered to be the key motivation factors. Ineffective legal migration system seems to be as well an important determinant of illegal migration and migrants’ illegal and quasi-legal economic activities.

The client system as such was one of the specific targets of our interest. Let us pinpoint only that the most important element of the whole client system is the relation between client and immigrant. These relationships are rather diversified and cover not only aspects purely related to work as such, but include other services (e.g. in areas like accommodation, food, health, communication with authorities and financial issues). Despite overall negative connotations the client system may sometimes play a positive role on the Czech labour market (by replacing non-functioning state structures), and for immigrants themselves (sometimes by making their stay and work easier).

The client system is a specific model that works especially within Post-Soviet immigrants and within the following sectors: primarily construction, then manufacturing and services. Just construction seems to dominate over other sectors in terms of overall migrants’ illegal employment according to experts’ views.

5. References

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