

**Filadelfiová, Jarmila – Gyárfášová, Oľga – Hlinčíková, Miroslava – Sekulová, Martina: Inquiring into Cultural Diversity in Slovakia**

Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava 2010, 153 pages.

Institute for Public Affairs (IVO) has published the book within the project Cultural diversity in Slovakia in the context of labour migration: trends and challenges for public policy financed by the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism, Norwegian Financial Mechanism and the state budget of the Slovak Republic. Viewed thematically, selection of authors as well as fresh art visual the reviewed book is a „twin“ to the publication „Female migrants in Slovakia“ by Jarmila Filadelfiová and Martina Sekulová published by IVO in 2009.

Book comprises a short introduction on the issue of cultural diversity and multiculturalism in Slovakia, four case studies (economic migration from Romania and Vietnam, multicultural dialogue following the arrival of Korean investments to Slovakia and investment into cultural diversity – music festival in Levoča) and a record of a panel discussion on the issue of immigration.

Publication is rather heterogeneous in that the first three studies show more academic attributes, while the closing section is a text more professional by nature and is an analysis of policies aimed at policy makers. These two parts are divided by a specific text written by J. Filadelfiová based on autobiographical account by the founder of festival called „The Indian Summer in Levoča“

In the introduction, authors focus with competence on the issue of growing cultural diversity, several definitions of multiculturalism and the role the „others“ play in the society. Similarly to most of the publications devoted to migration in Slovakia they avoid the question still „hanging in the air“, namely: „Why does such a small number of migrants come to Slovakia?“ If we take for example the time this book was published, 4000 Vietnamese were living in Slovakia, while in Czech Republic the number amounted to 60 000. At the end of 2008, there were not more than 1000 Ukrainians working in Slovakia, but more than 80 000 in Czech Republic. The truth is that in 2007 and 2008 there was a dramatic increase in the number of immigration in Slovakia. However, it is also true that with 1% share of immigrants Slovakia is deeply below European average.

The first case study in the publication is the text *Discovering new horizons - labour migration from Rumania* by Martina Sekulová. It focuses on migration from Rumania that increased enormously in 2007 and 2008. Despite the fact that it is based on six deep interviews only, it brings important information about this dynamically growing group of immigrants. It seems that a significant part of migration from Rumania is made up of the members of the Slovak minority in Rumania or by people in close contact with this minority. The text

can be reproached for not fully regarding migration theories, which leads to avoiding certain topics considered important by foreign research of economic migration. It concerns mainly the question of migration strategies either on individual level or within family circle. Furthermore, the text does not answer the question how migrants planned to invest their wages earned in Slovakia, or more precisely, after sending the money to Rumania, we do not know whether it was to support their parents or their own families. In order to improve basic orientation, it would help to include factual data about the Slovaks in Rumania, which seem to be the key source of migration from Rumania (such as their number, areas, in which they live) as well as a summary of their possibilities to migrate within EU 27.

Despite mentioned reservations text is a nice introduction into the book describing Slovakia as a country welcoming immigrants (particularly when they speak Slovak and as a matter of fact are countrymen from „The Lower Country“) and contrasts well with the second study by *Miroslava Hlinčíková*, who focuses on the lives of migrants from Vietnam.

Since in reality labour migrants from Rumania turned out to be foreign Slovaks, immigrants from Vietnam certainly have better preconditions for developing cultural diversity. Even though, this is not the first study on this community in Slovakia, it is unique thanks to the fact that it also studies the „new“ Vietnamese immigration, namely the migrants that came to Slovakia during the era of economic boom in 2007 and 2008. Author observes that immigrants from Vietnam form a non-homogenous group – individual generations of migrants differ in the level of human and social capital. Assimilation of the second generation of migrants is an interesting issue; it has only been indicated though. Similarly as in the case of the first study, text could be improved by drawing more inspiration from theoretical concepts of migration regarding either ethnic economy (in case of the Vietnams in Slovakia this concerns mainly networks of Asian fast-food restaurants or clothes shops) or migration networks (which the author calls migration bridges). Searching for parallel situations between similar immigrants in other countries would be interesting, particularly with regard to such phenomena as the formation of specifically Vietnamese economic sectors or institutes supporting compatriots. Information referring to a difficult situation of Vietnamese immigrants, who lost their jobs during economic crisis, had run into high debts in order to get to Slovakia and cannot return back home are very disturbing. Here again, information or explanation is missing about the primary strategy of the Vietnamese, who had come to Slovakia during economic boom in 2007 and 2008 – did they want to use their earning to support their families or parents, did they want to invest the money or simply use it for their own consumption?

While the first two studies focused on migrants coming to Slovakia, *Olga Gyárfášová* asks in her text whether the arrival of big Korean investors to Slovakia contributed to intercultural dialogue. Although author had dutifully searched for intercultural dialogue, which might have been induced by the arrival of Korean companies and employees to Slovakia in both localities with big Korean investments (Galanta, Žilina), in the end, she is forced to state the absence of any cultural dialogue whatsoever. Besides occasional sponsorship contributions for local events, the Koreans are perceived „invisible“, which is caused by the fact that families of managers live in separated neighbourhoods in Bratislava and the managers themselves spend most of their time during the week at work. Author's conclusion is aptly summarized by one member of focus group organized within the research that the most visible Asian culture in Žilina is Asian food shelf at the Tesco hypermarket store.

*Jarmila Filadelfiová's* chapter entitled *Contribution to cultural diversity and dialogue: the story of a music festival* is built on the account of a Slovak immigrant from 1968, who began to organize a classical music festival in Levoča together with her British husband. This is certainly a very interesting story, but departs slightly from the context of an academic and professional publication, since most of the chapter comprises a verbatim account of her story.

The last chapter making also the most extensive part of publication (almost one third of the book) depicts the course of an email panel discussion between seven experts from the public, non-governmental, and academic fields carried out within the project. Discussion concentrated on three main areas: 1. migration in contemporary Slovak society (assets and risks associated with labour migration to Slovakia and factors, which shape labour migration to Slovakia), 2. evaluation of public policies and approach (experts were searching for trouble spots in the migration policy and in the integration process in Europe and in Slovakia, for efficient, inefficient or missing migration policy tools and for factors that need to be taken into account at the policy creation process), and 3. expected migration development in the near future and key challenges (optimal model of cultural diversity or approach of Slovakia to cultural diversity).

Obviously, the discussion and given statements show that discussion participants are competent. Nevertheless, it is possible, that despite authors' apparent effort reader familiar with the topic will not learn a lot of new information. The chapter is rather long, many experts' statements were included as much as three times (firstly in the introductory conclusion of the discussion, then in a well-arranged table and finally as quotations in the text itself). This makes the chapter (which summarizes the state of migration policies in

Slovakia, introduces expected problems and offers possible solutions to immigration) rather too lengthy and less readable.

In conclusion, publication *Probes into cultural diversity in Slovakia* is a useful contribution to the study of economic migration in Slovakia. Authors' intentions are maybe too humble to call the book *Probes* when considering „methodology limits set on the project“. And although the book does not correspond with authors' statement and does not offer either an „exhaustive research or extensive theoretical conceptualization“, from my point of view, its biggest asset is that it offers several interesting studies about current migration movements in Slovakia, which have scarcely been mapped or not at all.

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